

## **Substance and Shadow**

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**Suhotra Dasa Tapovanachari**

**Substance and Shadow  
The Vedic Method of Knowledge**

A masterpiece! With clarity and humor, the author shows us what Vedic knowledge is. I especially appreciate the abundant references. The glossary of philosophical names and terms is about the best I have ever seen. *Substance and Shadow* well deserves the attention of those curious to know more about Vedic thought, and also of members of the scholarly world. Suhotra Swami has really succeeded in making difficult concepts understandable.

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## Dedication

I offer my humble obeisances in the dust of the lotus feet of my spiritual master, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, who said:

"Cultivate this knowledge, Kāñēa consciousness, and you'll be happy. Your life will be successful. That is all. And the method is simple—chant Hare Kāñēa:

*Hare Kāñēa Hare Kāñēa Kāñēa Kāñēa Hare Hare  
Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*

If you simply chant, that is sufficient for your self-realization. But if you want to study this philosophy, or the science of God, through your philosophy and argument, logic, we have got enough stock of books. Don't think that we are all sentimentalists, simply dancing. No. There is a background."

—Suhotra Swami  
on Çré Nāsiāha-caturdaçé (May 2, 1996)  
at ISKCON's Mayapur Chandrodaya Mandir  
in Çrédham Mayapur, W.B., India  
Preface to the Second Edition

## Preface

Seeing his book reprinted, an author likely feels a sense of accomplishment, even vanity. With the second printing of *Substance and Shadow*, I simply feel great relief. The first edition was rushed to the printer along with numerous errata so as to be offered during Çréla Prabhupāda's Centennial year (1996). Still, in the main, the reaction to the book was favorable. Brisk sales prompted me to revise the manuscript for a second edition. And this is the result a polished text in a new size under a new cover. Not that I claim it perfect; but I am relieved to say I've done all that I could to make it better. Most of the corrections are minor matters of spelling and punctuation. But there are some revisions of content too. Several of these deal with science. At least one reader with a scientific background was unsatisfied by how the first edition handled certain scientific issues. I've done what I can to show sensitivity to his complaint. But I won't be surprised if this edition also attracts criticism, since I have no formal training in, for example, quantum mechanics though in *Substance and Shadow* I dare make comments about it. What are my intentions (or pretensions) towards science? In answering that question, I offer six points here.

## The narrow basis of science

First, the main purpose of *Substance and Shadow* is to distinguish the Vedic method of knowledge from other methods. Humanity has different methods of knowledge available to it. I hold that only through Vedic knowledge can we grade the validity of these methods. *Substance and Shadow* examines four such methods: empiricism, scepticism, rationalism and authoritative testimony. I hold that Western science isn't capable of comparing and contrasting the validity of one method of knowledge against others. Why? Because its own basis is too narrow. That basis was summed up by Albert Einstein in *Out of My Late Years* (1936):

Out of the multitude of our sense experiences we take, mentally and arbitrarily, certain repeatedly occurring complexes of sense impression ... and we attribute to them a meaning the meaning of bodily objects.

Einstein admitted that this method cannot even prove the existence of the external world. So how can we be sure that the bodily objects scientists study are real things? Aren't such objects just mental interpretations of a jumble of sense data that, with a nonhuman mind, or even with a human mind culturally different than ours, could be interpreted in a very different way? Wouldn't a different interpretation of sense data reveal a very different world? Which interpretation is the right one? And how, by this method Einstein described, can we ever know whether there is a reality outside the range of our sense experiences? These questions are not for science to answer. They are for philosophy. There is a difference between the scientific approach and the philosophical approach. *Substance and Shadow* takes the latter; it is therefore not remarkable that a scientifically-minded person could have a problem with my book. Of course, science began in philosophy. But it cut its ties to the parent as it accelerated down the narrow path of the study of bodily objects. Professor Lewis Wolpert, erudite biologist at London's University College, writes that most scientists today are ignorant of philosophical issues. Though at the beginning of the twentieth century a professional scientist normally had a background in philosophy,

Today things are quite different, and the stars of modern science are more likely to have been brought up on science fiction ... the physicist who is a quantum mechanic has no more knowledge of philosophy than the average car mechanic.\*

Wolpert admits that the fundamental assumptions of science *may not be acceptable as philosophy*, but speaking as a scientist, he finds that irrelevant. If scientists don't care about the concerns of philosophy, then why, my readers might ask, should a philosophical book like *Substance and Shadow* be at all concerned with what scientists say specially if the author admits he is not very well-versed in what they say? I offer this, from a noted journalist in the field of cyber technology, as an answer:

Science, as we have already discovered, is outrageously demanding. It demands that it is not simply a way of explaining certain bits of the world, or

even the local quarter of the universe within telescopic range. It demands that it explains absolutely everything.\*

## Science is not philosophy

This leads us to the second point: today's scientists are not shy about tackling philosophical questions yet they are not trained in philosophy and, as Wolpert admits, they follow a rule that all scientific ideas are contrary to common sense.\* Here's an example. Wolpert puts forward the oft-heard argument that a scientific theory ultimately counts for nothing if it does not measure up to what can be observed in nature.\* Yet he approvingly quotes Albert Einstein as saying that a theory is significant not to the degree it is confirmed by facts observed in nature, but to the degree it is simple and logical; and he quotes Arthur Eddington as saying that observations are not to be given much confidence unless they are confirmed by theory.\* Common sense tells us there's a contradiction here. Wolpert admits it: Scientists have to face at least two problems that drive them in opposite directions.\* The first problem is that science postulates causal mechanisms to explain why the world appears as it does to us. The second is that since a fundamental cause is always *before* its visible effect in the form of the bodily objects of this world, the cause cannot be perceived as a bodily object can be. In other words, the objectivity of a scientist is restricted by his material body. Thus from his embodied standpoint, he has a difficult task proving that his postulated fundamental cause is real. But prove it he will try, starting with what Einstein termed free fantasy.\* Thus fundamental causes (or to be precise, *postulations about fundamental causes*) such as mechanical forces, electromagnetic and other fields, wave functions, and ultimate particles like the Higgs boson, acquire by free fantasy the same real status as bodily objects. And by the same free fantasy, the everyday bodily objects around us like people, animals, plants, houses, tables and chairs become unstable, hazy theoretical concepts. In the meantime, where did common sense go? I would contend, writes Wolpert, that if something fits in with common sense it almost certainly isn't science.\* LSD prophet Timothy Leary may have best put his finger on it when he wrote that in science, realities are determined by whoever determines them.\*

## Science as popular mythology

The third point is that *Substance and Shadow* addresses particular scientific theories *in terms of how they are presented to the nonscientific public* by authors and journalists who may or may not be professional scientists themselves. No, in researching this book I did not plod through the original writings of Darwin, Einstein, Eddington and Bohr. Wolpert says nobody does this anyway:

...no one is interested that [calculus] was discovered independently by Leibniz and by Newton ... and no one would now read their almost impenetrable papers. As ideas become incorporated into the body of knowledge, the discoverers, the creators (of whom there may be many), simply disappear. Likewise, no one reads Watson and Crick's original paper if they want to know about DNA, or Darwin if they wish to understand evolution.\*

From statements like this I contend that science is a modern myth.\* Dramatic storytelling is essential to mythology, and through popular science books and magazines, myth is reborn today as Wolpert's body of knowledge. It is the science writer's myth, not the science researcher/theorist's grind, that captures the public's imagination, seizing for science popular credibility. Even if the myth insults common sense, that only adds to the mystique scientists enjoy in society. Swedish physicist Hannes Alfvén explained this in his 1978 paper entitled *How Should We Approach Cosmology?*

The people were told that the true nature of the physical world could not be understood except by Einstein and a few other geniuses who were able to think in four dimensions. Science was something to believe in, not something which should be understood. Soon the best-sellers among the popular science books became those that presented scientific results as insults to common sense. One of the consequences was that the limit between science and pseudo-science began to be erased. To most people it was increasingly difficult to find any difference between science and science fiction.

### What is science supposed to mean?

The fourth point is that whenever science calls the possibility of philosophy into question, it also calls the possibility of science into question, since philosophy is a parent of science. In the West, science owes a foundational debt to, among other philosophers, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Leibniz and Kant. Scientists are often heard to dismiss the speculations of these great thinkers as unreliable. But they should not dismiss the original purpose of philosophy, which is to *explain information* to probe beneath the surface data that makes up the world of bodily objects. Philosophy grapples with the *why* of the world. If Professor Wolpert means to say that this is irrelevant to today's scientists, then science only informs. Though by the grace of science today's world is perhaps better informed than it ever has been, there is no certain metaphysical foundation to all this information. The result is information chaos.

To the question What problem does the information solve? the answer is usually How to generate, store, and distribute more information, more conveniently, at greater speeds than ever before. ... For what purpose or with what limitations, it is not for us to ask; and we are not accustomed to asking, since the problem is unprecedented.\*

## Beyond the senses and mind

The fifth point is that from the Vedic standpoint, the attempt to explain sense data by mental speculation is a lower method of knowledge. The failure of Western philosophy is that it never rose above this level, which is limited by factors of time, space, the defects of human sense organs and the distortion and unclarity inherent in mundane vocabulary and grammar. The Vedic method of knowledge is *darçana*, a systematic revelation of deep reality. It does not fish in muddy depths for meaning; rather, it purifies the depths so that the self-evident truth emerges.

The *Vedas* are spiritual sound, and therefore there is no need of material interpretation for the sound incarnation of the Vedic literature ... In the ultimate issue there is nothing material because everything has its origin in the spiritual world. The material manifestation is therefore sometimes called illusion in the proper sense of the term. For those who are realized souls there is nothing but spirit.\*

## Vedic science

My last point concerning science is that the Vedic *darçana* goes hand in hand with Vedic science. By Vedic science, I mean for example the scriptural explanation of the cosmic manifestation in terms of the three modes of material nature, or the calculation of time and distance from the movement of the sun, or predictions made from the law of *karma*, or the tabulation of the species of life. There is no denying that Vedic science shares themata (background principles) with Western science, such as:

- 1) within nature there are regularities;
- 2) knowing the regularities, one can predict certain events in nature;
- 3) thus a reliable body of knowledge about nature is useful;
- 4) such knowledge is taught in a language of numerical measurement.

As Wolpert writes, these presuppositions are universal.\* *Substance and Shadow* does not aim to denigrate these the mata. But Western science attempts to demonstrate the universality of it's the mata from human powers of observation and theory. This is like trying to hold an elephant on a dish. The universe is a display of the unlimited power of the Supreme. Human power is limited. Freely admitting this, Vedic science follows the universal standard of regularity, prediction, reliability and numerical measurement given by the Supreme. Moving away from the topic of science, I should like to conclude the preface to this second edition by advising the reader that this book is not supposed to be a global survey of all philosophies or philosophical

problems. Nor is it supposed to submerge you in abstract, technical complexities. It serves up what I hope are bite-sized samples from a select number of pots of controversy that have been cooking in philosophy for a long time. And alongside each sample, *Substance and Shadow* supplies the straight sauce of Vedic wisdom. You are invited to taste each sample first without, then with, the sauce. I think you'll find that when Vedic wisdom is added, philosophy satisfies as never before.

Suhotra Swami  
on Çré Rāmacandra-vijaya (October 11, 1997)  
in Altenburg am Hochrhein, Germany

## Purpose and Principles

The year 1996 marks the first century of the glorious advent of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda in this world. Around the globe, his disciples and followers are commemorating Çréla Prabhupāda's Centennial in many ways; one is by publishing literature in homage to Çréla Prabhupāda's contribution to philosophy. *Substance and Shadow* is a result of that effort. My hope is that those who've found joy in reading my spiritual master's books will bless this effort by reading mine. The title is taken from a theme Çréla Prabhupāda often employed in his writing and lectures. Note these two sentences from his introduction to *Bhagavad-gētā As It Is*:

The material world is but a shadow of reality. In the shadow there is no reality or substantiality, but from the shadow we can understand that there are substance and reality.

In *Substance and Shadow*, I try to show why this statement is axiomatic. Shadow yields only an impression of substance. If we want substantial knowledge, we must trace shadow back to its source. Since shadow completely depends upon substance, it cannot be known separately.

## Substance and category

A pragmatic Western philosopher of the early twentieth century said, mind is matter seen from the inside, and matter is mind seen from the outside. This suggests that mind and matter are really not different. The universe is actually one substance in two categories. One category is the inner world of consciousness. The other is the world out there. Together they form the whole, the One. However, this leaves us

with a nagging question: why does the One make itself suffer the pangs of birth and death? The Vedic scriptures agree that subtle mind and gross matter are categories of one energy, called *prakāṭi* (material nature). But something other than *prakāṭi* is doing the seeing of mind and matter. That something else is spirit. If while seeing mind and matter, spirit thinks I am what I see, that sense of oneness is illusion, *māyā*. Spirit is always different from material nature. The illusion of being one with material nature is the shadow of the true substance of reality. It is the root cause of our suffering in material existence. If the world in which we think ourselves to be mind and matter is only shadow, what is the substance? Some philosophers say the seer, the spirit self, is the substance. By knowing its own substance as different from material nature, the seer knows reality. The problem here is that if the soul is the substance, then mind and matter are the shadow of the soul. It's been established that a soul in illusion is a soul in the shadow of substance. If that soul is itself substance, how does it come under its own shadow? No logical answer can be found to this question. The reader will understand the difficulty clearly by going outside on a sunny day and trying to stand in his or her own shadow. The Vedic answer is that while the seer is not himself *alone* the substance, he *belongs* to substance, as light belongs to the sun. The substance of light is its source, the sun, for without the source, light cannot be. Similarly, the substance of the spirit self is the Supreme Spiritual Person, known in the Vedas as Viñēu or Kāñēa. However, due to forgetting his link with the source, the soul imagines the substance of everything to be either himself or the mind-matter shadow, *prakāṭi*. The source of all shadow (the daytime shade as well as the great gloom of night that covers half the earth) is the sun. Likewise, all light, including the light of fire and electricity, comes from the sun. The sun is the root of both light and shadow, yet it remains unaffected by them. Similarly, the categories of spirit (light), mind (daytime shade) and matter (night) are the effects of God, who is unaffected by them. He is *all there is* for the seer-self to know, either spiritually, mentally or materially. Not knowing the one substance of all categories, the seer is perplexed by duality everywhere, beginning with mind and matter. We struggle to find coherence in so many incompatible opposites. This lady enjoys sweets, but suffers from fatness. This gentleman can't live with women, and can't live without them. Daily we try to adjust heat and cold, pleasure and pain, big and small, rich and poor, light and dark, love and hatred, good and evil, life and death. Resolving duality has been the subject of philosophical speculation for thousands of years both in the East and in the West.

## Living knowledge

Knowledge means more than information content. A vast amount of information is contained within the Vedas; but that alone does not amount to the whole of Vedic knowledge. *Substance and Shadow* focuses upon method *how* content is understood, *how* knowledge is experienced as true. What is the method of knowing that our world is a shadow of substance? How is this knowledge to be applied in life? This is Çréla Prabhupāda's unique gift to the world the *method* to experience a life beyond



the limits of mind, matter, foolish youth, wise old age, and all such dualities of material existence. This experience is immediate to the soul as *living Vedic knowledge*. Even today, Çréla Prabhupāda continues to disseminate living Vedic knowledge in his transcendental books, distributed by Hare Kāññēa devotees worldwide. This knowledge, Çréla Prabhupāda said, is ...

... beyond any consideration of material qualifications such as age or intelligence. Just like thunder in the sky does not need any explanation to any old person or to a young child, similarly, the transcendental sound vibration of Hare Krishna and preaching of *Bhagavad-gétā* philosophy will act on everyone, regardless of whether or not they are understanding at first.\*

Material knowledge is a per lust ration of mundane thoughts and perceptions. But what we think and perceive of the world around us are features of the soul's ignorance. Thus it can be argued that *there is no method of material knowledge (no how)* at all. There is only the content of our ignorance, an illusory *what*, into which we stumble and lose ourselves as we search for knowledge through our thoughts and perceptions. The Vedas compare ignorance to the sleep of the soul. The content of that sleep is a dream world the material world, the shadow of the spiritual world. Material knowledge is knowledge of dreams. Vedic knowledge is a method of spiritual awakening that begins with hearing (*çravaëëdi*) the Vedic sound. As material sound lifts consciousness from deep sleep and dreaming to wakefulness, so spiritual sound lifts consciousness from matter and mind to the self's eternal connection to Kāññēa the source of mind and matter, deep sleep and dreams, and the source of the living Vedic sound that is ever beyond these. Thus the method, or the *how* of Vedic knowledge, is the same as the *why*, the eternal reason behind the temporal world. The method is the end in itself transcendence.

The Kāññēa consciousness is there. In everyone's heart it is dormant. Simply by *çravaëëdi*, by pure hearing process. ... Just like a man is sleeping. The consciousness is there, but he appears to be unconscious. He is sleeping. But if somebody calls him, Mr. such and such, wake up, wake up. Wake up. So after two, three callings, he wakes up. He remembers, Oh, I have got to do so many things.

Similarly, the Kāññēa consciousness is dormant in everyone's heart. This Hare Kāññēa *mantra* is the process of awakening. That's all. This Hare Kāññēa *mantra*, if we chant repeatedly Hare Kāññēa Hare Kāññēa, Hare Kāññēa, Kāññēa Kāññēa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare then the sleeping man awakens to Kāññēa consciousness. This is the process.\*

## What is Vedic sound?

The word Vedic is not a man-made religious, historical, regional, linguistic, or theoretical designation. In Sanskrit, the word *veda* means knowledge. So when we

speak of the Vedic method of knowledge, we are really just saying the knowledgeable method of knowledge. The intent is to distinguish the Vedic method from the non-method of ignorant knowledge the invention of theories, i.e. dreaming to explain dreams. *Na vilakṣātvād asya, Vedānta- sūtra* 2.1.4 explains, Vedic knowledge is of a nature different from mundane theories, because *tathātvaā ca ṣabdāt*: the Vedic sound is eternal reality. Vedic sound does not mean language as we ordinarily understand language to be, not even the Sanskrit language. This may come as a surprise to those acquainted with popular claims such as this one:

It [Sanskrit] is the language of the higher mind and thereby gives us access to its laws and vibratory structures. It is the language of the gods, the higher planes of the mind, and affords access to the powers of these domains.\*

Now, the above quotation is not untrue, as far as it goes. But it is wrong to assume that the laws and vibratory structures of Sanskrit, by which higher planes are accessed, are the means of crossing from the shadow to the substance. *Kena Upaniṣad* 1.1 urges us to seek the substance beyond the structure of speech: *keneṣītāā vācam imāā vadanti* Who impells those words they speak? The inquiry into *who* gives words their shape and power is our entrance to *para-vidyā*, knowledge of transcendence. Studies of *vyākaraṇa* (Sanskrit grammar), *nirukta* (the meaning of Sanskrit words), *sphoṭa* (the essence of Sanskrit words) and *manomaya* (the plane of mind), belong to *apara-vidyā*, the *ṣāstra*-guided science of mind and matter. *Para-vidyā* concerns only the Supreme Personality of Godhead. But to take up *para-vidyā* does not entail leaving words behind. This knowledge is not transmitted by the sound of silence, by one hand clapping. It is transmitted by words that have the power to reveal *who* gives words their meaning. That power comes from the *pūrveṣām*, the ancient tradition of spiritual masters beginning with Kṛṣṇa Himself.

*na tatra cakṣur gacchati na vāg gacchati no manau  
na vidmo na vijānēmo yathaitad anuṣiṅyāt  
anyad eva viditād atho aviditād adhi  
iti ṣuṣruma pūrveṣāā ye nas tad vyācacakṣire*

The eye does not go there. Nor does speech go there, nor the mind. We know it not. We do not understand how anyone might teach us about it. It is different from the known, and even more different from the unknown. Thus we have heard from teachers in the ancient tradition who explained this to us. (*Kena Upaniṣad* 1.3-4)

*Na vijānēmo yathaitad anuṣiṅyāt*: we do not understand how anyone might teach us about it. Yet, *iti ṣuṣruma pūrveṣāā ye nas tad vyācacakṣire*: thus we have heard from teachers in the ancient tradition who explained this to us. Are these two statements mutually contradictory? *Kena Upaniṣad* 2.3 clears this doubt:

*yasyāmataā tasya mataā mataā yasya na veda sau*

He who is of the opinion that he does not know, knows; he who is of the opinion that he knows, does not know.

In other words, one who teaches or learns Vedic knowledge from his or her own opinion (*mata*) of what that knowledge is does not know *Veda*. Opinion means theories of correspondence and coherence; more about that will come in Chapters One, Two and Five. A Bengali slogan that has unfortunately become popular in recent times is *yata mata tata patha*, for as many opinions as there might be, there are as many paths of Vedic understanding. Unquestionably, according to *Kena Upaniṣad*, this is false. In a world where knowledge means opinions about mind and matter, we do not know how anyone might teach or learn that which is beyond mind and matter. Therefore a genuine Vedic teacher is *sudurlabha*, very rare. He puts forward no opinion, for he knows that opinionation is not the method. The Vedic teacher, the bona fide spiritual master, humbly passes on to his disciple what was revealed by his own teacher. Such is the ancient tradition of *guru-paramparā*. As *Kena Upaniṣad* 1.2. states, *yad vāco ha vācaā*. What is taught by the *guru* is not speech, a linguistic formulation of human utterances, but Speech, transcendence made manifest as sound spoken and heard in pure consciousness. The clear measure of pure consciousness is the fidelity to *pūrveṅām*, the tradition of old. But the tradition of old does not preserve Vedic knowledge the way the ancient Egyptians preserved their Pharaohs, by hiding them away in the darkness of a tomb. Though it is the oldest knowledge, if it is actually Vedic, it is still eternally alive. If it is actually truth, it dispels illusion for all time. With ever-youthful ease, Vedic knowledge sets straight the gnarled philosophical issues of this or any age. That is why I've taken the liberty in these pages to employ terms of Western philosophical discourse. For instance, *reflexive criticism* is an up-to-date way to indicate what happens when, as it is commonly said, somebody shoots himself in the foot with his own argument. Now, if my purpose was to be Vedic in the academic, historical or linguistic sense, I could have chosen an old Sanskrit term, *pratijñā-hāni*, hurting the proposition. But modernity has to be met on its own terms. The refutation of up-to-date formulations of ignorance is itself the living Vedic tradition. As I write these words, I have before me an academician's review of an uncommonly philosophical book published a few years ago. He comments that it takes risks, it makes unusual connections and tangles mercilessly with the real problems. It is provocative and will excite some sharp disagreement. Something is said there about what it takes to write a book in this field. I haven't dared to hope that by publishing *Substance and Shadow*, my ideas will be welcomed in the contentious atmosphere of professional philosophy. My hope is that this book may help those educated in the Western way of thought to get a grasp of Vedic ideas.

### Five truths and three means

Çréla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, a learned Gauḍeya Vaiṣṇava who lived in the eighteenth century, is celebrated for his *Govinda-bhāṣya* commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*. In the introduction to that work he explains that Vedic knowledge categorizes reality into five *tattvas*, or ontological truths. These are:

- 1) *éçvara* the Supreme Lord
- 2) *jéva* the living entity
- 3) *prakāti* nature
- 4) *kāla* eternal time
- 5) *karma* activity.

Knowing these, one comes to the limit of our capacity for knowledge. It may be noted that the Vedic literature presents other enumerations of basic truths. In His instructions to Uddhava, Lord Kāñëa approves a variety of ways that *tattvas* were compiled by various sages. For brevity's sake, this book concerns itself only with the five-fold compilation of Baladeva. In *Prameya-ratnāvalé*, Çréla Baladeva Vidyābhūñāëa informs us by what evidence (*pramäëa*) the five truths of the Vedas are to be known: *akñädi tritayam pramäëam*, Beginning with 1) perception [then 2) reasoning and 3) authoritative testimony], there are three means of valid knowledge. *Substance and Shadow* takes great pains to explain how our perception of matter (in Sanskrit, *pratyakñä*) and our reasoning of mind (*anumāna*) can be valid means to certain knowledge when they are correctly aligned with Vedic testimony (*çabda*).

### Humble obeisances

The certain knowledge that is to be obtained by the Vedic method is Kāñëa Himself. But Kāñëa is obtainable only by Kāñëa's grace. Therefore, before proceeding further, we fall at His lotus feet and pray as did the wives of the Kāliya-*nāga*:

*namaù pramäëa-müläya kavaye çästra-yonaye  
pravāttäya nivāttäya nigamäya namo namaù*

We offer our obeisances again and again to You, Lord Çré Kāñëa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who are the basis of all authoritative evidence, who are the author and ultimate source of the revealed scriptures, and who have manifested Yourself in those Vedic literatures encouraging sense gratification as well as in those encouraging renunciation of the material world. (*Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 10.16.44)

Here it is stated that Lord Kāñëa is the basis of all evidence (the three *pramäëas*). It is also mentioned that there are different grades of Vedic literatures, and the Lord is the source of all of them. *Substance and Shadow* particularly adheres to the version of the *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam*, which excels not only the evidence of *pratyakñä* and *anumāna*, but also all other Vedic *çabda*.\* *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* alone is *sarva-siddhānta*, the essence of all knowledge. I am greatly indebted to the ISKCON devotees and friends of Lord Kāñëa who contributed in different ways to making *Substance and Shadow* what it is: His Holiness Bhakti Charu Mahārāja, Governing Body Commissioner for ISKCON Mayapur, West Bengal; His Holiness Bhakti-vidyā-pürëa Mahārāja, head of the ISKCON Çré Rüpānuga Paramārthika Vidyāpéöha at Çrédhāma Mayapur; His Holiness Hādayānanda Mahārāja, GBC Minister for Advanced

Vaiñëava Studies; His Grace Gopëparëadhana Prabhu, Sanskritist for BBT International; His Grace Aja Prabhu, ISKCON Copenhagen; His Grace Bimala Prasäda Prabhu, Mayapur Gurukula instructor; Çréman Mathureça däsa, Sanskritist at the Mayapura Vidyäpëöha; Çréman Mathurä-pati däsa, student of Indology at the University of Warsaw; Çrématé Bäikä-bihäre devé-däsé, corresponding secretary at the Vaishnava Graduate School, California; Çréman Räja Vidyä däsa, Govinda Verlag, Neuhausen; Professor Dr. Bruno Nagel, University of Amsterdam; Professor Dr. Marius Crisan (Muräri Kåñëa däsa), Technical University of Timisoara; Bhaktin Lisa, ISKCON Amsterdam; and two professional translators who volunteered their skills, Yani (Greece) and Fagu (Rumania). I offer my apologies to anyone I may have missed.

## Introduction

### Doubt and certainty in Vedic philosophy

How can I be certain that what you are telling me is true? Every thinking person asks, and gets asked, this question. The Vedic philosophy arrives at certitude through *pramäëa*. The Sanskrit word *pramäëa* refers to sources of knowledge that are held to be valid. In the Brahmä-Madhva-Gauðëya Sampradäya, the school of Vedic knowledge that ISKCON represents, there are three *pramäëas*. They are *pratyakñä* (direct perception), *anumäna* (reason), and *çabda* (authoritative testimony). Of these three *pramäëas*, *çabda* is imperative, while *pratyakñä* and *anumäna* are supportive. Therefore, when a devotee of Kåñëa is asked about the certainty of his beliefs, he usually answers by quoting authority: *guru* (the spiritual master), *çästra* (the Vedic scriptures) and *sädhu* (other devotees respected for their realization of the teachings of *guru* and *çästra*). In modern schools of thought, citing authority to certify what we say doesn't seem to count for much anymore. There is a Latin phrase for this kind of proof, *ipse dixit* (he himself has said it), after the answer that disciples of an ancient Greek sage used to give whenever an opponent called the certitude of the sage's doctrine into question. The problem modern thinkers have with *ipse dixit* proof is that its evidence lies only in words. And words alone don't prove anything.

## Lucy in the land of Narnia

A story by C.S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, illustrates the modern difficulty with *ipse dixit* proof. Lucy is the youngest of four children on a visit to the large, eccentric home of an elderly professor. There an odd thing happens to her. She passes through the back of a clothes closet into another land called Narnia. When Lucy returns and relates her experience to her brothers and sister, they conclude that her senses had to have been mysteriously deluded. Finally the children bring the matter before an authority, the professor himself. His decision is that because Lucy is not known to be a liar nor mad, she must be telling the truth. Lucy's brother Peter still cannot believe it. He argues that the other children found no strange land through the back of the closet. What's that got to do with it? the professor asks. Well, Sir, if things are real, they are there all the time. Are they? But do you really mean, Sir, demands Peter, that there could be other worlds all over the place, just around the cornerlike that? Nothing is more probable, the professor replies.\* Wouldn't you say Peter has a right to think his sister is hyperimaginative? As for that authority, the dear professor, bless him, he may be well into his second childhood. At first glance, Lucy's Narnia fantasy seems similar to the Vedic description of worlds other than our own. The Vedas were spoken by sage Brahmā after he had a vision of a transcendental realm called Vaikuëöha, the kingdom of God. For a person educated the modern way, the authority Brahmā might have as a sage does not make the existence of Vaikuëöha at all certain. Neither is Narnia made certain by the professor's authority. The modern outlook is summed up by another Latin phrase: *de omnibus est dubitandum*, doubt is everything. This was coined by Ren Descartes (1596-1650), often called the father of modern philosophy. While on a military duty outside his native France, the well-educated Descartes came to wonder if he knew anything at all. He doubted what he perceived with his senses. He doubted the *ipse dixit* authority of his schooling in the Greek classics. From out of these doubts arose a certitude about his own being, which he expressed in his famous maxim *cogito ergo sum*, I think, therefore I am. Oxford philosopher A.J. Ayer (1910-1989) explains:

The sense in which I cannot doubt the statement that I think is just that my doubting entails its truth: and in the same sense I cannot doubt that I exist.\*

## The modern method of thought

Doubt itself, then, formed Descartes' immediate, indubitable data. From there he doubted his way to an understanding of the external world, questioning at every step both his senses and the teachings of previous authorities. His method looks quite reasonable to people today, but for his time it was a most radical break with the Medieval intellectual tradition. Descartes' method of systematic doubt marks the starting point of the modern notion of knowledge as something worked out rather than something received. Now, what would Descartes do with Lucy's story of Narnia? As he himself wrote:

In our search for the direct road to truth, we should busy ourselves with no object about which we cannot attain a certitude equal to that of the demonstrations of arithmetic and geometry.\*

In other words, the reality of a thing is to be certified by a system of logical proof (*anumāna*), like geometry. It is not enough just for Lucy to see Narnia (*pratyakñā*), or even get authoritative confirmation that she saw it (*çabda*). If *anumāna* certifies it, then Narnia exists even if Peter can't see it or didn't learn about it in school. If *anumāna* doesn't certify it, Narnia doesn't exist, no matter what Lucy saw or the professor says. As physicist Paul Davies points out, Descartes' method of analytic geometry is a historical antecedent to today's theoretical physics, which also promotes *anumāna* over *çabda* and *pratyakñā*.\* Like Descartes, today's physicist relies upon a system of mathematical logic to decide what is real and what is not. And, like Descartes, he asserts that mathematical proof overrides even direct perception. The old adage, seeing is believing, is out the window. We can't see quarks, black holes or space-time worms, but the calculations tell us they are certain. Therefore they are certain.

## The quantum Narnia

Now, as many of us may know from popular science magazines and pocketbooks, quantum theory proposes the existence of alternative worlds that influence our own.\* Suppose Lucy drops her claim of having directly seen Narnia and instead tells her siblings, Physicists say that the structure of everything rests upon mathematical laws. They also say there are unlimited other universes in mathematical dimensions. Given the infinite possibilities involved, I am completely certain that in one of these other parallel universes is a place called Narnia. The professor concurs that she is right. Still Peter protests, Do you really mean, Sir, that there could be other worlds all over the place, just around the corner like that? Nothing is more probable, the professor replies. Peter, Lucy chimes in, you should pay attention to the professor now. This is no fairy tale. It's *science*. You were right to be dubious about the original form of my Narnia tale. But throw in a little physics and hey presto. It's rather tame, actually. We've heard so much about the quirky quantum world that by the mid-1990's, Narnia is just cold pudding. Many educated people today would tend to agree with Lucy. But Peter remains dubious that the quantized tale of Narnia is any more credible. These are his reasons. Even if I say I believe you now, I still don't get to see Narnia for myself. Quantum physics says that the alternative worlds are completely disconnected from each other. Communication between them is impossible. An individual cannot leave one world and visit another, nor can we even glimpse what life is like in all those other worlds.\* Not only can't you show me Narnia, you can't even give me a solid reason for believing that Narnia exists, because as a kid I'll never be able to work out the mathematics for myself. Admit it Sir, you're asking me to swallow the same old *ipse dixit* proof as before! His voice kind and fatherly, the professor patiently says, Peter, settle down. In the original tale

of Narnia, Lucy's only evidence was her direct perception. We can't trust that because, after all, she's only human. But reason is more developed than perception. Therefore the quantum explanation is superior. Since your perception is also untrustworthy, you're not able to use it to question logic and reason. Even if you can't understand the quantum method of logic, it has an authority of its own, different from *ipse dixit* proof. Are you telling me the quantum Narnia has the certain authority of truth? Peter, I said nothing could be more probable. I didn't guarantee that it is true. The point is that scientific reason has its own authority that is worth your while to listen to and follow, young man. No doubt, Sir, scientific reason is more developed than the simple words of a little girl, but it seems to me that you're the one missing the point. If we simply *believe* scientific theories without verifying whether they are true, we grant the scientists *testimonial authority* over our lives, not just theoretical authority. Theoretical authority means I'm giving you a hearing just for argument's sake. I may accept what you say or not. But testimonial authority supposes you to be speaking real facts that I as a schoolboy ought to take seriously if I want knowledge. You admit you cannot guarantee that what you are saying about Narnia is true. There is no evidence by direct perception that Narnia is real. Yet still you expect me to grant you testimonial authority. *But how can I be certain that what you are telling me is true?*

### Self-evident authority

To summarize, Peter and the professor disagree whether reason has authority. The professor's position is that if a statement is backed up by scientific logic (which he admits is not necessarily true), it has authority and should be accepted as testimony. Peter argues that logic in itself does not have the certain authority of truth. He accuses the professor, and modern science, of obliging schoolchildren like him to believe in theories about unseen things like Narnia as if they were true. This is just the sort of *ipse dixit* authority that Descartes rejected. Peter's objection to the authority of logic is well worth marking. A notorious problem of modern systems of reason is that their claims to authority are beyond reason. For example, what is the reason for the professor's argument that logic is the better method to certitude? The professor admits that logic does not guarantee truth. He speaks in terms of probability instead. But if the truth cannot really be guaranteed through logic, then how can we establish whether something is even probably true? And so the professor's argument for logical certification of knowledge is not reasonable at all.\* If his argument for the authority of logic is beyond reason, he is not really open to discussion. Rather, he is preaching from the pulpit: Logic has authority because I say so. Why should we believe that because he says so? This is the essence of Peter's challenge. In the same way, an argument based upon the authority of sense perception (*pratyakñā*) cannot be proved certain by sense perception itself. Our senses are limited. They cannot show that there is no reality beyond their limits of perception. What is the authority for my claiming that what I perceive is the whole truth and nothing but the truth? My brute ego? Like Peter, Vedic *pramāñā*



distinguishes between logic and testimonial authority. The word *çabda* means sound, but the *çabda* that is cited as authoritative Vedic testimony is *çabda-brahma*, spiritual sound. It is in a category by itself, distinct from *anumāna* (logic) and *pratyakñā* (direct perception). Spiritual sound, as opposed to ordinary sound, is *svataù-pramäëa*. That means its authority is self-evident. It does not derive its authority from another *pramäëa*. *Çrémad- Bhägavatam* 6.3.19 points out the essential difference between speech that carries self-evident authority, and speech that does not:

*dharmaà tu säkñäd bhagavat-praëétaa  
na vai vidur aññayo näpi deväu  
na siddha-mukhyä asurä manuñyäu  
kuto nu vidyadhara-cäraëädayäu*

Authoritative laws of religion (*dharma*) are those directly spoken by the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Even the great sages in the higher planets cannot ascertain the real religious principles, nor can the demigods or the leaders of Siddhaloka, to say nothing of the *asuras*, ordinary human beings, Vidyadharas and Cäraëas.

What Kåñëa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, says, has the full authority of truth. Kåñëa Himself *is* the Supreme Truth, the *paraà brahman*. Now, *Bhagavad-gétä* 10.12-13 states that great sages like Nārada, Asita, Devala and Vyāsa confirm this truth. That does not mean that the truth Kåñëa speaks depends upon the confirmation of others. Rather, the sages confirm they know the truth by repeating what Kåñëa says. Thus they are also accepted in the Vedas as authorities whose words are always true, because their authority derives from Kåñëa. Apart from this, sages, demigods, angels, human beings and demons have no self-evident authority. Similarly, sense perception and logic have no self-evident authority; they depend upon *çabda*. For instance, I perceive that people die. Reason impels me to ask whether every human being, including myself, will also die. But my senses and mind cannot answer that with certitude. I must turn to authoritative testimony. After so learning that I and everybody else will die, reason then forces me to ask, What is the use of this life? As before, the senses and mind cannot give me a certain answer. Only *çabda* has that authority. *Anumāna* can help us form a reasonable basis for a belief in worlds other than our own, as quantum physics does. But reason alone cannot bring us to the realization, with complete certainty, of other worlds in even a different material dimension, what to speak of the certain realization of transcendental worlds in the spiritual dimension (Vaikuëoha). The spiritual dimension is self-evident only via the medium of *çabda*, pure Vedic sound as transmitted by Kåñëa and His authorized representatives. On the other hand, sound spoken by someone who has no self-evident authority, who does not refer to Kåñëa, and who derives authority from *pratyakñā* and *anumāna*, is not *çabda*. Such *ipse dixit* evidence certifies only uncertainty. But that is also a part of knowledge. So that the certain may be distinguished from the uncertain, the latter must be exemplified. To that end, many (pardon) mundane authorities are cited in this book to demonstrate the uncertainty of material knowledge.

## Problems of self-referential logic

But aren't we who adhere to Vedic philosophy being too creed bound in citing *śabda* as proof of certain knowledge? Can there be anything more dubious than an appeal to some sort of self-evident authority? Yes: declaiming the principle of self-evident authority. The sense in which I cannot doubt self-evident authority is that my doubting entails the acceptance of a presumed self-evident authority namely, doubt itself (*anumāna*). The central theme of Descartes' philosophy, the so-called Cartesian principle, is that the mind, *by referring to itself alone*, can arrive at the fundamental certainties of existence: that I exist, God exists, and that geometric logic is intrinsically superior to all other types of knowledge. Nowadays it is fashionable for philosophers to reject Descartes' arguments for the soul and God. That logic, they point out, was just a holdover of his Christian upbringing. Still, the basic theme of the Cartesian principle, that the mind should be its own authority in deciding what is true and what is not, remains very prominent in the West. If the truth about everything is knowable only by the mind's systematic doubt, then truly, *de omnibus est dubitandum*, doubt is everything. But what can we know with certitude by doubt alone? Descartes tried to prove that doubt yields self-referential certainty by equating thought (I think) with the self (therefore I am). For the Christian that he was, I am meant I am an eternal soul, different by my thought from matter. This sense of non-physical identity formed his ground of certitude. On that ground, he devised his indubitable Cartesianism. But all his maxim really says with any certitude is, I am thinking now, therefore I exist now. The self does not always engage in thought. Sometimes it is completely unconscious, as during dreamless sleep. If thought is the self's nature, and thought is not always, then it does not follow that the self is always. I think, therefore I am is no more or less valid a statement than I sleep, therefore I am not. *Anumāna*, then, does not self-referentially establish a certain ground of eternal existence nor a certain ground of nonexistence. A second problem is that self-referential logic leads to paradox. Everyone who regularly uses a computer has experienced a hang, when the computer gets stuck in a function and cannot execute further commands. The only remedy is for the operator to reset the system. A hang happens when the computer slips into a logical loop that keeps referring back to itself. In the same way, our minds slip into a logical loop as we consider Descartes' own central theme: doubt is everything. If the statement is true, it is false, because by asserting that doubt is everything, it leaves no doubt about what everything is. But if it is false, then it is true, because the falsity of the statement provokes doubt in everything once more. Yet again, if it is true, it is false; but still, if it is false, it is true ... on and on without end. There is no way out of the loop because the logic of the statement has only itself to refer to. This strongly suggests that for logic to be meaningful, it must be directed by truth beyond itself, just as a hang must be reset by an operator external to the computer itself. Truth, then, is something beyond *anumāna*. A third problem is that Descartes himself could not put into practice the tenet of self-referential *anumāna*. He did experiments to test his theories, resorting to observation (*pratyakñā*) to support his *anumāna*.

## I am not the mind

Descartes' intentions were pious. With his maxim, I think, therefore I am, he offered everyone a simple method of self-realization that he supposed certified our identity as soul. He hoped his method of logical analysis would put religion on a rational footing. Unfortunately, his method does not really lead to self-realization, because it confuses the soul with the mind. Vedic *çabda* reveals truths the mind is unable to discern when referring to itself. One such truth is that the mind is a subtle material covering of consciousness, something like the smoke that clouds a flame that is not burning cleanly. The flame is comparable to the soul, for the flame spreads its light like the soul spreads consciousness. A flame burning uncleanly is like a soul in *mâyä*, the state of forgetfulness of Kåñëa, or God. From the soul in *mâyä*, the mind arises, like smoke rising from a flame. Smoke and flame are closely associated yet have opposite qualities. Flame gives light, while smoke obscures light. The mind is called *caicala* in Sanskrit, meaning unsteady. Sometimes it is awake. Sometimes it dreams. Sometimes it is in deep dreamless sleep. When the light of self-knowledge is obscured, wakefulness, dreaming and deep sleep delude consciousness. We therefore make such false statements as I think, last night I dreamt, I was unconscious, and so on. But all the while the flame of the self, the soul, burns eternally, unaffected by this clouding of its light. The unsteady mind is captivated by external sense impressions. Through the mind and senses, the soul's attention is focused upon the ever-changing material world. This misdirection of consciousness (the power of the soul) powers the turning of the *saàsära-cakra*, the wheel of birth and death. The mind is misinformed by the imperfect senses. Illusioned by uncertain sense data, the mind makes mistakes. When in spite of this, we stubbornly think we've gained indubitable knowledge, we are cheated. Suppose you and I agree, on the basis of mathematical logic like that deemed indubitable by Descartes, that one plus one is two is a sure fact. We form a school of philosophy, the Too True To Two school. We challenge any other school to come forward and prove that one plus one is two is not certain. The losers have to give the winners all the money in their wallets except one banknote. A member of the One On One Won school takes up the bet. He places one drop of water on a flat glass surface with an eyedropper, then carefully adds a second drop to it. The result, to our chagrined surprise, is not two drops. We lose, cheated by our own minds and senses. After giving away the money, I have one dollar in my wallet. You have a ten dollar bill in yours. Pooling our funds, we fall into a grave philosophical contradiction. My senses tell me we now have two notes, but your mind tells you we have eleven dollars. We quarrel. I shout, Believe your eyes! Two! You shout back, Believe your mind! Eleven! Condemning one another, we dissolve our school.

## Can we be certain about *çabda*?

The dispute over the two bills is not just comedy relief for readers weary of epistemology. Friction between rationalists (who believe their minds, i.e. reason) and empiricists (who believe their eyes, i.e. the senses) has been a flashpoint of regular philosophical controversy since classical times. Like unsupervised children, *pratyakñā* and *anumāna* quarrel whenever the authoritative parent *pramāëa*, Vedic *çabda*, is absent. As mentioned before, theoretical physicists, following Descartes, give *anumāna* the last word over *pratyakñā*. They labor to devise a Theory of Everything, a mathematical formula that explains the universe so concisely that it can be worn on the front of a T-shirt. It's all very exciting, but nobody knows if there is any truth in it: One theory builds upon another. We can't escape the suspicion that we may be constructing a very ephemeral house of cards.\* Unfortunately, the tendency is to equate Vedic *çabda-pramāëa* with the sort of *ipse dixit* authority that Descartes rejected. And so, among intellectuals, *anumāna* remains the favored *pramāëa*, though it is never beyond doubt. But there are three simple, standard rules of semantics (the study of linguistic communication) that suggest a method by which we may assure ourselves that there is more to *çabda* than empty words. These rules, considered reasonable in the modern context, have always operated within the Vedic context. If I want to know whether a statement has real authority, I ought to:

- 1) Know what the statement means;
- 2) Know the right way to verify it;
- 3) Have good evidence for believing it.\*

First, knowing what a statement means requires me to accept an appropriate discipline of thought. For instance, I cannot know what *nondeterministic, polynomial-time-complete* means through the disciplines of basket weaving, horticulture or phrenology. The appropriate discipline is combinatorics, the study of complex logical problems. Similarly, if I want to know what *çabda is the sound incarnation of Kåñëa* means, I have to accept the system of discipline (*paramparā*) through which *çabda* is handed down. Second, I verify the statement *çabda is the sound incarnation of Kåñëa* by consulting the three *paramparā* sources of *çabda*: *guru*, *çāstra* and *sādhu*. If I read this statement in *çāstra*, I consult *guru* and *sādhu* for verification. If I hear it from *guru*, it is verified by *çāstra* and *sādhu*; and if I hear it from *sādhu*, it is verified by *çāstra* and *guru*. And when I actually follow the *çabda* myself, it is verified from within the heart by Lord Kåñëa Himself, the source of all knowledge. Third, there is very good evidence for believing the statement *çabda is the sound incarnation of Kåñëa*. One who makes the senses and mind his authorities is bound by them, and is thus bound by ignorance of the self. In other living creatures such ignorance of the self is natural; but in man it is a vice that results in vice. *Ipse dixit* sound does not have the potency to free the self from the vicious demands of the mind and senses. *Çabda* that is understood and verified as per the two previous rules transforms the hearer in a way that *ipse dixit* sound does not. As Çréla Prabhupāda writes in *Bhagavad-gétā As It Is*:

Perfect knowledge, received from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is the path of liberation.\*

Liberation of consciousness from the dictation of the mind and senses, and from ignorance and vice, is self-evident in the devotees who take to the path. The direct experience of the purifying power of *çabda* convinces the devotee of its authority. At the end of the path of liberation, the path of hearing Vedic *çabda*, Kåñëa personally reveals Himself as Absolute Knowledge, the Absolute Knower and the Absolute Object of Knowledge. This state of full realization of the truth is called Kåñëa consciousness. As this introduction comes to a close, at least a couple of questions still linger in the air: How are *pratyakñã* and *anumāna* to be guided by *çabda*? How does *çabda* directly reveal the transcendental worlds of the spiritual dimension? These and many more problems are dealt with in the chapters to come.

## Chapter One: Perception (Pratyakñã)

In *Vedānta-syamantaka* 1.2, Çréla Baladeva Vidyābhūñāëa defines perception as *indryārtha sannikarñe pratyakñã*, the direct contact of the senses with their objects. This produces an experience. But is that experience knowledge? It is for those who adopt the viewpoint known as naive realism that everything is simply the way it appears to be. However, since the time of Descartes, naive realism has been considered deficient. What the senses readily experience is only what Western philosophers term the *manifest qualities* of nature: tastes and colors, for example. But manifest qualities do not reveal their own cause, and finding the cause was the main concern of the New Philosophy of the seventeenth century. During this period, the first modern scientists developed a vigorous program of methodical experimentation in an effort to push beyond the limits of naive experience. The Latin words *experientia* and *experimentum* (from which we get experience and experiment) are closely related. Before Descartes, they were almost synonyms. Experiments in the Middle Ages were naive *experimenta fructifera*, fruitive experiments, designed to produce a particular effect or useful purpose. Metallurgists of that time sought ways to make higher-quality iron tools by quenching them, red-hot, in experimental baths prepared from plant and animal matter. For instance, the juice of the horseradish, being sharp, was so tested in the hope it would sharpen the edges of blades. Such fruitive experiments were concerned only with the manifest qualities of nature. But as time went by, craftsmen and chemists, emboldened by new techniques brought to Europe from the Muslim world, performed sophisticated *experimenta lucifera*, experiments of light meant to uncover nature's *occult qualities*. Originally, an occult quality was supposed to be a mysterious, yet natural, phenomenon like the magnetism of a lodestone. With the rise of New Philosophy, *all the perceived qualities of nature* came to be thought of as occult. The English scientist Joseph Glanvill (1636-1680), writing in *Scepsis scientifica*, declared:

The most common phenomena may be neither known, nor improved, without insight into the more hidden frame. For Nature works by an invisible hand in all things.

This succinctly expresses the *basic premise of science* not just the science of the West, but also the Vedic science. Both agree that sense experience is not what it seems to be; the truth goes deeper. But the two sciences differ in method. Western science relies on experiments of light, whereas Vedic science relies upon *adhyātma-dépa*, the light of transcendental knowledge. In any case, light is required to dispel darkness. What is that darkness? According to the Vedic version, it is false ego (in Sanskrit, *ahaikāra*) summarized by Lord Kāñëa to Uddhava in *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 11.24.7-8.\*

### The false ego

Perception itself is a faculty of consciousness. When consciousness is pure, then perception is likewise pure, as indicated by Lord Kāñëa in *Bhagavad-gétā* 9.2 (*pavitram idam uttamam pratyakñävagamaà dharmyaà*). Physical sense perception is a darkening, an occlusion, of that faculty. This occurs when the self is mistaken to be the body. That mistake is the false ego. The real ego who witnesses the sense objects is the soul (*ātmā*), always different from matter: *evaà drañöä tanou pāthak*.\* The soul is distinguished from matter by consciousness. Yet consciousness is bound to matter by the false ego. The false ego reflects three modes of impure consciousness. The ignorant mode (*tāmasa-ahaikāra*) governs perception. From out of ignorance, the five manifest qualities (*pañca-tan-mātras*) appear within consciousness: sound, touch, form, taste and smell. These are the subtle qualities of five elements (*pañca-mahā-bhūtas*): earth, water, fire, air and ether. In Vedic science, an element is that which, when contacted by a sense, manifests a quality as when sound manifests from contact of the ear with ether (vibrating space), or as when form manifests from the contact of the eye with the solar fire (sunlight). From the passionate mode of the false ego (*rājasa- or taijasa- ahaikāra*), the senses are produced. And from the mode of goodness (*sāttvika- or vaikārika-ahaikāra*) come eleven demigods, five of whom manage the functions of the five perceptive senses (ear, tactile faculty, eye, tongue and nose). Another five demigods manage the working senses: mouth, hand, leg, genitals and anus. The eleventh demigod manages the mind.\*

### Real perception

By *adhyātma-dépa*, the light of transcendental knowledge, we distinguish sense perception from perception itself. Inasmuch as the self is known to be different from the body, correspondingly the self's perceptive power is freed from the limits of the material sense organs. When the self is completely liberated, the universe is seen as the energy of the Supreme. This way of perception is direct knowledge of reality, as we are told by Kåñëa Himself in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.24.19:

The material universe may be considered real, having nature as its original ingredient and final state. Lord Mahä-Viñëu is the resting place of nature, which becomes manifest by the power of time. Thus nature, the almighty Viñëu and time are not different from Me, the Supreme Absolute Truth.

Here, then, is the reason for Çréla Baladeva Vidyäbhüñaëa's counting as *tattvas* (truths) the material nature, time and their interaction (*karma*). In reality, they are not different from Kåñëa, just as the living entities are not different from Him. Yet they remain always subordinate to Him, for He is ever their controller (*écvara*). Though the *tattvas* are not different from Him, Kåñëa is different from them, as the sun is different from the light and shadow it displays. *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.24.20 states that the material world exists only due to the perception of the Supreme Personality of Godhead:

As long as the Supreme Personality of Godhead continues to glance upon nature, the material world continues to exist, perpetually manifesting through procreation the great and variegated flow of universal creation.

The Supreme Lord's standard of perception is the standard of reality itself. This is real knowledge, or Kåñëa consciousness, as confirmed in *Çrémad- Bhägavatam* 4.29.69:

Kåñëa consciousness means constantly associating with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in such a mental state that the devotee can observe the cosmic manifestation exactly as the Supreme Personality of Godhead does.

Great souls like Brahmä, purified by extraordinary austerity, directly see the whole universe in that way. Such austerity is beyond our reach. But at least we can learn to see things rightly through the eyes of revealed scripture (*çästra*). Scriptural vision is called *çästra-cakñuñä*. In Vedic circles, this *pratyakñä* is acceptable as bona fide *pramäëa*. Otherwise, as Çréla Prabhupäda used to say, even if God personally came before us now, we lack the eyes to see Him. Our present eyes are material, but they can be scripturally trained. *Çästra-cakñuñä* is directed not by the body and mind, but by the vision of the Supreme Lord and His authorized representatives, of whom the first is Brahmä. Actually, God *is* present before us right now, accompanied by His various energies. But as long as our vision is steeped in the shadow of our real self, we cannot see Him.



## Illusory perception

The foregoing explanation, involving as it does God, the soul and eleven demigods, must appear occult to some readers. But let us not forget that Europe's own New Philosophy, the direct precursor to modern science, considered all qualities of nature manifest within our perception to be occult. The reason is the problem of causation. An occult quality is simply our limited experience of a *hidden cause*. The New Philosophy sought to scientifically explain that cause. The Vedic literatures explain that our minds receive impressions from the senses; these impressions signal the existence of a substance (in Sanskrit, *vastu*) external to us. That substance is the cause of what we perceive. In truth, that substance is Kāñëa, the cause of all causes. However, unless we are fully Kāñëa conscious, we do not perceive Him as the substance on the other side of sense perception. As Çréla Prabhupāda states in his purport to *Bhagavad-gétā* 14.8: *Vastu-yāthātmya-jñānavarakaà viparyaya-jñāna-janakaà tamaù*: under the spell of ignorance, one cannot understand a thing as it is. Instead, we perceive only whatever impressions our materially conditioned senses are able to convey: sound, touch, form, taste and smell.\* We cannot know beyond these impressions what actually is out there.\* Hence, perception is occult, since its cause is ever-hidden. Any knowledge that depends upon the authority of *pratyakñā* is curtailed on all sides by our ignorance of the substance of reality. Not only is *pratyakñā* limited to impressions, our senses grasp these impressions imperfectly. Çréla Baladeva Vidyābhūñāëa points out that our senses are able to perceive only objects that are within their range. They cannot detect those that are far away or very near. An object too small or too great likewise cannot be perceived. And when the mind is distracted, we miss even those objects that are within the range of perception. Sense objects obscure one other, as when the sunshine covers the shining of the stars, or when milk and curd mix together.\* Other defects of sense perception are described in *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam*. We perceive a candle flame as a steady light, when in reality, moment by moment, the flame comes into being, transforms and passes out of existence. (*Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 11.22.45) Sometimes, due to a mirage, we perceive water where there is only dry land. (*Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 7.13.29) We perceive an object reflected upon a moving surface as moving when in fact it is not. (*Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 11.22.54) Western philosophy likewise admits that sense perception is defective. Four standard examples are 1) the same object sometimes appears different to the same person, as when a green tree appears black at night; 2) the same object sometimes appears different to different persons, as when a green tree looks red to a person who is color-blind; 3) we derive the forms and other qualities of sense objects from the functions of our sense organs, but objects and organs are really just atoms arrayed in empty space; 4) what we perceive cannot be what really is at the moment we perceive it, since it takes time for perception to occur (for instance, if sunlight takes eight minutes to reach the earth, we only see the sun as it was eight minutes before). Each of these examples further underscores the problem of the occult quality of perception: what's really out there? The grave difficulty with the attempt of experimental scientists to solve this problem is that their proposed solution just renews the problem. Experimental science questions existence, and answers those same questions, from the standpoint of *pratyakñā* (experience and experiment). In Vedic terms, such philosophy is called *pratyakñāvāda*.\* There are two types of *pratyakñāvādé*—empiricists and sceptics.



Empiricists equate sense perception with knowledge. Though that knowledge is presently incomplete, they argue that it should be increased by advances in experimental technique. Vedic authorities reject this attempt as being inherently flawed. Even if we extend the range of our senses by using scientific instruments, the defects of the senses stay apace of the senses' range. Sceptics argue that since perception is always defective, knowledge is not worth pursuing. Cratylus, a sceptic of ancient Athens, found sense perception to be so meaningless that he gave up speaking altogether. He merely wiggled his finger to indicate he was fleetingly responding to stimuli. This too is not approved by Vedic authorities.

## Presence and absence

The conflicting views of the empiricists and the sceptics center on the presence and absence of the objects of perception. Impelled by desire, the senses seek contact with their objects. In the presence of desired objects, we feel satisfaction; but time inevitably separates us from them. Either the objects are removed against our will, or in time we become satiated by their presence and give the objects up. Despite this, some people maintain a strong hope that the presence of sense objects will yield happiness. Others, after repeated separation from them, lose that hope. And almost everybody vacillates between that hope and hopelessness. All of us have at one time or another felt completely unfulfilled in our present sphere of experience. All of us have at one time or another hoped to break through that hopelessness to a completely new experience. The dedicated empiricist is attached to sense objects, and so philosophizes that all knowledge springs from the contact of the senses with their objects. The dedicated sceptic contrarily prefers the senselessness of the unknown. He denies the meaningfulness of perception. It is rare in history to find *pratyakñavädés* who, like Cratylus, never swerve from one extreme or the other; but let the terms empiricist and sceptic serve as markers of the limits of *pratyakñaväda*. From the Vedic viewpoint, neither position is reasonable, for in neither is there an understanding of the cause. When the cause of the presence and absence of sense objects is understood, only then does perception make sense. From Çréla Baladeva Vidyäbhüñaëa comes the example of a waterpot taken from one room to another by a servant. After the waterpot is removed from our sight, it is clear by our not seeing it that the pot is elsewhere.\* But if we lose our memory of what governs the presence and absence of that pot, the defects of the senses overwhelm our intelligence. Seeing the pot absent, we might disbelieve our eyes that it is really gone. Seeing the pot present, we might not believe it is here. Such bewilderment indicates a deranged state of mind. For a deranged mind, the truth or falsity of knowledge acquired through the senses becomes a grave philosophical problem. *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 4.22.31 states:

When one deviates from his original [Kãñëa] consciousness, he loses the capacity to remember his previous position or recognize his present one.

When remembrance is lost, all knowledge acquired is based on a false foundation. When this occurs, learned scholars consider that the soul is lost.

In the period beginning with Descartes, when doubt became everything, philosophers came to question whether what we perceive really exists, and if it does exist, *where* it exists in the world, or in the mind. Here is an example of contemporary reasoning in this respect. Note how the problem of self-reference, seen to undermine the authority of *anumāna* in the introduction of this book, now undermines the authority of *pratyakñā*.

If you try to argue that there must be an external physical world, because you wouldn't see buildings, people, or stars unless there were things out there that reflected or shed light into your eyes and caused your visual experiences, the reply is obvious: how do you know *that*? It's just another claim about the external world and your relation to it, and it has to be based upon the evidence of your senses. *But you can rely on that specific evidence about how visual experiences are caused only if you can already rely in general on the contents of your mind to tell you about the external world. And that is exactly what has been called into question.* If you try to prove the reliability of your impressions by appealing to your impressions, you're arguing in a circle and won't get anywhere.\*

### The uncertain foundation of empirical knowledge

How do we know if and when what we perceive is reliable? How do we know if and when it is not? When we stand on a stretch of railroad that extends straight to the horizon, we *know* that the space between the tracks is always the same, even though we *see* the tracks gradually meet in the distance. We *know* that what we see in this case is just an illusion. How do we know that? Well, if I walk towards the horizon, I will *see* that the tracks are always the same distance apart. But here the problem of self-reference stops us in our tracks. It already established that our seeing is imperfect therefore we see the two tracks meeting in the distance. Which perception is real? Which perception is an illusion? How much of what we think we perceive is really an interpretation of the mind? How do I know that what you understand in your mind to be the color blue is the same as what I understand it to be? How do we know that everything we perceive is not just a hallucination? These are some of the many problems faced by the *pratyakñāvādés* as they strive to determine the truth through sense perception. Naive realism, that everything is simply the way it appears to be, does not give us a purchase on separating true perceptions from false ones. Experimental science is said to be empirical, in that it equates proven knowledge with that which is directly observed. Yet scientists are quick to argue that their observations are not naive. They do not accept any and all *pratyakñā* as valid knowledge. Now, the interesting point here is that in separating valid perceptions from invalid ones, scientists rely upon ipse dixit assumptions.

Thus perception, even when it is regulated by strict rules of observation and enhanced by instruments, is not actually the measure of proof in science. A so-called hardnosed realist who says, I accept as true only that which is proven by empirical science, is in the main accepting *assumptions that cannot be proven by empiricism*.<sup>\*</sup> To separate valid perceptions from invalid ones, scientists first must assume that the world can be known through the senses. They must also assume that the world is objectively real. These assumptions do not get along well with one other. To say the world is objectively real is to say it is independent of and indifferent to sense perception. Then what in the world can we know? We can know only the effects of the world upon our senses, not the world itself. The problem for empiricists, notes philosopher D.W. Hamlyn, is

... that if we perceive only the effects of physical objects upon us we are not in the position to have any direct knowledge of those physical objects. We are not therefore in the position to verify any statement about the causation of our perceptions, and in consequence physical objects as such are what Immanuel Kant called things in themselves, forever unknowable and outside our experience.<sup>\*</sup>

The things in themselves are actually Kāñēa and His energies, the *tattvas*. But, as noted before, when the living entity is not in his original state of Kāñēa consciousness, he is restricted to perceiving only impressions of those *tattvas*. Since the cause of the impressions remains unknown, sense perception is ever out of touch with reality. Thus it has no self-evident authority. Yet scientists, following the assumption that the world can be known through the senses, continue to strive for direct knowledge of reality through perception. Faith in the empirical method moved a number of prominent philosophers of science to abandon causal theories of perception in favor of a theory known as phenomenalism.

## Phenomenalism

The phenomenal theory of perception argues that all knowledge about reality is drawn from sense data, but no knowledge about sense data can be drawn from reality hence there is no deep reality beyond sense data that causes perception. This serves empiricism well. But it also serves scepticism well.<sup>\*</sup> Radical sceptics, like the solipsists, argue that our perception of reality might just as well be a dream. If there is no reality beyond sense data, then existence is wholly a state of mind. Objective knowledge is impossible. All I can know is the contents of my mind; there is no way to determine beyond my mental impressions whether what I know is true or false. Empiricists reply that the comparison of our knowledge of sense data to a dream isn't appropriate, because we don't ever wake up into a reality beyond the senses. Reality is immediately physical. We need not submit to an occult cause beyond physical matter, since the brain of each one of us, as anatomist J.Z. Young argues, literally creates his or her own world.<sup>\*</sup> All that we know depends on the physical brain; the

mind is just an epiphenomenon of neurochemistry. Because sense perception is generated by the measurable flow of neural impulses, it is objectively real. A sceptic might retort that matter is the mode of being that the world appears to have, when observed by a mind.\* The human brain, that gray lump seen within the skull, is simply a mental image labeled *physical matter* by our minds! There is no proof that the brain, or anything we perceive, *is* matter. After all, scientists who take the empirical method to its uttermost limit themselves conclude that the universe is more like a great thought than a great machine.\* Empiricism and scepticism are mirror images of one another: identical, yet reversed. Arguments back and forth of sense data is mental, no, it is physical, will never demonstrate the final validity of either of these viewpoints over the other, since both sides accept that imperfect sense data constitutes all we can know. Because it is imperfect, sense data cannot be *veda*, or certain knowledge. The bottom line is this: if we rely only upon perception, we can never be sure if what we know is true. Philosophical author Bryan Magee writes:

That the whole of science, of all things, should rest on foundations whose validity is impossible to demonstrate has been found uniquely embarrassing. It has turned many empirical philosophers into sceptics, or irrationalists, or mystics. Some it has led to religion.\*

What Magee is saying here is that the foundation of empiricism is a belief, not the objective truth. We should try to understand this carefully. Belief is defined in philosophy as a state of mind that is appropriate to truth.\* A state of mind is subjective. The objective confirmation of belief is truth. Now, if the claim of empiricism, sense data is knowledge, was a truth, empiricists would be able to demonstrate objectively that there is nothing to be known beyond sense data. But the very term empiricism (coming from the Greek *empeira*, experience) means that sense experience is the limit of empirical knowledge. Confined by their method within this limit, empiricists have no means of knowing whether or not there is something beyond the experience of the senses. Therefore the claim, sense data is knowledge, is nothing more than a belief. What empiricists *ought* to understand from this state of affairs is that

... you have to accept that your senses are imperfect. So you, by speculation, cannot have perfect knowledge. This is axiomatic truth.\*

### **The problem of reflexivity**

The truth is, then, that *pratyakñavādés* are in ignorance.\* They can only truthfully speak of what they *believe* they perceive and thus what they *believe* they know. They are not in any position to be judgemental about other beliefs for instance, the belief in God and the survival of the soul beyond death. Yet perplexingly, famous empiricists are wont to publicly declare, as did A.J. Ayer in an address at London's Conway Hall, that the deity does not exist and there is no world to come.\* In this connection, a term that crops up in recent philosophical writings is

reflexivity. It comes from the Latin *reflectare*, to bend back. To reflexively criticize an opponent means that the critic's argument bends back to refute his own position:

Sawing off the branch one is sitting on is not generally regarded as good practice in human life, and such damaging reflexivity must always be seen as a warning that something is going wrong with our reasoning.\*

For an empiricist to argue that God and the soul exist only as subjective beliefs is reflexive, for the empiricist is sunk in his own subjective belief that sense data is knowledge. Reflexivity rears its head whenever someone who believes that sense data is all we can know won't admit his belief is not knowledge. For example, how can the sceptic who says We can't know the truth know that his statement is the truth? In recent times, an attempt by *pratyakñavādés* to deal with the problem of reflexivity has resulted in statements like this:

At no stage are we able to prove that what we now know is true, and it is always possible that it will turn out to be false. Indeed, it is an elementary fact about the intellectual history of mankind that most of what has been known at one time or another has eventually turned out to be not the case. So it is a profound mistake to try to do what scientists and philosophers have almost always tried to do, namely prove the truth of a theory, or justify our belief in a theory, since this is to attempt the logically impossible.\*

That sums up the view of the philosopher Karl Popper (1902-1994), who argued that science cannot verify anything. It is only able to falsify, to disprove claims of knowledge. A truly scientific statement is one that gives a high degree of information and is subjectable to rigorous attempts to disprove it. As long as it passes the tests, it may be called knowledge, although it can never be absolutely true. Sooner or later, as testing methods advance, the statement will be proved false. Now, science cannot test a believer's claim that God exists. Therefore science will never prove that God is false. But neither will a believer be able to prove that God is true, for according to Popper there is no way to prove *any* truth. So while God may exist in some way, He does not exist scientifically, hence science need not be bothered. The strategy of ignoring God statements and other dogmas as nonscience, instead of attacking them as nonsense, spares science from reflexively becoming a dogma itself. At least, that was Popper's hope. There is one problem, though. If Popper's theory is checked against his definition of scientific knowledge, it must be deemed unscientific. Falsifiability fails as science because of the very paradox of self-reference it was supposed to be immune to. There is no way the theory of falsifiability can test itself!

## The correspondence theory of truth

We've been looking at how empirical philosophy (sense data is knowledge) is really just a belief, and how that spells trouble for material science. Empiricism is inseparable from experimental science. Yet because of it, science can never know

what is true. But wait: empiricists do put forward a definition of truth. Interestingly enough, it is not a new idea; in fact, there is an ancient Sanskrit term for it: *artha-sārūpya* or *viñaya-sārūpya*, the structural resemblance between a verbal proposition and its factual object. The term used by recent empiricists is *the correspondence theory of truth*. This theory argues that truth is to be had when language corresponds to the observable world. Is such correspondence possible? Shortly we shall see why it is not. But even if it was, it would be vexed by paradox. Language that exactly corresponds to perception would report only sense data. How do we know that sense data is the truth? To rephrase the question, how do we know that what the world *seems* to us to be, is what the world really is? We won't find the answer in a report on what the world seems to us to be. And a report that tells us with complete certainty that there is no truth beyond what the world seems to us to be is a report about what is outside the range of our senses. Such a report cannot be empirically true, for it does not correspond to perception. There are no perceptions beyond *pratyakñā* to verify such a report as certain. An empirical argument ought to conform to sense perception. The correspondence theory doesn't. It conforms to other theories of what language is, what meaning is, and what the nature of the world is. And *these* theories, in turn, depend upon the power and influence of theoreticians, not on sense perception. Now, to be fair, science assumes from the start that the world is rational (i.e. it can be comprehended by the mind). I am not suggesting that because science is empirical, it has no valid place for theoreticians. But at the end of the day, only a theory that is shown to correspond to sense data deserves to be called scientific so we are led to believe. An example of a theory of the nature of the world is Einstein's theory of relativity. Einstein is probably the greatest name in modern science. His relativity theory is extremely influential. A scientific report that defies Einstein's theory will likely not be accepted today. Yet relativity does *not* correspond to the readily observable world. It argues that there is nothing in the universe that is not always moving in relation to other things. In contrast to this, every day we observe things that are fixed and motionless. But that's just your naive experience, someone might reply. Scientists observe the world to a greater depth than we do. They tell us that all matter is constantly moving in ways most folks miss. Well, then correspondence is out of reach of the senses of most of us. We'll just have to make do with following scientific authority. But does that authority have substance? Let us briefly review the way scientists themselves validated Einstein's theory. Special relativity predicts that the velocity of light is always the same, whether light emanates from a source moving towards the observer or from a source moving away. General relativity predicts that gravitation bends light. Two historical experiments, so the textbooks tell us, demonstrated the accuracy of these key predictions of Einstein's theory. These were the Michelson-Morley measurement of the speed of light in 1887, and the measurement of the bending of starlight near the edge of the solar disk by A.S. Eddington during the total eclipse of the sun in 1919. At the time of the latter experiment, Eddington was a world-famous fellow of Great Britain's Royal Astronomical Society, while Einstein was practically unknown outside of a small circle of theoreticians. The fame Eddington lent to Einstein's predictions had immediate impact. LIGHTS ALL ASKEW IN THE HEAVENS, a *New York Times* headline trumpeted on November 10, 1919: MEN OF SCIENCE MORE OR LESS AGOG. Einstein was quoted as saying not more than twelve people on earth could understand his theory. The names Einstein and relativity were

suddenly on everyone's lips and the word reality just as suddenly took on a new meaning as millions of people discarded overnight the Newtonian view of the universe they'd learned in school ... one more sentimental memory of a world the Great War of 1914-18 turned upside-down. Western society of 1919 was ready for a total redefinition of existence, and here it was, Einstein's theory: verified not by correspondence to observation, but by the mystical manipulations of *māyā*. Careful study of the findings of the Michelson-Morley and Eddington experiments show they did not factually support relativity at all.\* What they really show is that Einstein's theory corresponds not to the observable world, but to Einstein's imagination. He himself declared that theory cannot be fabricated out of observation, but that it can only be invented.\* In practice, then, correspondence between statement and observation is not the golden rule of modern science.

In the real world, the process of scientific discovery is less like a carefully controlled experiment and more like a pantomime of coincidence, accident and adversity. Whatever they may profess outwardly, many scientists construct theories, models, ideas, speculations, that are way ahead of any data they may have, and then set about looking for evidence that might support the theory.\*

### Tacit and explicit knowledge

The correspondence theory is unrealistic in another way, as explained by the philosopher Friedrich Waismann:

If I had to describe [this] right hand of mine, which I am now holding up, I may say different things of it: I may state its size, its shape, its color, its tissue, the chemical compound of its bones, its cells, and perhaps add some more particulars; but, however far I go, I shall never reach a point where my description will be completed: logically speaking, it is always possible to extend the description by adding some detail or other.\*

In his book *The Tacit Dimension*, scientist Michael Polanyi writes that perception has inexhaustible profundity containing boundless undisclosed, perhaps yet unthinkable, experiences.\* In other words, we always perceive more than we can tell. Polanyi argues that most of what we know in life is *tacit* as opposed to *explicit*: it cannot be captured in words or even in symbols. He gives piano playing as one of several examples. It would be nearly impossible for someone to learn to play well this instrument only from a verbal description, or even from a combination of words and pictures. Just as the experience of a piano concert only partially corresponds to the words describing it, so Polanyi holds that all of experience, even the scientific experience, is more tacit than explicit. Learning science is mostly learning an activity that is too multifarious to make wholly explicit in words. Explicit knowledge follows tacit knowledge the way a map follows a terrain. A map helps us orient ourselves to the terrain, but by no means corresponds to the terrain in fullness of experience.

## Corresponding to what?

Even if we settle for limited correspondence between a statement and observed data, that still does not mean the truth I derive from the statement is the same as yours. There is an old Indian saying that a playboy, an ascetic and a carrion dog each sees one thing, a woman, in three different ways: as an object of pleasure, a lump of matter, and a meal. If truth is correspondence, then to whose truth does the sentence, Here is a woman, correspond? Advocates for a strictly scientific language would say the word woman should be defined ostensively. This is done by pointing at a scientifically-verified example of a human female while a scientist's voice intones, Woman. Ostensive definition, so it is hoped, fixes the word once and for all to an unambiguous object. In *The Philosophies of Science*, Rom Harr comments:

A little reflection on this theory shows how unsatisfactory it is. Of course pointing to samples does play a part in the learning of words, but what part exactly? It cannot be the whole part, since wherever a finger points there are many qualities, relations, individuals, and materials, any one of which might be what was sought.\*

A playboy, ascetic and a carrion dog, sitting in on the ostensive definition of woman, would each focus on particular qualities, relations and materials of the defined object. Thus each would continue to understand the word woman and its meaning in different ways. The correspondence theory can't account for a statement like I have a pain in my arm. Although it is understood by everyone, the word pain corresponds to no empirically determinable thing in the world. Pain is subjective. It does not avail itself to scientific observation. Even if the arm is connected to an instrument that detects a nervous reaction whenever the patient feels pain, we would not recognize a printout of that instrument's readings as corresponding to the word pain. Some empiricists have therefore issued a call to banish the word pain as we know it from science.\* But will they also banish the word electron? The word electron corresponds to no observed thing. In the course of explaining to us the results of a cloud chamber experiment, a scientist might say, Here we can see an electron. But all we really see is a streak of condensation within the chamber. As little as the word pain corresponds to the readings of an instrument, so little does the word electron correspond to a streak of condensation. Yet for some empiricists, pain is not a scientific word, while electron is. It is not surprising, then, that scientific definitions of words have come to be seen as just one of many language games, a term coined by Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951). Language games are not able to represent a final truth. They represent only what goes on in various fields within human society. Businessmen play their language games, poets play theirs, musicians theirs, priests theirs, scientists theirs, and so on. Truth in language depends upon agreement between the players of the games, not the correspondence of statements with things outside of language. Wittgenstein argued that the attempt of scientists to establish their language game as paramount over others is pretentious, because the scientists, like everybody else, can only observe how the world looks. Observing the world does not come to grips with the real problem of life, so no observer, scientific



or otherwise, can make a special claim on truth. As Wittgenstein pointed out in his aphorisms, the real problem of life is not what the world looks like, but why it exists:

We feel that even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched.

We find certain things about seeing puzzling, because we do not find the whole business of seeing puzzling enough.

The sense of the world must lie outside the world.

Wittgenstein's philosophy of language is very influential, though it has its own inconsistencies, as we shall see in Chapter Three. But to Wittgenstein's credit, the spread of his ideas considerably undermined belief in empirical science as a self-evident means to truth. And his positing Why does the world exist? as the real question of knowledge, instead of What exists in the world?, agrees very well with the Vedic understanding.

## Perception and the mind

Strict empiricists think that perception is most accurate when the influence of the mind on the senses is kept to a minimum. One should carefully observe and not permit preconceived ideas to interfere with objectivity. Ridiculing this notion in *Conjectures and Refutations*, Karl Popper tells of a lecture he gave in which he asked his students to carefully observe, then write down what they observe. The students naturally wanted to know *what* they should observe. In other words, they asked for an idea to guide their observation. The idea, in turn, has to be fixed to a perception: Watch what I do, or Watch what happens in the window. Even the empirical truth that reality is limited to what our senses can perceive is really just an idea fixed to perception. Vaiñëava Vedānta admits two kinds of *pratyakñābāhya* (external) and *antara* (internal). *Bāhya-pratyakñā* is the contact of the bodily sense organs with external objects. But sense objects must become objects of the mind for us to comprehend them. The mind, in the words of Çréla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvaté Öhäkura, is the telegraphic center of the senses.\* From that center, the outflow of mental energy communicates with the senses, the information-gathering outposts of the body. When stimulated by contact with their objects, the senses transmit subtle signals to the common sense, the mind. Mental consciousness then reads this sense data as sound, touch, form, taste and smell. The mind's reading of sense data is *antara-pratyakñā*. Thus the boundaries of sense perception define the egoistic field (or, to put it another way, the claimed territory) of mental functions (*mānaso-vātti*).\* By its attachment to sense data, the mind becomes agitated. Since egoistic attachment is produced from the *tamo-guëa* (mode of ignorance), it is to be understood that this agitation is a result of the mind's *lack of knowledge* about sense perception especially, its lack of knowledge how sound, touch and the rest *may be enjoyed without problems*. In its agitated state, the mind manufactures many ideas

to solve problems encountered in the field of sense perception. This is called *mano-dharma*, imagination. Even the scientists themselves admit their method is a combination of the functions of the senses with imagination.\* The result material knowledge then, is imaginary. To get a clearer picture of this, we may consider a line spoken by Prahlaḍa Mahārāja in *Ṣrēmad-Bhāgavatam* 7.5.31: *durāçayā ye bahir- artha-māninaù*. *Dur* means difficult, and *āçaya* is a person's intention. Thus *durāçaya* refers to a contradictory intention, one that lands us in difficulty. What intention of life does Prahlaḍa consider contradictory? The enjoyment of the material world, in which external sense objects (*bahiù*) are the gain (*artha*). The contradiction here is that our claiming possession of sense objects does not make us the enjoyers of the material world, because we don't know how to enjoy matter without suffering. In our efforts to overcome this contradiction, we let the imagination (*mānina*) do what it will with sense objects. An example of that type of imagination is the empirical measurement of material nature. Material nature is *mahat*, immeasurably great. But the intention of the scientist is to gain control over nature. As a means to limit nature, to render it manipulable, measurement is central to the empirical method. It is a systematic attempt to define nature in terms of human duality: big/small, hot/cold, heavy/light, bright/dark, fast/slow, positive/negative, successful/unsuccessful. Such measurements are analogies of mind imposed upon matter. When ridden home, they prove to be *spectral*, in both senses of the word. Instead of representing the reality of things in themselves, they represent the spectra (ranges) of human sensations. And we resort to them as primitives resort to good and evil specters (ghosts), to make sense of the unknown. For instance, physicists measure subatomic quantum objects as either waves or as particles. Whether an object appears to be a wave or a particle depends in some uncertain way upon the observer. Now, apart from the wave-particle duality in the scientist's mind, what are quantum objects really? At present, at least nine schools of thought are in disagreement. The debate about the existence of quantum objects is not unlike the debate about the existence of ghosts. According to astrophysicist John Gribben:

It is hard to see quantum physics as anything but analogy the wave- particle duality being the classic example, where we struggle to explain something we do not understand.\*

Empirical measurement is a human enterprise and to err is human. The idea that the measurements of science constitute well-verified facts is sheer imagination.\* *Māyā*, the illusory aspect of material nature (*prakāṣti*), entices our imagination by apparently confirming and rewarding it. In 1919, Albert Einstein rose to world fame when Eddington's measurements seemingly confirmed the theory of relativity. Since then, by *māyā's* grace, scientists have used the theory to their great profit. Today, relativity seems to be a well-verified fact. But this is just one side of the story. The other side is that Einstein and Eddington are dead and buried, overcome by the nature they attempted to measure and explain. Where they might be now is unknown even to their most devoted followers. And, in time, the theory of relativity will also pass away. It will be replaced by a new theory that *māyā* will confirm, reward, and then drop by the wayside of history. The passage of time turns the cycle of duality; thus knowledge comes to us followed by ignorance, happiness comes

followed by distress, heat comes followed by cold, honor comes followed by dishonor, and so on. The soul who achieves great material success in this life is sure to be landed by time in the midst of proportionate failure in the future. Therefore *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 4.29.2b concludes:

Everything happening within time, which consists of past, present and future, is merely a dream. That is the secret understanding in all Vedic literature.

Now, this dream is not like that proposed by the sceptics who say the world is entirely subjective, existing only within the human mind. Our senses do connect with a substance that has a factual existence external to us. The dream of everything happening in time refers to the transitory nature of our impressions of that substance. The dreams we have in sleep are *antara-pratyakñä* impressions of subtle elements. Though subtle, they appear as solid as our wakeful impressions of gross elements. We understand the dream-quality of our sleeping perceptions not by *how they look* but *how they vanish in time*. And our wakeful perceptions also vanish in time. The moment of death is very like the moment a dream breaks. It is therefore sheer imagination to hold that either waking or sleeping perceptions are ever-reliable concrete facts. *Mäyäs* reward of our imagination with profit, adoration and distinction intoxicates the mind with pride and attachment. Kåñëa does not intend for His parts and parcels to be immersed deeper and deeper in such illusion. Time, Kåñëa's *käla-tattva*, breaks pride and attachment by force. Time therefore represents Kåñëa's intention. As soon as the living entity gives up his wrong intention and surrenders to Kåñëa, his intention becomes the Lord's intention. Immediately his perception and knowledge are freed from the cycle of time. But one who remains *duräçaya* (wrongly-intended) again and again takes shelter of imagination. In history, there were famous empiricists who, stubbornly intending to enjoy their senses forever, imagined death could be conquered through science. There were famous sceptics who, imagining death to be a creation of the mind, stubbornly intended to surpass it by mentally negating its reality. Both positions, in time, proved hopeless.

The speculative argument of philosophers, This world is real, No, it is not real, is based upon incomplete knowledge of the Supreme Soul and is simply aimed at understanding material dualities. Although such argument is useless, persons who have turned their attention away from Me, their own true Self, are unable to give it up. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.22.34)

### **Making Vedic sense of sense perception**

In conclusion, four facts about *pratyakñä* will be summarized. The first is that it is generated from ignorance. Therefore knowledge limited to sense perception is not knowledge at all. The circular arguments of the empiricists and sceptics demonstrate that on the level of sense perception, mind and matter cannot be distinguished. The second fact is that perception indicates the presence of an objective reality. But we are unable to directly connect with that reality through *pratyakñä*. That is because of

the third fact: our senses are defective. On Vedic authority, then, we should simply accept that perception evinces that something is really out there. If we doubt the Vedic causal explanation of *pratyakñā*, it is only because, being enamored with our senses, we are stubbornly blind to their imperfections. The fourth fact about sense perception is that everything we perceive has a beginning. The evidence is so strong that it is only reasonable to accept it.

Anything you see, material, it has got a date of birth. Who can deny it? Can you present anything material which has no beginning? Everything has got beginning. So how you can say this material world has no beginning? This is nonsense. Therefore *hetumadbhir viniçcitaiù*. *Hetu* means with reason, not like dogmatic obstinacy. You must have the beginning.\*

Through reason, the occult beginnings of natural phenomena can be glimpsed. When we were little children, our eyes were not trained in telling time. We saw a clock as a manifestation of metal, plastic and glass. What it meant was occult, since the reason for the clock's existence was unknown to our senses. But after being trained in thinking reasonably in knowing what a clock is for we could see time (one of the *tattvas*) whenever we looked at one. Then clocks made sense. Similarly, by the method of Vedic knowledge, consciousness is released from the thrall of the false ego, whereby the qualities of *prakñti* manifest in consciousness from occult beginnings. Liberated consciousness connects with the supreme *tattva*, the Personality of Godhead, Çré Kññëa, from whom everything time, nature, activity and life has its beginning. This consciousness is called Kññëa consciousness. It is the real sense behind the manifest qualities of material nature.

## Chapter Two: Reason (Anumāna)

In a quotation near the end of the last chapter, Çréla Prabhupāda declared it *reasonable* that there is a beginning to all we perceive. Since it is the very cause of sense objects, senses and sensations, that beginning lies outside *pratyakñā*. Where the senses fail to find the beginning, the mind takes over, for the mind is superior: *indriyebhyaù paraà manau*, as *Bhagavad-gétā* 3.42 states. The mind's attempt to know what is beyond the reach of sense perception is called *anumāna*, reasoning. For example, while writing these words, I am sitting in a bamboo hut within an *āçrama* school in Bengal, India. Hearing a strange noise outside, I think it reasonable that a student at play is the cause of this sound.

## Logic

Reasonable thinking is distinguished from deranged thinking by the factor we call logic. The word logic is defined in the dictionary as the study of the rules of exact reasoning, of the forms of sound or valid thought patterns. Its Greek ancestor, *logos*, had three aspects of meaning: structured thought, structured speech and the structured appearance of the world.\* Thus we think of logic as 1) systematic thought 2) expressed in language 3) that accounts for what we know in this world. But is reality *itself* objectively logical? At every moment, the telegraphic center of the mind is overloaded with data from the senses. As the mind deciphers this data, logical structures manifest within and outside us. Yet how do we know these structures are not mere assemblages of our imagination that have no foundation in fact? After all, different minds interpret the data differently, as did the playboy, ascetic and carrion dog. Moreover, the sheer quantity and profundity of tacit sense data challenges the mind's capacity to render it logically explicit. Can we ever fully understand what it all means? Does it even have a meaning? Recall again the problem of the occult quality of our experience of the universe. The cause of that experience does not make sense (make it to the senses). Therefore, *why* we see the universe in a structured way, *why* we describe it in words, *why* we even think rationally about it, remains occult, outside our understanding. So how can we say for sure that existence is logical? Here begins a problem of philosophy which, as expressed by a modern thinker, is

... how are we to distinguish the objective from the merely subjective, if we are not allowed to say what objective truth represents?\*

Let's try to get a clearer idea of this problem. Suppose I am sitting in my hut with a friend. I hear a strange noise outside and ask him, What is that? I wonder, he replies. Why, it really sounds like there's an ostrich out there. But how could it be? I ask. The ostrich lives in Africa, not India. True. Well, one possibility is that an African ostrich escaped from the Calcutta zoo and wandered up this way. Not very likely, but possible. It's also possible there's a boy out there who's become expert in making ostrich sounds. But then, how could a local boy learn to do that when there are no ostriches native to India? The whole thing is very puzzling. Its strangeness leads me to consider yet another possibility. What's that? I just might be sleeping now. This all could be a dream. Oh come now. You look wide awake to me. Besides, I can hear the sound too. This is not a dream. That I look awake, or that you can hear the sound too, doesn't prove a thing. Both of us might be wide awake and talking in my dream. I could be dreaming you're telling me I'm not dreaming. Get serious. The sound just *has* to be some boy outside having fun with us by imitating an ostrich. I'll go have a look. You can't go outside. I won't let you. If it is an ostrich, that bird has a nasty kick. But if you don't allow me to go out, how will we say what that noise represents? Look, it might represent an ostrich, a boy, or nothing but a dream. We can't say for sure. After all, what is certain in this life? Life itself could be a grand hallucination. The friend is my mind, the walls are the limits of my senses, and the noise is sense data. The mind moves through three modes of thought in an attempt to logically uncover the cause of the sound. These modes are *reflective*, *creative* and *critical* thinking. In the first, the mind lays out the scope of the problem apparently something outside is making a sound like that of an ostrich. In the second, the mind

creates a number of possible causes for the sound an ostrich, a boy or a dream. In the third, the mind critically assesses these possibilities in terms of evidence and logic. But critical thinking leaves us ever-uncertain about what the cause of the sound really is, because we are not allowed to cross beyond the limits of the senses to see what that sound objectively represents. Extreme critical thinking denies us the right to say that there is anything beyond the three modes of thought. This leads to skepticism the suspicion that my experience of the sound, the hut, the whole universe, even my very person, could just be a dream. By what kind of evidence and logic can the critical mind know that the universe exists as an objective fact?

### Objective versus subjective logic

Greek philosophers of old answered that question with the doctrine of *Igos spermatiks*, the life-giving word. They believed that logic *can* prove the objective reality of our world because it is sown throughout the universe in seeds of reason. Unless it is fertilized by these seeds (*spermatiko*), passive matter is bereft of objective shape and activity. The seeds are transmitted by *Igos*, a divine word that expresses the logical why of everything. For more clarity, we may turn to Vedic testimony. At first material nature (*prakāti*) was inert and unconscious. A glance by the original father, Lord Kāñēa, impregnated her with countless seeds of spiritual sparks, as Çréla Prabhupāda called them. They, the *jévas*, appeared from her womb in structured forms of mind and matter.\* We are seeds of intelligent life. Our mother, *prakāti*, provided each of her children with senses and a mind, through which the innate intelligence of the soul spread forth into the universe. But because we spiritual sparks are so tiny, our comprehension of the structure of the universe is very limited. Subjectively, sense data comes to us from an occult source. We do not know if it is objectively real, and we cannot say with any certainty what it represents. But the Vedic word allows us to say what sense data represents. That is because Kāñēa is the source of the Veda. For Him, there is *no gap to be bridged* between subjective impressions and the objective universe. How so? The objective universe exists only by His divine perception. He impregnated *prakāti* with the souls and brought forth the complete structure of the universe just by His glance. The gap between perception and reality is not His problem. It is *ours*. We try to bridge that gap with the help of our incapable friend, the mind. But since Kāñēa's perception is the factual standard of reality, there can be no better bridge than Kāñēa's reason in the form of *çabda-brahma*, Vedic sound. In *Bhagavad-gétā* 14.27, Kāñēa says, *brahmaëo hi pratiñöhāham*, that He is the basis of Brahman, the effulgent substance out of which this and many other universes appear (see also *Brahma-saàhitā* 5.40: *yasya prabhā prabhavato jagad-aëòà-koöi*). And *Åg-veda* 10.114.8 states, *yāvad brahma viñöhitaà tävaté vākas* much as Brahman is extended, so much is Vāc. *Vāc* literally means voice. The voice or sound of Brahman is the Veda, which testifies to the logic of creation in full detail. Çréla Prabhupāda used the example of his dictaphone to make this point clear:

Of course, the manufacture of the dictaphone is wholly within the energy of Kåñëa. All the parts of the instrument, including the electronic functions, are made from different combinations and interactions of the five basic types of material energy namely, *bhümi, jala, agni, väyu* and *äkäça*. The inventor used his brain to make this complicated machine, and his brain, as well as the ingredients, were supplied by Kåñëa. According to the statement of Kåñëa, *mat-sthäni sarva-bhütäni*: Everything is depending on My energy.\*

The other day I explained, Veda means, just like this dictaphone machine is manufactured, along with [it] one literature is also compiled. So customers, they are given the delivery of the machine as well as the literature how to use it. That is the Vedas. Therefore Kåñëa says that *vedänta-kåd*, I am the compiler of the Vedas. Because if He does not give the literature, then how will [we] use the machine. The manufacturer of the machine, he knows how to use it, what for it is, how to manipulate it.\*

## Forms of reason

Objective reason, then, is to follow the authorized Vedic user's manual in all fields of thought and action. This form of reason is called *deduction*. Çréla Prabhupäda explained deduction as follows:

Our knowledge is from the deductive process. Kåñëa said, This is this. We accept. That is our movement, Kåñëa consciousness. We may be imperfect, but Kåñëa is perfect. Therefore, whatever Kåñëa says, if we accept it and if we... Not accept blindly, but you can employ your logic and argument and try to understand.\*

To illustrate, suppose Bhaktividyä-pürëa Mahäräja, the *sannyäse* in charge of the *äçrama* school, drops by my hut for a visit. I can ask him what the ostrich sound outside represents. He is the authority over the school, and having just entered my hut, he knows exactly what is going on out there. Even though I can't see the cause of the sound myself, I can count fully on his explanation as valid proof of the cause of the sound. That does not make my acceptance of his testimony blind, because Bhaktividyä-pürëa Mahäräja is not blind. As many details as I may reasonably want (e.g. which boy is making the sound and why), Mahäräja is able to provide. In a similar way, Vedic deduction relies upon knowledge that is authoritative and indubitable. Brahmä, the first Vedic sage of the universe, received that knowledge from the Supreme Personality of Godhead at the dawn of creation. And after that, whenever the Vedic teachings were misinterpreted, the Lord appeared again and again (*sambhavämi yuge yuge*) to objectively re-establish the correct understanding. Let us briefly look at three features of Vedic deduction. 1) It reasons *from the cause*. Çréla Prabhupäda's reasoning of the dictaphone rests upon the logic of an original cause of everything, *mat-sthäni sarva-bhütäni*. 2) It reasons *to the cause*, arguing that there is no goal to be known except the cause of everything. Different scriptures

seem to teach different goals: *dharma* (social and religious duties), *artha* (economic development), *kāma* (sensual pleasure) and *mokṣa* (liberation from these three goals). This is confusing, and confusion leads to wrong philosophies. Therefore the sage Vyāsa wrote *Vedānta-sūtra* and *Çrēmad-Bhāgavatam* to teach the ultimate logic of the Vedic scriptures. These books distinguish the *paramārtha*, the supreme goal of the Vedas, from the lesser four goals.\* The *paramārtha* and the original cause of everything are shown to be one and the same: *puruṅārtho 'taù çabdād iti bādarāyaēaù*.\* There is nothing to be sought in life except the self-existent cause of the four lesser goals. 3) Vedic deduction is *çāstramūlaka*, i.e. rooted in *çāstra*, the Vedic scriptures. As the logic of transcendence, it is not under the limitations of the mind and senses, as commonplace reasoning is. Commonplace (*laukika*) reasoning is called *induction*, the logic of *pratyakṣa*. We get a good model of induction from the method the police uses to investigate a crime. Let us say a millionaire was found murdered in his bed. The chief detective carefully gathers and examines every shred of *experientia* evidence. From this, he logically assembles a hypothesis (a provisional solution): the butler did it. That hypothesis is tested by rigorously applied *experimentum*. The butler is repeatedly interrogated, his background is checked, his movements are followed. If these tests confirm the butler is the murderer, the hypothesis becomes the reasonable solution. Thus the detective charges the butler with the crime. If the tests do not confirm it, the hypothesis is overturned and the butler is dropped from the list of suspects. The detective then assembles a new hypothesis from the evidence, and tests it. But as Çréla Prabhupāda noted:

Because we have got our senses with limited power, and there are so many defects in our conditioned stage, therefore inductive process is not always perfect.\*

Perfect induction is a standard term from Aristotelian logic. Induction is called perfect when *pratyakṣa* confirms that my hypothesis solves the problem. To give an example, suppose the notebook computer I am using to write this sentence suddenly quits. Not being skilled in the repair of these machines, I can only guess that the cause is a depleted battery. I test this hypothesis by reconnecting the computer to the mains supply. As soon as I do that, *pratyakṣa* confirms that the computer works again. My induction was perfect because the problem did not exceed my capability to solve it. If after trying all solutions within my capacity, the computer still won't work, it would be useless for me to speculate further on the cause of the problem. I should turn to deduction: the bringing in of an expert. We should note again that even when an inductive inference is considered perfect, it is *laukika*. Commonplace logic is ultimately *subjective logic*, because its proof or disproof depends on sense perception, which is inherently limited and imperfect. Even in perfect induction there is always a possibility of error. Thus sometimes innocent men are sent to prison, convicted for objective reasons that, many years later, are shown to be wrong, though logically consistent. Objective reasoning is purely *çāstramūlaka* reasoning. As we shall shortly see, deduction is also *laukika* if its authority is not Vedic.



## Circular reasoning

A charge may be leveled against deductive reason that it leads to a vicious circle (from the Latin *circulus vitiosus*). In other words, deduction assumes in the beginning what it sets out to prove in the end. Now, logic may be expressed in *sylogisms*, or reasonable step-by-step arguments. The Sanskrit equivalent of syllogism is *parārthānumāna*, reasoning for others' understanding. Below, so that we may clearly understand the problem of circular reasoning, is a *deductive syllogism* from a standard reference book.

- 1) Major premise: All the beans in this bag are white.
- 2) Minor premise: These beans are from this bag.
- 3) Conclusion: These beans are white.\*

To get a clearer picture, think of a man in a marketplace standing next to a large sack. All the beans in this bag are white, he tells you. He reaches in the bag and withdraws a closed fist. Holding it up, he says, These beans are from this bag. Then, opening his hand, he concludes, These beans are white. Even if the contents of the man's hand prove to be white beans, you may still question whether the bag really holds only white beans. He offers the handful of beans he took out of the bag as proof, but it could be that just the top portion of the bag contains white beans, while underneath are pebbles scooped up from someone's driveway. If the man insists, No, these beans in my hand mean the bag is full of white beans, you might reply it is only an *assumption* they do. His insistence that the handful of beans is evidence just brings you back to the question, What's really in that bag? This is what is meant by a vicious circle. Whether his major premise is true depends completely on whether this man's authority is infallible. If it is, then everything follows as a natural sequence, as when the major premise is rooted in *çāstra* and *guru*, and its goal is Viñëu, the source of everything. If instead the major premise is an ordinary man's fallible speculation, deduction becomes a caricature. How do we know whose authority is infallible? This question is answered in the introduction to this book: only Kāñëa's authority is absolutely certain. A teacher of deductive logic must impart Kāñëa's teachings to have any real authority of his own. If due to egoism he invents his own teaching, he becomes a misleader. Aristotle (384-322 BC), revered in Europe for many centuries as the foremost authority on deduction, taught that women have fewer teeth than men. He could not even be bothered to ask one of his two wives to open her mouth so he could count them. No wonder European philosophers, following Descartes, broke free of the vicious circle of the Greek tradition of *laukika* deduction.

## Reason, truth and speculation

Even if we have a teacher who does not mislead us, we may still be uneasy with deduction. Is the supreme truth, the cause and the goal of existence, just a

mechanical formula passed down a line of authority? How can we *realize* the explanatory power of Vedic deductive logic? Çréla Prabhupāda gave a simple, profound method. For example, when drinking water, the Vedic philosopher should reflect on Kāññēa's statement in the *Bhagavad-gētā* (7.8) that He is the pure taste of water. The philosopher then creatively refers to other scriptural texts that detail how the manifest quality of water, taste, is caused by Kāññēa; how He makes our perceptual knowledge possible; how He alone gives power to the senses to do their work. The Vedic philosopher may also critically compare and contrast non-Vedic theories of perception, finding them uncertain and insubstantial. He thus appreciates how it is perfectly reasonable that his experience of the taste of water is an experience of Kāññēa. And finally, Kāññēa personally reciprocates with this effort to know Him by granting the Vedic philosopher wisdom from within the heart. Çréla Prabhupāda termed this method of thought *philosophical speculation*. Philosophical speculation is different from *mental speculation*. In the former, *pratyakñña* is understood through *anumāna* in accordance with the explanation of the Vedic scriptures (*çāstra*) and the spiritual master (*guru*). Thus our sensory experiences and mental insights are philosophically linked to their cause and goal, Kāññēa. In the latter, *pratyakñña* is not understood in terms of an authorized explanation. Rather, the modes of *anumāna* (reflection, creation and criticism) are allowed to develop their own explanations in an undisciplined and haphazard way. The difference between the two kinds of speculation can be very subtle. In the history of Indian philosophy, the *nyāyēs* (logicians) claimed the Vedic sage Gautama as their *guru*. But they used reason to serve their egos instead of Viññēu, entangling themselves in the thorny branches of mundane wrangling and sophistry. Therefore *Manu-saàhitā* 2.11 resolutely condemns those who give up the true Vedic path for *nyāya*. A *nyāyé* might argue, When the *Bhagavad-gētā* says 'God is the taste of water,' it means nothing more than that the taste of water *is all God is*. Is God just water? I think not. Therefore to find Him I have to speculate beyond these limiting words of scripture. Mundane logicians, being too enamored by their own limited minds, cannot understand how the direction and goal of speculation remain always outside the range of their speculation. But this is nicely illustrated by the logic of *çākhā-candra-nyāya*: a teacher directed his student to look at the branches of a tree. The goal, however, was for the student to see the rising moon through the branches. The meaning is explained in *Çré Caitanya-caritāmāta, Madhya-lélā* 21.30:

*apāra aiçvarya kãññēeranāhika gaēana  
çākhā-candra-nyāye kari dig-daraçana*

No one can estimate the opulence of Kāññēa. That is unlimited. However, just as one sees the moon through the branches of a tree, I wish to give a little indication.

The shape of the branches (i.e. the form of the philosophical speculation) frames, but cannot hold fast, the moonlike truth of Kāññēa, the transcendental Lord. Tasting water and considering how that is an experience of Kāññēa is like looking at the branches of a tree and noticing the moon shining through them. The argument of the mundane logicians is as if to say the moon is a glowing ball stuck in the branches of that tree. The actual size of the lunar globe, however, dwarfs our imagination and completely transcends that tiny tree. Similarly, Kāññēa appears to us in the taste of

water, but at the same time, being always the Supreme Truth, He is infinitely more than anything we may perceive.

### The use and limits of formal reason

Çréla Prabhupāda's example of tasting Kāñëa in water fits a type of formal reason called *abduction*. Abduction is expressed in this syllogism:

- 1) Major premise: All the beans in this bag are white.
- 2) Minor premise: These beans are white.
- 3) Conclusion: These beans are from this bag.

To get a clearer picture, imagine you are putting a dry goods storeroom into order. The first thing you notice is a large sack in the corner marked white beans. A bit later you find a small tin on a shelf holding a few white beans. You conclude that the beans in the tin came from the bag. Here, the perceived quality (whiteness) of the minor term (the beans in the tin) gives force to the conclusion that the beans in the tin must have come from the bag marked white beans. But ordinarily, the formal limits of abductive logic cannot absolutely guarantee that conclusion. Just because we see the beans in the tin are white doesn't rule out the possibility that they came from somewhere else besides that bag. After all, it is unreasonable to think the bag is the source of all the white beans in the world. But, as Çréla Prabhupāda explained, when the same formal reasoning is directed by *guru* and *çāstra* with Viñëu as the goal, certainty is guaranteed Kāñëa is the pure taste of water; this water tastes pure; Kāñëa is the taste of this water. Certainty is guaranteed because Kāñëa is the Absolute Truth, the source of everything all water, all beans, all universes, and all living entities. This is the difference between *çāstramūlaka* and *laukika* logic. In comparison to deduction and abduction, an *inductive syllogism* is presented next:

- 1) Major premise: These beans are from this bag.
- 2) Minor premise: These beans are white.
- 3) Conclusion: All the beans in this bag are white.

To get a clearer picture, you are on your way to put another storeroom into order. As you open the door, a girl comes out with something cupped in her two hands. Seeing that you're about to do an inventory, she gestures with her head in the direction of a bag in the corner. These beans are from this bag, she says. Then, showing you what's in her hands, she explains, These beans are white. As the girl leaves, you wonder why she paused to tell you the beans she has are white. You glance over at the bag. Seeing it is unmarked, you ask yourself whether it is reasonable to assume this bag contains only white beans. Maybe it holds mixed colors white, red and black which the girl sorted through to get her handful of white ones. And that is why she let you know she took only white beans from the bag. You decide that you'll only be sure of the contents if you take a look inside. But suppose the bag is a metaphysical one, i.e. beyond human powers of inspection. Could anyone claim to really *know* that

all the beans in the bag are white because he saw the girl held a few in her hands?\*

Metaphysical induction is the form of mental speculation that mundane logicians use to hypothesize the cause of sense perception. Mundane logic holds mundane experience to be the final proof of the validity or non-validity of a metaphysical idea. But just as *pratyakñā* is always questionable, so too are the metaphysical ideas that are proved by *pratyakñā*. If a handful of beans proves the idea that all the beans in the unknown bag are white, then the taste of water proves the idea that Kñā is only water. But *çāstra* and *guru* do not direct us to worship mere water. To argue that it is logical that Kñā is only water is to argue *laukika* reasoning to be superior to *çāstramūlaka* reasoning.

## Logic and probability

Actually, mental speculation, or metaphysical induction, can't prove *any* metaphysical idea. It is only a gamble. It guesses, it does not prove, that all the beans in the metaphysical bean bag are white. But its proponents argue that when it is allied with experimental science, it can be a well-informed, highly logical method of gambling. Here is an example of what they mean. For many years before the age of space flight, scientists observed the moon through telescopes and saw mountains there. Now, the same half of the moon faces the earth at all times. So it was a gamble for scientists to assume there must also be mountains on the unseen opposite side. In the nineteen sixties a Russian satellite circled the moon and sent back pictures. Lunar mountains on the far side were confirmed, supposedly validating the logical predictive powers of science. Yet it was also once probable that the heavy layer of clouds around Venus indicated constant rainfall. And that, in turn, probably meant the planet was covered by an ocean. Later, space probes showed the surface to be exactly opposite a hellish desert. Despite the talk of probability, there was no logical imperative for the Venusian ocean. So what does probability mean, and where does it fit into logic? In mathematics, probability, or chance, is the numerical likelihood of some event happening. What might happen when a die is tossed? A die is a well-known thing: a small cube, each side of which is marked with an arrangement of from one to six dots. The law that governs the die is also well-known: a toss has a one in six probability of returning a particular number of dots. This sense of probability is considered logical and objective, in that it follows rules of calculation that no mathematician disputes. In ordinary speech, probability often has a *subjective* usage that does not conform to rules of calculation. Note, in the four examples that follow, how subjectivity colors the word probably when it is used

- 1) as a preliminary indication of intention I'll probably go to India this year, although it's not clear how I'll pay for it;
- 2) as a tentative prediction on the basis of incomplete evidence He probably won't come today, as he's two hours late;

3) as a cautious first evaluation that can be revised after a more careful study There are probably no grains in this preparation, but I'd have to ask the cook to make sure;

4) as a way of avoiding the admission of an unpalatable truth No worry, they were probably just joking when they said my singing was terrible.

Then there are appeals to probability that are wholly illegitimate. These misleadingly combine the two senses explained before (objective and subjective). A well-known illegitimate usage is called the gambler's fallacy. Let's suppose that after twelve tosses of the die, every number except three has turned up at least once. I might imagine that this proves each new toss of the die makes a three more probable. But this is just a fallacious combination of the mathematical sense of probability with the ordinary sense. In fact, with each new toss of the die, the odds that three will come up remain the same: one in six. The experts analyze the gambler's fallacy as a psychology of vacillation between objective and subjective probability.\* More blatant fallacies of probability are often seen in highly speculative sciences like cosmology. To get a clearer idea of what I mean, think of a black die with five faces covered by bits of masking tape, so that the dots are unseen. On the free face is one white, moonlike dot. The die is tossed and a masked face turns up. Three, I guess. When the tape is removed from the face, ten dots are discovered. It is now clear that the masked faces of this die are unknown in a unique way. There is no certainty how many dots might be found on any of the remaining masked faces. But let's go one step further imagine this die also increased its masked faces every time it was tossed! All talk of probability would be rendered completely illogical. So what does this example have to do with science? *Time* of November 20, 1995, ran a feature article on the high-resolution photographs taken by the Hubble Space Telescope. These photos lifted the tape from a number of facets of the cosmos, undermining so-called probable estimates about the way the universe came into being. As the magazine reported, cosmologists are scrambling to patch up their theories [and] to save the idea of the Big Bang. (p. 51) This suggests three points. The first is that knowledge of one side of the mysterious cosmic die does not make our guesses about unseen and unknown sides more certain. For example, the verification of mountains on the moon's back side does not lend validity to guesswork about other regions of the universe, nor does it insure that one day man will know everything there is to know about what the universe looks like and how it came into being. The second point is that cosmologists are clinging to a doctrinaire estimate about the origin of the universe despite growing uncertainty. The more facets of the universe they uncover, the less sure they are of how the universe began. How many more facets will be uncovered in the future? And when they are, what totally unexpected facts will be revealed? That no scientist can say. So to estimate that a Big Bang probably happened twelve billion years ago is meaningless, because the odds of the game are unknown. Cosmologists have mathematically dressed up what is no more than a first evaluation or a tentative prediction to look like a sure winner. But the Big Bang theory has no substance. The third point is that cosmologists have a hard time facing the simple fact that the Big Bang theory is just a subjective mental concoction. To say, even when the evidence goes against it, No worry, the Big Bang is still

probably right, will never do as logic. Yet the Big Bang remains a key feature of what physicists call the Standard Model of the universe.

## The deceptive universe

Metaphysical induction thrives on the belief the hope that the world is not essentially deceptive.\* Remember that the side of the moon visible from the earth did not deceive us about the side we couldn't see before the sixties. Presumably it follows that the whole universe will turn out to be more of what our senses tell us right now. This belief, unfortunately, is essentially self-deceptive. Inductive probability deals only with the physical appearance of things. Sometimes, as in the case of the far side of the moon, how a thing is supposed to appear is guessed correctly. Sometimes, as in the case of Venus, the guess is wrong. But at all times, whatever appears to our material senses remains deceptive because we are ignorant of the cause behind that appearance. Frankly, scientific induction puts humanity in the same epistemological boat as the animals. There are unknown laws at work behind how things look. Gambling with appearances as the animals do puts us at risk of falling afoul of these laws. The deer bets that the sweet sound of the hunter's horn means pleasure. Ignorance of the law behind that sound means death. The moth bets that the attractive flame means pleasure. Ignorance of the law behind that sight means death. The fish bets that the tasty bait means pleasure. Ignorance of the law behind that taste means death. Some two centuries ago, as the Industrial Revolution gathered momentum, scientists bet that Nature was ripe for the taking. Now, as we approach the beginning of the twenty-first century, it is clear that this gamble put humanity into grave peril. Yet scientists, like the moths that never learn not to fly into the fire, continue to push the odds in a high-stakes flirtation with disaster. As the physicists who built the first atom bomb prepared to test-fire it, they bet among themselves on the magnitude of the explosion. Some wagered it would ignite the earth's atmosphere and incinerate all of New Mexico or even all of the world.\*

## Why?

Conceiving ideas is comparable to conceiving offspring. As human beings, we are urged from deep within to search out the truth. Just as the reproductive urge compels us to have children, so the urge for the truth compels us to have ideas. But if the truth is one, the world has certainly become overpopulated with conflicting opinions of what it is. As the history of philosophy shows, the study of one opinion after another can come to no final conclusion. No matter how interesting a particular idea may seem, another idea will come along to challenge it. A mind crowded with incompatible opinions is a mind confused. To get to the root of philosophy, we need

to pursue just one question: *why* are human beings urged from within to find the truth and be rid of illusion? This question, *Why?*, forever separates deduction from induction. *Why* is essential to deduction. *Why* can never be understood inductively. This is because induction is a speculative leap from partial knowledge to the whole, and here's the rub the partial knowledge it starts with is sense data, and the guess about the whole is verifiable only by more sense data. As we learned in the previous chapter, sense data can only imperfectly tell us what is in the world, not why the world exists.

Induction is the familiar process by which we form generalizations. You see a raven. It's black. You see other ravens, and they're black too. Never do you see a raven that isn't black. It is inductive reasoning to conclude that all ravens are black. ... Induction is reasoning from circumstantial evidence or David Hume's matters of fact. It extrapolates from observations that are not understood on a deeper level. You don't know *why* all the ravens seen have to be black. Even after seeing 100,000 ravens, all black, the 100,001st just might be white. A white raven isn't inherently absurd, like a triangle with four sides. There is no logical necessity to an inductive conclusion. For this reason, induction has always seemed less legitimate than deduction.\*

There is no logical necessity, no reason why, to induction. This paradox has been called the skeleton in the closet of Western philosophy. And though the retort may be, But because of induction we now have photographs of the far side of the moon, that does not change the fact that sense perception cannot explain itself. Those photographs will never reveal the why behind sense perception. The method of inductive reasoning is restricted to the sense objects, the senses and the mind, which spring from the modes of the false ego. Hence it is impossible for induction to transcend the subjective ego and connect with the objective reality that is the cause of the sense objects, senses and mind. The false ego is induction's logical dead end. This is demonstrated in quantum physics, which comes to a point where the objects of perception (the material elements) become indistinguishable from the ego. Only bafflement, not the reason why, then remains. In *Are We Alone?*, physicist Paul Davies explains:

In classical physics the world is there, and the observer is here, and they're separated, in spite of the fact that we know there must be linkages via the senses and so on. What quantum physics says is that the observer is entangled with the observed reality in a very baffling manner. ... The observer is not a trivial detail. She, he or it may actually be essential to make sense of the notion of an external reality in a physical, not just a philosophical way.\*

And in *Other Worlds*, he plainly informs us of the logical end-consequence of quantum induction:

Taken to its extreme, this idea implies that the universe only achieves a concrete existence as a result of this perception it is created by its own inhabitants!\*

## The logic of ignorance

It is less than perspicacious to believe that mortal human beings, most of whom live for less than a hundred years, create by a glance the universe many billions of years old. But, at its extreme, this is where the logic of science ends up. True, not many scientists defend the notion that human beings are the cause of the universe. Yet still they defend inductive speculation as the *only way* to understand the world:

We use it [induction] because it is the only way of getting broadly applicable facts about the real world. ... Induction provides the fundamental facts from which we reason about the world.\*

Rom Harr gives an insight into a fundamental fact of particle physics, that since all electrons are not observed to be different, it is logical that they are exactly alike. He says this is

... very likely a consequence of our ignorance of their nature, and there is no reason to suppose that were we able to study electrons closely, they would not show identifiable characteristics that marked them off as individuals.\*

A guess about the nature of things unseen, like electrons, is hardly a substantial fundamental fact. It might be argued that it can be called a fundamental fact because there is no proof to the contrary. But this is a logical fallacy (called *argumentum ad ignorantium*, an argument from ignorance). Is it a fundamental fact that all Martians are green because there is no proof otherwise? All we are left with is the certainty that the fundamental facts of induction cannot be called truths.

We cannot identify science with truth, for we think that both Newton's and Einstein's theories belong to science, but they cannot both be true, and they may well both be false.\*

Reason fermented within sense perception distills no certain truth, because sense perception always raises further questions about itself. Inductive thinkers freely admit that there is no limit to speculative explanations of observations. Observations explained by one theory (for instance, Newton's) can be explained by a quite opposite theory (Einstein's). Speculation, scientists say, is the best estimate of the truth. But all that is certain about a best estimate is that it cannot be certain. Scientific theory and discovery often turn out to have less to do with logic and more to do with haphazard, capricious and even mystical states of mind.\* While I am not arguing that science is useless, much of it is indistinguishable from science fiction.

Whole areas of the Western scientific model come into this category: theories that seem as solid as rock and, indeed, are foundations of much of Western thinking, yet in reality are at best unsubstantiated and at worse no more than superstitions.\*



It is ironic, then, that a scientist's uncertain estimates are his source of professional pride. And that pride is the envy of other scientists, whose profession is to refute him and establish their own best estimates. Thus how can science reach a final conclusion, an ultimate truth, an end to all arguments? Its purpose is to lend the appearance of reasonability to a profession of competing egoists. The only why it finds, and the only reason for its own existence, is the ego itself.

Scientific knowledge is not some tested body of truths about how the world works but is the result of a competitive struggle for the ear of the community, waged by the protagonists of various competing points of view by whatever means comes to hand, including propaganda, the unscrupulous exercise of power, and skillful use of persuasive rhetoric.\*

## Buddhi, the faculty of discernment

In Vedic philosophy, there are two conceptions of ego, false (*ahaikāra*) and real (*ātmā*). Haphazard metaphysical speculations end in the false ego. The real ego, the soul, may be known through the disciplined use of intelligence, or *buddhi*. The Sanskrit dictionary translates *buddhi* as discernment, i.e. discrimination, or the correct perception of distinctions. It is similar to the Greek term *dinoia*, used by Plato and Aristotle, who laid the foundations of Western philosophy. By *dinoia* (discernment), factual knowledge (*nesis* or *epistme*) is to be distinguished from mere opinion (*doxa*). Unfortunately, because Western intellectualism is inductive, what factual knowledge might be is a matter of subjective opinion. One who practices the Vedic method is said to ascend to factual knowledge by experiencing the self as having no material affinities. *Buddhi*, guided by spiritual authority, yields that experience directly. *Vivekena tato vimuktiu*, a great spiritual master declared: Discernment frees the soul from illusion.\* Adept *yogés* discern their real, spiritual ego by the total cessation of *anumāna* (that is, by trance). Most people today will not be able to stop thought for more than a few seconds. But our non-material identity can be inferred by surrendering *anumāna* to *buddhi* as Çréla Prabhupāda directs in his purport to *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 2.2.35. One begins by reflecting upon his own existence. From here he can discern himself, the seer, as different from the parts of the body, which are seen. Next, one may reason that he depends upon nature for all his perceptions and actions. This means that all mental functions within the field of the senses are material. We are dissatisfied with this present state of affairs. Consciousness aspires to push beyond the limits of the imperfect knowledge of the material mind. While considering how to transcend the boundaries of the mind, we depend upon the intelligence which acts like a higher authority. If a person renounces the direction of the intelligence, he becomes deranged. *Buddhi* is offered us by the Supersoul, our inner friend and guide. Our good use of this grace makes possible the direct perception of the self as eternal spirit soul, beyond the gross body and subtle mind. *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 3.26.30 says *buddhi* has five functions: *sañçaya*, *viparyāsa*, *niçcaya*, *smāti* and *svāpa*. Of these, *niçcaya* (apprehension) and

*viparyāsa* (misapprehension) are the functions by which the soul is directly experienced. In the purport, Çréla Prabhupāda elaborates:

When one is able to analyze his actual position, the false identification with the body is detected. This is *viparyāsa*. When false identification is detected, then real identification can be understood. Real understanding is described here as *niścaya*, or proved experimental knowledge. This experimental knowledge can be achieved when one has understood the false knowledge. By experimental or proved knowledge, one can understand that he is not the body but spirit soul.

Thus one can experience the soul by proving to oneself that the self cannot reasonably be material. This process begins with *sañcaya* (doubt). I must first doubt I am the body before I can seriously seek the soul. Why would I doubt that I am the body? That doubt arises from *smṛti* (memory), another feature of *buddhi*.

The first lesson in spiritual life is that we are not these bodies, but eternal spirit souls. Once you were a child. Now you are a grown man. Where is your childhood body? That body does not exist, but you still exist because you are eternal. The circumstantial body has changed, but you have not changed. This is the proof of eternity. You remember that you did certain things yesterday and certain things today, but you forget other things. Your body of yesterday is not today's body. Do you admit it or not? You cannot say that today is the thirteenth of May, 1973. You cannot say that today is yesterday. The thirteenth was yesterday. The day has changed. But you remember yesterday; and that remembrance is evidence of your eternity. The body has changed, but you remember it; therefore you are eternal, although the body is temporary. This proof is very simple. Even a child can understand it.\*

Besides *smṛti*, the conscious power of recollection, there is subconscious memory. This is termed *svabhāva*, translated by Çréla Prabhupāda as intuition, nature, or natural instinct. As indicated by *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 10.8.39, *svabhāva* is allied with *karma-ācāya*, the intention to perform certain actions. *Svabhāva* is a living entity's intuitive psychology, the subtle fingerprint of his destiny over lifetimes past, present and future. Why, all else in this lifetime being equal, is one person a natural-born musician and another not? It is due to *svabhāva*, the nature inherited from the past lives. Souls surrendered to Kāñēa also exhibit an intuitive psychology, one that is pure and free of the influence of false ego.\* Now, an argument raised against reincarnation is that (for most of us, anyway) there is no overt memory of our previous lives. How, then, is reincarnation reasonable? It is reasonable because one of the five functions of *buddhi* permits us to directly experience a change of body and the forgetfulness associated with that change. This faculty is *svapna*, dreaming. As Çréla Prabhupāda often explained, just as we've forgotten the body we had in our last birth, we forget this present body while dreaming at night. When our dream ends, we forget our subtle dream-body and return to the gross body. So this is the proof, Çréla Prabhupāda said, that you are a living entity, but the body's changing daily.\*

## Reason is not infallible

*Anumāna* is superior to sense perception because it asks the reason why.\* It starts, but cannot finish, the process of finding the answer. The mind is subtle matter, a shadow cast upon consciousness. Its search for the reason beyond perception is the material energy's way of urging the soul to intelligently apply Vedic knowledge. When *anumāna* heeds Vedic direction and deduces the self beyond matter, the mind is pacified by *niṣcaya*, the fixed perception of the soul. We *must* pacify the mind to achieve the goal all philosophers strive for the resolution of duality. The reason is given in *Ṣṛé Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-lēlā* 4.176:

*'dvaite' bhadrābhadrā-jñāna, saba'manodharma'  
'ei bhāla, ei manda, 'ei saba 'bhrama'*

In the material world, conceptions of good and bad are all mental speculations. Therefore, saying, This is good, and this is bad, is all a mistake.

The mind is the locus of all contradiction. Left to itself, *anumāna* finds no end to its struggle with duality. When, through discernment cultivated with the help of a spiritual master, all dualities of mind at last subside, the soul turns its undivided attention to the truth hidden behind thought and perception. Then, at last, consciousness enters the direct presence of the Supersoul, the *Éçvara*. *Bhagavad-gētā* 6.6-7 states:

For him who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends; but for one who has failed to do so, his mind will remain the greatest enemy.

For one who has conquered the mind, the Supersoul is already reached, for he has attained tranquillity. To such a man happiness and distress, heat and cold, honor and dishonor are all the same.

As was noted in the introduction, the philosophical school known as rationalism emphasizes *anumāna* or reason as the *svataù-pramāëa*, the self-evident means to truth. Central to rationalism is the notion that the mind can know the underlying meaning of everything by deep thought alone. This idea is very old in Western philosophy. Aristotle spoke of the *nous poietiks*, the inward aspect of the mind by which the eternal beginnings of all phenomena may be understood. It may seem that rationalism and the Vedic method of discernment described above are alike. But the former comes to a very different conclusion. It rationalizes existence, or in other words, gives it a mental basis. When *anumānavädés* discuss God and the soul, time and space, good and evil and so on, they do so as if they are talking about objective realities. But their discussions are really only about *ideas* of God, soul and the rest. Thus rationalists investigate the world as they *think it should be* (as opposed to empiricists, who investigate the world as they *perceive it to be*). Vedic philosophy does not accept *anumāna* as the *svataù-pramāëa*. The perfect, self-established knowledge (*svataù-siddha-jñāna*) is transcendental.\* It is *divya-pratyakñā*, divine perception that depends upon nothing material, not even the logical functions of the

mind. *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 2.2.6 states that *svataù-siddha* is the omnipotency of the Supersoul situated within the heart of this body. His potency alone frees the soul from birth and death. Even though we may theoretically understand I am not this body, reason alone has no power to stop the cycle of *saàsära*. Kåñëa is *acintya*, not subject to our powers of mind. But He permits Himself to be known via the saintly person in whom dwells Vác, the Vedic sound: *brahmäyam väcaù paramaà vyoma*, the *brähmaëa* (knower of Brahman) is the supreme, most excellent abode of Vác.\*

## Rationalism as hypothetico-deduction

In early 1996 I gave a talk on some of the topics of this chapter in Berlin. At the end a young man wanted to know why I'd said that all Western philosophy is inductive, and only Vedic philosophy is truly deductive. He pointed out that the European rationalists beginning with Plato are highly regarded as deductive philosophers. The remainder of Chapter Two elaborates on the theme of the answer I gave him. It should be noted that his question was not misinformed. Standard philosophy textbooks do count European rationalism as deductive. This is because rationalists, unlike empiricists, posit an *a priori* knowledge (i.e. knowledge prior to sense perception), made up of first principles. From these principles they try to deduce the logic of everything *a posteriori*, after sense perception. Nonetheless, the first principles of European rationalism are tainted by induction, even when they are derived from scriptural revelation. It is very useful to follow why this is so. That will help us pinpoint how inductive thinkers attempt to subvert Vedic knowledge, a problem dealt with in Chapters Four and Five. To use the precise terminology, rationalism is a *hypothetico-deductive* system of thought. Some logicians treat hypothetico-deduction and induction as two aspects of the same reasoning procedure. I share this view, since both systems begin their reasoning with a hypothesis. The difference is that unlike empiricism, rationalism does not strive to confirm with evidence from the senses its basic hypothesis of *a priori* first principles. The aim is to prove by logic alone that there is an ideal meaning to all things even prior to *pratyakñä*. For instance, rationalists argue that the categories of meaning into which we sort objects of perception (This object is a pencil (or a chair, table, and so on)) are programmed in our heads by an innate knowledge. Thus categorical meaning is different from the sense data being categorized. A hypothesis of this sort cannot be proved or disproved empirically, even though it explains something we have direct familiarity with. (Rationalists have their own theory of proof that will be looked at shortly.) But though rationalism tries to transcend inductive empiricism, it is not infallible. It remains limited to the field of human experience the experience of the human mind. Now at this point a doubtful reader may interpose, But many prominent rationalists gave logical arguments for the existence of God. Are you saying that just because they used their reason, the deity they defended was only a hypothesis? They did not invent God in their minds. They believed in Him from the scriptures, and then tried to explain Him rationally. No doubt that in the past at least, Western rationalism defended theism. European rationalists tried their best to

mentally assemble an infallible deity. But they failed. It is beyond the power of man-made reasons to establish God as *éçvara*, the infallible master of all energies. Let us examine why.

## Rationalism and scepticism

Nowadays it is not uncommon for persons who are completely sceptical of religion to call themselves rationalists. But in the Europe of a few centuries back, the aim of most rationalists was to prove that the Bible is perfectly reasonable and God is a logical necessity. One logical proof rationalists offered was that just as a watch requires a watchmaker, so the intricate arrangement of the world requires a creator, God.\* This is a form of the well-known design argument, which holds that intelligent design is *a priori* to material form. But the Scottish dubitante David Hume (1711-1776) raised such difficult questions about the design argument that it was swept completely off the stage of serious European philosophy. In *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, Hume analyzed the rationale of divine cause and decided that it proved that God is neither benevolent, perfect, magnanimous, infallible nor even existent. Here are four of his arguments in summary.

- 1) All creatures are subject to pain as well as pleasure but why, if God is benevolent?
- 2) The world is controlled by strict laws. But if God has to resort to rule of law, how can He be perfect?
- 3) Powers and faculties are distributed to the living entities with great frugality. Why, if God is magnanimous?
- 4) Though the different parts of the great machine of nature work together systematically, these parts (for instance, rainfall) are sometimes deficient, sometimes excessive. Thus it seems nature works without higher supervision. Why, if God is infallible?

Hume's scepticism left ravages upon the European mind.\* The response of the rationalists came from Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), who was highly impressed by Hume's logic. Kant attempted to synthesize scepticism and rationalism into what is known as Critical Philosophy. In doing this, he fell victim to reflexive criticism. He argued that while reason is transcendental (i.e. it stands outside sense perception), it is *meaningful* to us only in terms of sense perception. We must rely upon our senses to know whether an idea is reasonable or not. Therefore the design argument is (from the human perspective) unreasonable, because the world we perceive does not appear to have been created by a beneficent and omnipotent God. But if perception proves reason, how does Kant prove from sense perception his contention that reason is transcendental to the senses? On this point, he fell victim to reflexivity. Kant's conclusion was, for all practical purposes, agnostic: God is confined to the

realm of the unprovable, beyond the senses. Therefore discussing God is a waste of the philosopher's time. Rationalists who philosophize about a reality transcending our experience are in what Kant called transcendental illusion. Thus Kant ended an era of rationalist defense of Christianity. What followed was an era of rationalist attack on Christianity. Kant's Critical Philosophy spawned such atheistic strains of thought as Marxism, Positivism, Pragmatism and Existentialism. These bring us right up to the contemporary period of uninhibited materialism. The irony is that before Kant, rationalism was largely identified with theism and deism. Today, people take rationalism to be a synonym for atheism and scientific scepticism. There is an Indian Rationalist's Association dedicated to debunking religious beliefs through scientific proofs. Western philosophy, whether it is called empirical or rationalist, is ultimately dedicated to human-devised, human-centered inductive thinking. Induction may sometimes float theistic ideas. But as the Chinese say, water floats a ship, and water sinks a ship.

## The Vedic logic of design

Kant said that Hume awoke him from his dogmatic slumber.\* The religious dogmatism in rationalism transformed, after Kant, into dogmatic materialism. We shall look at this shortly. But now let us briefly consider the Vedic reply to Hume, whose arguments so revolutionized the European intellectual attitude to religion.

1) Hume questioned why a benevolent, loving God would subject all living entities to the duality of pain and pleasure. His definition of living entity was limited to the physical body. The Vedic response is that every living creature is in essence *jéva-tattva*, an eternal spirit soul. Because of the attraction to lord it over *prakâti*, the *jéva* is entrapped in the bodily concept, and subject to the cycle of repeated birth and death throughout all the species in nature. The *jéva's* perception of pleasure and pain within these bodies is but an illusion generated by the false ego. By *yoga* (discipline and purification of the mind and senses), pleasure and pain are transcended. And by engaging the purified mind and senses in Kâñëa's service, the living entity is established in an eternal loving relationship with the Supreme Person.

2) Hume asked why a perfect God would have to resort to strict laws to govern the universe. The answer is that the universe is formed out of the *bhinnâ-prakâti-tattva*, the separated material energy of *éçvara*. Material nature is separated, and thus organized by the rule of law instead of the rule of love, because of the separate interests of the living entities under the sway of false ego. Hume's interest in a world emancipated from material laws is to be fulfilled within the spiritual nature (*daivi-prakâti*), which is not separated from *éçvara*.

3) Hume's next doubt is answered by knowledge of the actual purpose of the material world. The universe is a reformatory for souls who, due to false ego,

foolishly aspire to be the lords of all they survey. Nature's frugality is to help the soul understand his real position: he is a servant, not the master.

4) The last doubt is cleared up by knowledge of the *kāla* and *karma tattvas*. When a person performs sinful activities, reactions such as flood, drought, famine, pestilence and so on are destined by time to fall upon him in this and future lifetimes. Such misfortune is sobering. One should inquire from a saintly person how to become relieved from sin and its reactions. But too often, human beings are stubbornly animalistic. When hit with a stick by its master, an animal cannot understand what it did to deserve punishment. For all the animal knows, the beating is purposeless and chaotic. In this sense, Hume's view of the natural disturbances that befall mankind is animalistic. Hume's philosophical revolution soon became a scientific one. Less than a century after Hume's death, Charles Darwin (1809-1882) would confide in a letter to Asa Gray that the theory of evolution had to be reasonable because a beneficent and omnipotent God could not have created bloodthirsty creatures that kill with savage delight.

## Reason and scripture

The rational argument of design started off with a serious handicap that left it open to Hume's attack. The handicap was incomplete knowledge of the purpose of creation. In her book *Heresy*, Joan O'Grady writes that this problem arose from a tenet ...

... developed from the Old Testament, that God, the Creator, made a world that is good. And God saw everything that He had made and, behold, it was very good. (*Gen* 1.31) From that it follows that our bodies are good.\*

If the world and our bodies are good, what are they good for? And what is evil? On these points, the 'orthodox' teaching has never been completely clear.\* Being unable to deduce what the creation is good for from an unclear premise, rationalist Christians *induced* it to be good for what historian Paul Johnson calls enlightened self-interest.\* This self-interest was defined as the long-term and prudent pursuit of happiness.\* In simple language, the rationalists supposed God's creation to be good for sense gratification. The comparison of God to a watchmaker is a reasonable assumption inasmuch as we know that watches do not assemble themselves. But the analogy of the watchmaker implies a further assumption about God's relationship with His creation. A watchmaker manufactures the watch for another person, who becomes its owner, controller and enjoyer. What makes the watch good is the satisfaction it gives the one who takes possession of it. Hume's scepticism struck just this point. How can you say God created a world good for our sense gratification? It isn't logical. We suffer pain as well as pleasure, we are forced to live under strict controlling laws, we have only limited powers and faculties, and our world is too often chaotic. The definition of a good world as good for sense gratification is not

good. It is passionate, as *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 3.5.31 confirms: *taijasänéndriyääy eva jïäna-karma-mayäni* philosophical speculation in connection with sense enjoyment is passionate, because the senses are products of the mode of passion. In the mode of passion, it is very hard to understand why a God who made the world good allows pain to offset pleasure; why He strictly rules this good world by law; why He is frugal in distributing powers and faculties; and why this good world is too often disturbed. Rather than trouble themselves with these contradictions, passionate philosophers find it reasonable to jettison God from their systems, and get working on remaking the world into what it should be. *Éçvara*, the Supreme, is properly understood only in the mode of goodness.\* *Bhagavad-gétä* 14.17 states, *rajaso lobha eva ca*: from the mode of passion, greed develops. Greed for material pleasure, power, wealth, and comfort is the path of materialism. This path bends reason away from the real logic of creation, which is to reform us from our illusion. In the name of awakening from the slumber of dogma, materialistic reasoning first assumes God irrelevant, as did Kant's Critical Philosophy, and then assumes the material world as mankind's own godless paradise, as did Marxism, Positivism, Pragmatism and Existentialism.

### The monistic tendency of rationalism

Thus the assumptions of rationalism are open to the same criticism leveled at the assumptions of empirical metaphysics: because they, like all other kinds of postulates, are assumed, they distort reality and define it selectively.\* That selective definition is assumed to be the truth. Empiricism defines truth as correspondence with what is perceived in the world. But as we have seen, correspondence breaks down into contradiction because sense perception raises more questions than it can answer. Rationalists find contradiction very frustrating. Their aim is to push past the senses to coherence, or the underlying connection of everything to everything else. The *coherence theory of truth* holds that truth is a grand unified explanation, completely consistent within itself, of all the levels of our cognition of the universe. Empirical facts are merely the external details. Once a completely coherent logical truth is established, empirical facts can be added at any time; they will cohere to the system without contradiction. At the lowest level of the system are theories of perception. Above these are theories by which perceptions are judged. Above these are theories about the basic laws governing the world. Above these are theories of logic, the dictionary of the whole system. Above these, the ultimate unifying principle is that all things below cohere to existence itself. Why do all things exist? The old answer was that God created everything, but this has lost favor with rationalists. And Kant's warning about transcendental illusion also puts the brakes on philosophical talk of a reality beyond that gave existence to our world. Thus rationalists say everything exists because of *Entity*, the bare fact of existence itself. And what is *Entity*, apart from the things that exist?



*Entity* has no properties and stands in no relation to other things, or, as Hegel would say, it has no determinations. But this implies, according to Hegel's line of reasoning, that pure being is absolute negation, since it is *not* this, that or the other. And absolute negation, to complete the argument, is nothing, that is, it is non-being. Being and non-being, therefore, are ultimately one and the same undifferentiated thing.\*

This quotation is an example of monistic metaphysics in modern rationalism. Metaphysics is speculation beyond the limits of the senses. Monism refers to any doctrine that reduces reality to oneness. The tendency to coherence, to bring everything under one unifying principle, is logically a tendency to monism. Now, when a rationalist speculates that Entity is the unifying principle, he is not really telling us anything different from his rivals, the empiricists, who say that everything exists because the senses reveal that everything exists. We still do not know *why* everything exists. But the rationalists do go one step further than the empiricists by distinguishing the *fact* of existence (Entity itself) from the *things* that exist as revealed by the senses. In the previous quotation, this is done by negation, which concludes that being is non-being. Though it is not sensible, this hypothesis halts further inquiry into the why of existence. But if being is non-being and non-being is being, how can the origin of the world be explained coherently? How can an entity that is zero manage the energies of creation? Çréla Prabhupāda analyzes the problem:

But if God is zero, how are so many figures emanating from Him? As the *Vedānta-sūtra* says (*janmādy asya yataù*), Everything is generating from the Supreme. Therefore the Supreme cannot be zero. We have to study how so many forms, so many infinite living entities, are being generated from the Supreme. This is also explained in the *Vedānta-sūtra*, which is the study of ultimate knowledge. The word *veda* means knowledge, and *anta* means ultimate. Ultimate knowledge is knowledge of the Supreme Lord.\*

European speculations about how an impersonal Entity gave rise to the forms of this world go back to ancient Greek metaphysicians. Unmoved and changeless, Entity is a disembodied mind that thinks only of itself. While this mind is ever-oblivious of the moving, changing world that depends on it, creation somehow arises from its self-preoccupation. Aristotle proposed four causes (*aitai* in Greek, or reasons for something happening) to explain how creation occurs. These are the material, formal, efficient, and final causes. Something created must have substance. That substance is the material (or ingredient) cause (*causa materialis*). Something created must have shape. That shape is the formal cause (*causa formalis*). Creating something is an act, and that act must be initiated. That which initiates creation is the efficient cause (*causa efficiens*). Something created must have a purpose. That purpose is the final cause (*causa finalis*). Any realistic plan of creation must account for these four causes. For instance, to create a house, there must be materials, an architectural design, a skilled construction crew, and a purpose that makes the building of the house worth the time and money. That, we would agree, is only reasonable. But we would not think it very reasonable if we were told that behind the four causes of the house there is a completely self-absorbed impersonal being that

has no concern whatsoever whether the house is built or not. We reasonably expect that only a person with the will to see the job done can be responsible for the four-fold causation of the house. A personal controller of the four causes is coherent. An impersonal controller of the four causes is incoherent, because something impersonal has no intention and purpose. How, then, can impersonalists coherently answer the question why? They aver it is not quite right to say that Entity is completely disinterested in creation. Rather, Entity divides into the observer and the observed so as to observe itself. The real Entity is lost in this act of observation. The individual observer and the forms he observes are not Entity, which has neither individuality nor form. This answer to the question why? is paradoxical. What sense is there for Entity to observe itself *not* be so that it can observe itself *be*? Impersonalists defend their paradoxical answer thusly: it's only when we reach the paradox that we're forced to give up asking questions.\* But giving up in the face of the paradox still does not answer why there is a paradox. The Vedic answer is not paradoxical. An artist's creation may be a kind of illusion, but still it inspires the observer with appreciation for the artistic skill of the creator. Similarly, Kåñëa's artistry as the creator of this temporary universe is meant to inspire us with appreciation for His supreme skill. Therefore in the *Çvetāçvatara Upaniñad*, God is praised as Mäyén, He whose power is *mäyã*, the paradoxical material energy. That Kåñëa is Himself the four causes proposed by Aristotle is indicated in *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 6.9.42: as *upādāna*, He is the giver of the ingredients of creation. As *sva-rūpeëa pradhāna-rūpeëa*, all material forms emanate from His eternal personal spiritual form. As *nimittāyamāna*, He is the efficient cause. And as *artha-viçeña*, He manifests the special necessity or purpose of every living entity. Understanding Kåñëa in these ways liberates one from illusion. But if I think the four causes of cosmic creation are myself observing myself, that is false ego interfering with logic.

### The rational false ego

The young Berliner suggested that ancient Greek rationalists like Plato were as much deductive philosophers as the sages of the Vedas. A similar point of view is evident in this remark by a modern exponent of Indian mysticism:

Yet we find in both [the philosophers of ancient Greece and India] the same profound sense of reason, logic, order, harmony, experimentation and experience.\*

Some parallels are undeniable. But to correctly apprehend the Vedic method of knowledge, we have to come to terms with the facts. Greek philosophy, which is the foundation of the European philosophical tradition, began as an intellectual reaction against the limitations of Hellenic religious scriptures. In contrast, Vedic philosophy explains the cause revealed in the Vedic scriptures. Historians tell us that philosophy was born when ancient Greek thinkers became doubtful about the *Theogony*, one of the main religious texts of their time. The *Theogony* (genealogy of the gods), written

by the poet Hesiod in the eighth century BC, is said to have been inspired by angelic entities called the Muses. It relates that the world and the gods arose from *chos*, a word very close in meaning to its English cognate chasm, a gap.\* *Chos* was a gap in logic, a void unpenetrated by the intellect. The *svabhāva* (natural instinct) of the Greeks was fond of logical speculation, so it was natural for some thinkers to take the problem of *chos* as a challenge. Different causal agents (water, fire, air and so on) were argumentatively proposed to fill the gap. Gradually a few philosophers, possibly influenced by ideas from India, turned away from physical theories of causation to speculate about an underlying Entity of pure thought. One of the greatest of these was Plato. He conceived Entity (from Greek *t n*, that which is) to be a feature of *aut t agathn*, the Good itself. The Good is to be found on a higher plane of abstraction, a mindscape independent of human thinkers, where the intellect of the philosopher might enjoy the full meaning of truth, beauty, form, soul, and other ideals. Our world is just a shadow of that. But Plato did not achieve the substance beyond the shadow. His philosophy culminates in the doctrine of exemplarism, that the finite things of this world are copies of *only the ideas* of the universal mind. However, this is not the end of the Vedic inquiry, which asks further, *keneñītaà patati preñītaà manau:* By whom is the mind set in motion?\* The Greeks did not ask this question because they were fettered by their assumptions. The *Theogony* taught that all persons, including the Olympian gods, are created from *chos*, which is impersonal. Plato similarly assumed that beyond the gap that separates persons from the truth, Entity is *asmatos*, incorporeal and invisible. There, the forms are thought of but not seen.\* Thus Platonic logic is not Vedic. As a kind of impersonalism, it fails to connect the shadow of personality to the substance of personality. Plato's rejection of the person in the form of the gross material body (*sthūla-çaréra*) left him with the subtle mind (*liiga-çaréra*). There, person, soul, are just *good ideas*, i.e. concepts of mind. But in fact, mind and matter are coverings of the real personality, the soul, which alone is *para*, transcendental. As Nārada Muni explains in *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 1.5.27:

O great sage, as soon as I got a taste for the Personality of Godhead, my attention to hear of the Lord was unflinching. And as my taste developed, I could realize that it was only in my ignorance that I had accepted gross and subtle coverings, for both the Lord and I are transcendental.

The lofty thoughts of the ancient Greek rationalists were the product of their *svabhāva*, or intuition. But to merely follow intuition is not proof of an actual realization of the truth. Even people unread in philosophy mentally negate whatever they do not like about this world, and dream a better world to come. Modern ideals like liberty, equality, fraternity, world peace which people all around the world agree are glorious remain tantalizing mental concepts that somehow do not quite take hold of our lives, at least not for very long. Thus the mental plane proves itself to be no more dependable than the physical plane. Yet throughout history people of an intellectual nature turn away from the discrepancies of the physical world to search for certainty on the higher plane of the mind. Why?

Higher plane means you are seeking after pleasure, but that is being obstructed. That is your position. You are seeking pleasure, but it is not unobstructed. Therefore you are seeking higher, where there is no

obstruction. Pleasure is the purpose, but when you speak of higher plane, that means you are experiencing obstruction in getting pleasure. So you are seeking a platform where there is no obstruction. But the purpose is the same.\*

The root of *svabhāva* is the pleasure principle.\* Each person's philosophy of life begins here. When *svabhāva* or intuition is not directed by Vedic logic, it aims at erroneous goals of supreme happiness. The *svabhāva* of the ancient Greek rationalists was to seek happiness in abstract logical speculation. The *Theogony* had no satisfying answers to their questions of how the world came to be. So they left religion behind, following their minds deeper and deeper into the realm of thought. Being thinkers who, naturally, liked thinking, they assumed it is clear that reason (*nous*) is the goal of all things and that everything proceeds from reason and that the whole universe has its being from reason.\* In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defined intuitive reason as God: *ho theos ka ho nous*. The goal of Neoplatonic philosophy was *hnoisis*, oneness with the Divine Mind which has its being in the thinking of its own being. On the other hand, the Christian rationalists accepted from the start the Bible's account of a personal God as the cause. But their *svabhāva* turned them back to the material world to find pleasure in what God created. They rationalized God to be an indulgent parent who handed His creation down to mankind for our pious material happiness. They supposed scientific progress to be service to God, because it advances civilized sense gratification. This binding of the intellect to matter finally forced a choice between God and material happiness. Rejecting God and embracing materialism, the rationalists concluded, Man is God, the supreme enjoyer of the world. *Anumāna*, unlike *pratyakñā*, can help us understand that the conscious self is different from the body. But if we grant it full authority, *anumāna* leads us to our own ego as the ultimate Entity, the why of existence. Egoism is the belief that self-interest is the just and proper motive force. It manifests as *ahaà-mameti*, I and mine. *Mama* (mine) is the basis of *karma-vāda*, the philosophy of claiming the world for one's enjoyment. *Aham* (I) is the basis of *jñāna-vāda*, the philosophy of leaving the world aside to enjoy the higher plane of abstract thought. Both philosophies are imposed by men upon the creation of the Lord; indeed, these are means by which men propose to become God themselves. Now, what is the wrong in men imposing their own philosophies upon the creation? The wrong is that such an imposition is not an act of knowledge. It is an act of blind faith, of inductive gambling. Neither the Christian rationalists nor the ancient Greeks had a truly *deductive teleology*. The word teleology comes from the Greek *tlos*, purpose, goal and *lgos*, knowledge of. The logic of teleology is that one can know the purpose of something by deducing it from its origin. Çréla Prabhupāda gave the example of a Calcutta playwright who was asked why he entitled a historical drama *Shah Jahan*, after the medieval Indian king who built the famous Taj Mahal. In the play, the king's son, Aurangzeb, performs the best part of the action, while his father languishes under Aurangzeb's house arrest. So why wasn't the play called *Aurangzeb*? The answer was that the play's purpose was to focus upon the suffering of Shah Jahan at the hands of his son. This explanation could only come from the creator of the play and no one else. Similarly, the purpose of the world is to be known from the creator, *éçvara*. That is deductive teleology. Unfortunately, in neither Greek nor Judaeo-Christian rationalism was there a starting point of complete

information about the purpose of creation. This made induction unavoidable. Induction, as we have seen, is a method of egoism. Empiricism, apparently opposed to rationalism, is in fact no different. Quantum physics, for instance, begins in the empirical study of particles of matter. But it ends in speculation about an egoistic consciousness that creates the universe via perception.

## The deduction of real happiness

Philosophers often liken the universe to an incredibly vast mechanical apparatus. We are very insignificant creatures who try to make our happy nests deep within its cogs, blindly hoping, as did the Christian rationalists, that the machine was built just for that purpose. Or perhaps, like the Greeks, we speculate on the machinery from our insignificant point of view, in the hope of achieving happiness on a higher plane of understanding. However, in either case our position is very dangerous, like that of a cat that has crawled into the warm environs of the engine of a parked automobile to take a nap. The cat risks severe injury as soon as the owner returns and starts up the motor. And this is because the cat does not understand the real purpose of an automobile engine. According to deductive, Vedic logic, the creation is not meant to be enjoyed by us because there is no ultimate happiness for us in it. As Kåñëa says in *Bhagavad-gétä* 13.9, *janma-måtyu-jarä-vyädhi-duùkha-doññanudarçanam*: right knowledge is seeing the world as a place of misery, full of birth, death, old age and disease. Human beings are meant to get liberated from this misery: *labdhväpavargyaà mänuñyaà*. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 4.23.28) And that is why human beings have discerning power: *vivekena tato vimuktiù*. What, then, is the truth that is to be discerned from illusion? *Jade baddhasyänanda bhramo vaikuëöha bhramäçcasaigät*: the illusion is to mistake enjoyment of the mind and senses as *änanda* (spiritual bliss); this must be distinguished from the *änanda* of the liberated state of Vaikuëöha, our spiritual home.\* Vaikuëöha is the transcendental abode of *écvara*, explained by Lord Kåñëa in *Bhagavad-gétä* 8.21:

*avyakto 'kñäara ity uktas tam ähuù paramäà gatim  
yaà präpya na nivartante tad dhäma paramaà mama*

That which the Vedäntists describe as unmanifest and infallible, that which is known as the supreme destination, that place from which, having attained it, one never returnsthat is My supreme abode.

The word *avyakta* (unmanifest) means that the bliss of Vaikuëöha cannot be perceived by our material senses, nor conceived of by our material minds. And *akñäara* (infallible) means that Vaikuëöha is not under the control of material nature, time, and the chain of *karma*, as we are in our present condition. Vaikuëöha is not different from the Supreme Controller. It is the unlimited realm of His personal transcendental happiness. The material world is a perverted reflection of Vaikuëöha, projected upon the false ego of the living entities who have chosen to enjoy separately from Kåñëa. When the Vaikuëöha consciousness is discerned from the selfish material consciousness, it yields complete happiness for the soul. But if

*pratyakñā* and *anumāna* cannot reach Vaikuëöha, then how is it to be known? This is the topic of the next chapter.

### Chapter Three: Verbal Testimony (Çabda)

The word *çabda* is found in the *Upaniñads*, *Vedānta-sūtra*, *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam*, *Mahābhārata*, and many other ancient Sanskrit texts. Its basic meaning is sound, or voice. *Çabda* is the vibration of the element *ākāça*, the ethereal space of the sky. This is not a difficult concept to grasp. Educated people know that the sky is the medium of not only audible sound, but radio signals, light, cosmic rays and so on. These all exhibit vibratory properties. Though modern scientists do not count ethereal space as a material element as do Vedic scientists, they agree it is not a void, but rather a sea of energy in which we and all other things in the universe are swimming.\* Some suppose there is a fundamental vibration that permeates the universe, holding all matter together.\* There is indeed a fundamental vibration Veda. It originates in the spiritual sky:

*Çabda-mātram abhüt tasmän nabhaù. Nabhaù* is sky. So there is a point wherefrom the sky, the material sky, begins. And there is spiritual sky. The sky is spiritual wherefrom the *çabda* is resounded. Because there is sky, therefore there is sound. Because there is sound, therefore the instrument of hearing sound, the ear, is there. So our material position and spiritual position the ultimate point is sound. And this sound is presented in its original spiritual form. That is called Veda, *çabda-brahma*.\*

### The yoga of spiritual sound

Material sound gives rise to material existence. Spiritual sound gives rise to liberation from material existence:

It is stated also in the *Vedānta-sūtra* that sound is the origin of all objects of material possession and that by sound one can also dissolve this material existence. *Anāvāttiù çabdāt* means liberation by sound. The entire material manifestation began from sound, and sound can also end material entanglement, if it has a particular potency.\*

By the particular potency of spiritual sound, the transcendental qualities of Vaikuëöha, the spiritual world, are transmitted through the medium of words (*vacāsi vaikuëöha-guëënuvarëane*). (*Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 9.4.18) As the form of

the material world is made up of three *guëas* or material qualities (goodness, passion and ignorance), so also are there three qualities of Vaikuëöha. The Vaikuëöha qualities, however, are transcendental: *sac-cid-änanda* eternity, knowledge and bliss.\* Some portions of the Vedic scriptures train our ears on *sat*, the eternal absolute (Brahman) in which the living entities and matter are sheltered. Other portions train our ears on *sac-cit*, the Supersoul (Paramätmä) who directs the spiritual and material energies in Brahman. The most confidential portion of the Vedas train our ears on *sac-cid-änanda-vigraha*, eternality known in His original blissful form (Bhagavän).\* The particular potency of this sound is Lord Çré Kåñëa Himself, as He confirms in *Bhagavad-gétä* 7.1:

*mayi äsakta-manäù pärtha yogaà yuijan mad-äçrayaù  
asaàçayaà samagraà mäà yathä jïäsyasi tac chãëu*

Here Kåñëa speaks of five results of hearing directly from Him: 1) one becomes established in *yoga* (*yoga-yuijan*); 2) one's consciousness takes shelter of Him (*mat-äçrayaù*); 3) one's mind becomes attached to Him (*mayi äsakta-manäù*); 4) all doubts are completely vanquished (*asaàçayaà samagram*), and 5) one comes to know Kåñëa in full (*mäà yathä jïäsyasi*). *Yoga* is defined in *Bhagavad-gétä* 5.11 as *käyena manasä buddhyä kevalair indriyair api*, the state in which the functions of the body, mind, intellect and even the senses are *kevala*, completely pure. In the *kevala* state, consciousness passes over the barrier of deceptive sense impressions to take shelter of the cause of all causes, Lord Kåñëa. Taking shelter of Kåñëa is not a hypothetical venture that the mind may reject later on. Indeed, the only real happiness for the purified mind is the transcendental excellence of the Lord's holy name, form, quality, pastimes and relationships. When one thus comes to know the Lord in full, ignorance and the doubts it spawns are destroyed. All this is accomplished by hearing sound infused with Kåñëa's spiritual potency. Kåñëa is therefore known as *çrutekñita*, He who is seen through the ears. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 3.9.11) If we do not see God, it is because we don't hear Him. And we do not hear him because our desire is impure:

Kåñëa, or God, is situated in everyone's heart. As you become purified, He speaks. He speaks always, but in our impure condition, we cannot hear.\*

### The sky in the lotus of the heart

In his purport to *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 1.3.1, Çréla Prabhupäda elaborates on the location of the material sky:

In the spiritual sky, the effulgence of Brahman is spread all around, and the whole system is dazzling in spiritual light. The *mahat-tattva* is assembled in some corner of the vast, unlimited spiritual sky, and the part which is thus covered by the *mahat-tattva* is called the material sky. This part of the spiritual sky, called the *mahat-tattva*, is only an insignificant portion of the

whole spiritual sky, and within this *mahat-tattva* there are innumerable universes. All these universes are collectively produced by the Kāraëodakaçäyë Viñëu, called also the Mahä-Viñëu, who simply throws His glance to impregnate the material sky.

Lord Mahä-Viñëu then expands into each of the universes as Garbhodakaçäyë Viñëu. Describing this, *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 3.5.6 states:

*yathä punaù sve kha idaà niveçya  
çete guhäyää sa nivåtta-våttiù*

Without any endeavor, the Supreme Lord lies down on His own heart spread in the form of the sky.

Here, heart (*guhä*) refers to the space or sky (*khe*) within the shell of the universe. Other verses reveal that this cosmic space is pervaded by *präëa*, an expansion of the Lord Himself. *Präëa*, the original life force, reverberates; this reverberation branches out in all directions as the sound of the Vedas, created by the mind of the Lord. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.21.38-40) The *Chändogya Upaniñad* 8.1.1. tells of a small sky within a lotus palace located in a great city (*daharo 'sminn antaräkäçau*). Explaining this, Çréla Baladeva Vidyäbhüñaëa says that the great city is the body of a worshipper of the Lord, the lotus palace is the heart, and the small sky is the Supersoul.\* The human body, then, is a microcosm. The sky in the heart of the body, like the universal sky, constantly vibrates with *çabda*. The *jéva*, the spark of spirit that is the pure self of the living being, floats within the vibrating *präëa* of that sky. When the *jéva* is not a worshipper of the Lord, the heart becomes the locus of *käma* (lusty desire). The *Åg-Veda* states that prior to creation, the original seed of the material mentality was *käma*.\* Lord Kåñëa tells Uddhava that this lust cancels the soul's knowledge of the Lord situated within the heart. When knowledge of the Lord in the heart is lost, the knowledge that the entire universe emanates from Kåñëa, and that it is nondifferent from Him, is also lost. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.21.28) Nārada Muni uses the term *svabhäva-rakta*, the inclination to enjoy, to explain the waywardness of the ignorant *jévas*. He warns that in this condition, they are attracted by the Vedic vibration *in a wrong way*. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 1.5.15) They receive it via the false ego instead of from their original spiritual master, the Lord in the heart. Egoism is the starting point of material sound, which generates all the objects of material possession. False ego is a creation of *prakåti*, the material nature. Dwelling in the heart along with the Lord and the *jéva*, the *prakåti-tattva* is always attentive to the Lord's command. As soon as the *jéva* becomes inclined to enjoy apart from Kåñëa, as her service to the Lord, she takes control of that soul via the false ego. Her long-term aim is to bring the soul back to the shelter of His lotus feet by making his life very difficult. Thus she is known as Durgä (*dur*, difficult; *gä*, to go [out]). Having gripped the *jéva*, false ego transforms into the mind. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 3.5.30) The mind's *vijñāna-rūpiëé*, or feature of deliberation, is the intelligence. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 2.10.32) These three false ego, mind and intelligence form the subtle material body of living entity. Then *prakåti* causes the sense of hearing to arise from the vibration of the subtle body. The tactile sense follows, then vision, taste and smell. Thus helped by material nature, the *jéva* floating in the space of the heart realizes, as the object of his desire, the gross body



and its five sense objects. Underlying all this is the order of the Lord, the *çabda-brahma*, manifesting within the senses, mind and life energy itself. For souls under the influence of *prakāṭi*, the transcendental significance of this sound is *su-durbodham*, very difficult to know. (*Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 11.21.36) They give attention only to the material names and forms that flicker on the screen of false ego. Mundane names and forms appear in consciousness as the result of *prakāṭi*'s perpetual agitation of the thought and perception of the *jéva*. *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 5.11.11 points out the precise means by which *prakāṭi* accomplishes this: through *dravya* (physical objects), *svabhāva* (our conditioned nature, by which all our material desires develop), *āçaya* (culture), *karma* (the predestined reactions of work), and *kāla* (time). Agitated by these, the mind and senses multiply hundreds, then thousands, and then millions of functions. Each of these functions assumes a name and a form, becoming a subject of mundane hearing and speech. As *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 2.1.2 states:

*çrotavyädéni rājendra nāëää santi sahasraçau  
apaçyatām ätma-tattvaà gāheñu gāha-medhinām*

Those persons who are materially engrossed, being blind to the knowledge of ultimate truth, have many subject matters for hearing in human society, O Emperor.

## Mythologies of why

And so, myriad mundane subject matters bubble forth from *pratyakñā* and *anumāna* to form imaginary explanations of why we and the world exist. These explanations fall into two categories: *karma-vāda* (the philosophy of fruitive activities) and *jñāna-vāda* (the philosophy of mental speculation). They are the cause of our falldown into material entanglement, as Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura states in his *Tattva-viveka* 17:

*karma-jñāna-vimiçrä yä yuktis-tarka-mayé nare  
citra-mata-prasüté sa saäsāra-phala-dāyini*

A person whose logic and arguments are mixed with fruitive activities (*karma*) and speculative knowledge (*jñāna*) comes to multifarious conclusions that simply cause him material bondage.

Mundane knowledge is a myth. Like the myths of primitive people, it is inseparable from the material conditions that prevail upon our minds: the time, place, and cultural circumstances in which we live. Western man measures world culture by his own standards of *pratyakñā* and *anumāna*. Anything he detects that does not fit into his outlook he is liable to classify as mythology. But as philosopher Stephen Toulmin points out, this very method of trying to winnow mythology from reality is itself mythological!\* By reliance upon the authority of the imperfect senses and mind, all that is accomplished is the invention of a new body of myths to explain the old.

Toulmin writes of two kinds of myths: anthropomorphic and mechanomorphic. The first personalizes the natural world in the image of man. For example, Christian rationalists conceived of an anthropomorphic God whose purpose in creating the world reflected their own mundane desires. World history abounds in examples of anthropomorphic mythology. The second type depersonalizes nature, leaving only a schema of mechanical pushes and pulls. Mechanomorphic mythmaking is evident today in the theories of modern science. Instances can be seen in other cultures as well, for instance the atheistic Sāikhya philosophy of India. The aim of the mythmaker is to lay the objective foundations of a culture of *karma* and *jñāna*. The mythmaking religionist, philosopher, scientist, or historian is convinced, and is too often successful in convincing others, that his sense perception and mental speculation are a lawful tradition for all humanity. Unfortunately, as we have seen previously, knowledge that draws its authority from *pratyakñā* and *anumāna* cannot be objective. How can we be sure there can never be genuine objectivity in *karma-vāda* and *jñāna-vāda*? Because the subjective yearnings of *karmés* and *jñánés* are pitted against an objective contradiction time. Both want lasting happiness in a world where nothing lasts. *Karmés* seek happiness in sense pleasure on the physical plane. *Jñánés* seek happiness in intellectual pursuits on the higher plane of abstraction. Both schools spin out reams and reams of literature promoting their respective mythologies. But in neither case is the promised happiness attainable, since *saàsāra-phala-dāyiné*, the fruit of *karma-vāda* and *jñāna-vāda* is only the repetition of birth and death.

### Çabda as objective knowledge

But can we say Vedic knowledge is objective? We've learned *çabda* is a spiritual sound that vibrates in the deepest core of the heart as a language of interior illumination. Yet according to the modern understanding, only when knowledge is *open to confirmation by the public* can it actually be called objective. How, then, can the public confirm Vedic knowledge? Because of impure desire, we, the public, are drawn to the topics of bondage, *çabda* received through the false ego. Only when desire is pure, can the pure sound be heard. Vedic sages teach an objective means to purify desire. It is called *yajñā* (sacrifice). Vedic *yajñās* set *karmés* and *jñánés* on the path leading to the Vedic sages, in whom Vedic sound dwells. As *Āg-Veda* 10.71.3 states:

*yajñena vācaù padavéyam äyan tām  
anv avindann āññiñu pravistām*

By means of *yajñā* (sacrifice), they followed the tracks of Vāc (Mother Veda) and found she had entered in the sages.

The greatest Vedic sage is Brahmā, whom Kāññēa deposes with the task of cosmic creation. Brahmā is first among those rare souls in the universe who directly hear the instructions of the Lord in the heart. He is the *ādi-kavi*, the first reciter of the *çruti-*

*çāstra*, the Vedic texts. His recitation at the dawn of creation is the universal standard of Vedic knowledge. Brahmā is therefore the spiritual master of all other Vedic sages. In his purport to *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.42, Çréla Prabhupāda explains:

Lord Brahmā, being the creator of all living beings in the universe, is originally the father of several well-known sons, like Dakṣa, the *catuṣ- sanas* [the four Kumāras], and Nārada. In three departments of human knowledge disseminated by the Vedas, namely fruitive work (*karma-kāṇḍa*), transcendental knowledge (*jñāna-kāṇḍa*), and devotional service (*upāsana-kāṇḍa*), Devarṣi Nārada inherited from his father Lord Brahmā devotional service, whereas Dakṣa inherited from his father fruitive work, and Sanaka, Sanātana, Sanandana and Sanat-kumāra inherited from their father information about *jñāna-kāṇḍa*, or transcendental knowledge. But out of them all, Nārada is described here as the most beloved son of Lord Brahmā because of good behavior, obedience, meekness and readiness to render service unto the father. And Nārada is famous as the greatest of all sages because of his being the greatest of all devotees.

Dakṣa and the four Kumāras preside over the Vedic paths known as *karma- kāṇḍa* and *jñāna-kāṇḍa*. *Karma-kāṇḍa* scriptures allow for the personalization of the world in the image of theandric sensualism. The why of the world is the mutual sense gratification of the creator and the created. *Jñāna-kāṇḍa* scriptures allow for the depersonalization of that world. The why of everything is reduced to mechanistic forces, or the impersonal logic behind such forces. But because they are Vedic, *karma-kāṇḍa* and *jñāna-kāṇḍa* scriptures lead to *upāsana*, the worship of great sages and ultimately of God Himself. The *karma-kāṇḍa* and *jñāna-kāṇḍa* scriptures make up the *apara-vidyā* of the Vedas.

### Paramparā: the link of hearts

In *Bhagavad-gētā* 18.64, Lord Kṛṣṇa says He awards the most excellent knowledge (*paramā vāca*, or *para-vidyā*) only to those who are dear to Him. Brahmā, the first of the sages, is dear to Kṛṣṇa as a personal friend.\* Simply by being dear to the Lord, he was able to hear Him directly through the heart. The best of what he heard is *upāsana*, knowledge of how Kṛṣṇa is to be worshiped. Nārada Muni is dear to Brahmā because he alone among his sons teaches *upāsana* free of any taint of *karma* or *jñāna*. The system of *paramparā* (one after another) thus began as a linking of hearts to Kṛṣṇa. That which links the hearts of Nārada and Brahmā to Kṛṣṇa is *bhakti*, pure devotion. In *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam*, Nārada Muni speaks of the loving attachment a disciple feels for his spiritual master. He uses the term *anurakta*. This attachment is exactly opposite the *svabhāva-rakta* mentioned earlier, the attraction to material enjoyment that puts the *jéva* under the spell of material nature. *Anurakta* and *bhakti* are synonyms: *bhaktiṁ pūrānuraktiṁ parebhakti* is complete loving

attachment to the Supreme Lord.\* The attachment of the heart of the disciple to the spiritual master can be understood by outward symptoms. Nārada lists them as obedience, sinlessness, faithfulness, subjugation of the senses and strict adherence to the order of *guru*. These symptoms attract the spiritual master's mercy. By that mercy alone, the disciple becomes dear to Kāñḥa. Therefore the spiritual master is considered to be the heart of the Lord Himself. Hearing from such a devotee is identical to hearing from Kāñḥa in the heart, as confirmed in *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 9.4.68: *sādhavo hādayaà mahyaà sādḥünää hādayaà tv aham*. The pure devotee is always within the core of My heart, and I am always in the heart of the pure devotee. Hearing the Lord in the heart, one sees with the eye of pure devotion through the baffling curtain of physical objects, conditioned nature, culture, karmic reactions and time with which material nature has covered the heart. In his heart, Brahmā saw all things as they really are as the *tattvas* devotedly serving their *éçvara*. What he saw in his heart is the description of Vaikuëoha:

The Lord was seated on His throne and was surrounded by different energies like the four, the sixteen, the five, and the six natural opulences, along with other insignificant energies of the temporary character. But He was the factual Supreme Lord, enjoying His own abode. (*Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.17)

The four are spirit, matter, their combination as *mahat-tattva* and the false ego. The sixteen are the five material elements (*mahā-bhūtas*), the five sense organs (*jñānendriyas*), the five working organs (*karmendriyas*), and the mind. The five are the sense objects. The six are the *bhagas* (all riches, all strength, all fame, all beauty, all knowledge and all renunciation) by which the Lord is known as Bhagavān. Brahmā saw all these as the personal servants of the Supreme Person. Each of us sees at this very moment the same divine forms Brahmā saw. But we see them in ignorance, as matter viewed from mind and mind viewed from matter.

### **Mystical is not the word**

A word, a scholar of language tells us, is like a big sack into which we throw a very large number of things. Brahmā's *darçana* (vision) of the spiritual world may prompt us to reach for the word mystical. But we should be cautious. Unpack mystical as people use it today and we'll find it contains a holy grail, a seagull, a Zen motorcycle, and many other symbols of the ineffable. But Brahmā's spiritual vision was not mystical in this sense. It does not symbolize something that cannot be expressed, as Wittgenstein would have us believe:

There are indeed things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical.\*

In a book entitled *Mysticism Examined*, Richard H. Jones analyzes the problems mystics encounter with language.\* He offers many quotations to show that through the ages these problems have obliged mystics to resort to symbolism, negation,

paradox and silence. The reason, he argues, is that mystics share with materialistically-minded people a mistaken mirror-theory of language. The mirror-theory is plagued by two problems. One is the assumption that language can have no metaphysical depth. It can only mirror human experience. Alice could step through her magic looking-glass into a world beyond, but language has no such magic. It is only a two-dimensional reflection that ever denies us direct entry into the truth represented by words. In short, words cannot convey substance. The second problem is the assumption that our use of words is like looking at a mirror both embed a subject-object concept in the intellect. But all that is really there is our own self. Jones defines a mystical experience in this way:

One moves away from the normal cognitive situation of a subject knowing a mental or physical object set off from the subject in some sense. More exactly, the result is a state of consciousness without an object *of* consciousness.\*

Jones cites a famous mystic as saying, Everything in the Godhead is one, and of that there is nothing to be said.\* Commenting, he notes that when mystics defend with words

... the claim Everything in the Godhead is one ... far from aiding in inducing such an experience, [that verbal defense] embeds concepts more firmly as acceptable to the intellect. An antimystical effect is thereby produced. We are still left in the realm of language and, as the Ch'an adage goes, Wordiness and intellection the more with them, the further astray we go.\*

It is true that words vibrating through attitudes of false ego I am one with everything, The cosmic power is mine, I am God cannot convey the message of transcendence. These words reflexively return to illusion even as they attempt to go beyond it. The mirror-theory of language knows only the words of illusion. It cannot account for Vedic language. Beyond material sound is spiritual sound (*çabda*), as *Vedānta-sūtra* 4.4.22 confirms: *anāvāttiù çabdāt*, There is no return to illusion because of *çabda*. Words did not prevent Brahmā from sharing his experience of Vaikuëoha to his disciples. Quite to the contrary. He was empowered by his spiritual vision to be the first *brāhmaëa* (teacher of *çabda*). In assuming this exalted position, Brahmā did not fall under the material spell of the false ego, by which the illusory duality of mind-subject and matter-object is generated. He knew through Vedic spiritual vision exactly what the false ego really is: a personal servant of the Supreme Lord. The special feature of Vedic knowledge that sets it apart from much of the mystical is *māyānubhāvam avidam*, the clear, easy understanding of the influence of the Lord's energy (*māyā*). (*Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 1.5.31) Let us suppose we want to understand the influence of alcohol. We could try induction, and taste it. But this leads to intoxication, addiction and other dangerous consequences. The easy way to understand alcohol is to hear about it from an authority, who instructs us all about its positive and negative uses. When one knows the influence of alcohol the easy way, he sees clearly that a drunkard's condition is abominable. Because the drunkard is *under the influence*, he cannot see his own position. Staggering from one bar to the next, he doesn't think of himself as inebriated he thinks himself the *greatest man alive*. Similarly, when the living entity comes under the influence of the material

potency of Kåñëa's servants (the mind, senses and so on), he thinks himself the controller of these potencies. He thinks himself God. That only means he has fallen under the control of the false ego. Vedic knowledge puts the living entity under the influence of *svataù-siddha-jñāna*, the knowledge of the real ego as an eternal servant of Kåñëa. Mysticism is often an attempt to realize the infinite and unspeakable by the suspension of thought and action in silent meditation.\* But one who is endowed with Vedic knowledge expertly uses his mind, senses and words in devotional service. Yet the false sense of I and mine does not arise, because his relationship with the mind, senses and everything is transformed. It is like this: milk, which can cause diarrhea, can cure the same when it is transformed into curd. Similarly, the material energy, the cause of the soul's disease of repeated birth and death, becomes the cure for the same disease when it is transformed in the service of the Lord. The Lord's energy (the mind, the senses, conditioned nature, physical objects and so on) helps the devotee in his efforts to get free of illusion. Illusion simply means forgetfulness of the fact that there is nothing separate from Kåñëa at any time, because everything is His energy. Yet the same energy confounds the efforts of the *karmés* and *jñānés* as *māyā*, the cause of all their sufferings. Knowing the truth of Kåñëa's energy, we know the answer to the question raised in the last two chapters why? Why are we born? Why do we have a body and mind? Why is there a material world? The answer is that everything, both material and spiritual, is meant to be engaged in Kåñëa's service. We have the chance to realize that in this human birth. As Çréla Prabhupāda states in his purport to *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 1.5.33, by using everything in relation to the Supreme,

... we can experience that there is nothing except the Supreme Brahman. The Vedic *mantra* that everything is Brahman is thus realized by us.

Brahman means the Absolute Truth, and absolute means all-inclusive. The all-inclusive truth is that there is nothing that does not originate in Kåñëa. Therefore everything has a *dharma*, an essential purpose, in relation to Him. That purpose is called Vedic *dharma* because it is revealed in the Vedas. *Taittiréya Upaniñad* 3.1.1. states, *yato vä imāni bhütāni jāyante*. This means everything, including words, thoughts, actions, objects, space and time, manifests from Brahman. Brahman is the very substance of all creations, the way the ocean is the substance of its waves. *Chāndogya Upaniñad* 3.14.1 confirms: *sarvaà khalv idaà brahma*, everything is Brahman.

### Beyond the duality of matter and spirit

*Karmés* suppose the true nature of reality to be material. Matter is real, and spirit (consciousness) is a product of matter. Words cannot be sensibly used in a spiritual way, for they apply only to the practical affairs of human life. *Jñānés* suppose the opposite. The world of matter is imaginary. Words are part of this imagination. They only convey falsity. The truth is an inexpressible impersonal spirit or Entity that

mysteriously manifests itself as the world around us. Çréla Prabhupāda sheds more light on this matter-spirit duality in the following quotation from the purport to *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 10.3.18:

Not knowing the conclusions of the Vedas, some people accept the material nature as substance, and others accept the spirit soul as substance, but actually Brahman is the substance. Brahman is the cause of all causes. The ingredients and the immediate cause of this manifested material world are Brahman, and we cannot make the ingredients of this world independent of Brahman. Furthermore, since the ingredients and the immediate cause of this material manifestation are Brahman, both of them are truth, *satya*; there is no validity to the expression *brahma satyaà jagan mithyā*. The world is not false.

*Jiānēs* reject this world, and foolish persons [*karmēs*] accept this world as reality, and in this way they are both misguided. Although the body is not as important as the soul, we cannot say that it is false. Yet the body is temporary, and only foolish, materialistic persons, who do not have full knowledge of the soul, regard the temporary body as reality and engage in decorating this body. Both of these pitfalls—rejection of the body as false and acceptance of the body as all in all—can be avoided when one is fully situated in Kāñēa consciousness. If we regard this world as false, we fall into the category of *asuras*, who say that this world is unreal, with no foundation and no God in control (*asatyam apratiñōhaà te jagad āhur anēçvaram*). As described in the Sixteenth Chapter of *Bhagavad-gētā*, this is the conclusion of demons.

### The five stages of Vedic knowledge

Vedic *çabda* is self-evident and objective. But as it was noted before, *çabda* is *su-durbodham*, very difficult for one under the covering of false ego to understand. We are deaf and blind to our own hearts, to the transcendental sound within, and to the Lord from whom that sound emanates.

*jéve sākñāt nāhi tāte guru caitya-rūpe  
çikñā-guru haya kāñēa-mahānta-svarūpe*

Since one cannot visually experience the presence of the Supersoul, He appears before us as a liberated devotee. Such a spiritual master is no one other than Kāñēa Himself.

This verse from *Çré Caitanya-caritāmāta* (Ādi-lēlā 1.58) begins with the words *jéva sākñāt*: the *jéva* visually experiences. The Bengali word *sākñāt* means direct experience. Its root is the word *akñā* (the eye or the senses). It conveys the same meaning as *pratyakñā* (*prati* means near or through, and *akñā* means senses). The idea is that because the perception of the conditioned soul is limited to *pratyakñā*, he therefore cannot (*nāhi tāte*) inwardly perceive the *guru* in the heart. But he can

perceive the *guru* who appears externally as a great devotee to impart *çikñä* (spiritual instruction). The *jéva* should therefore surrender his senses to the service of the visible, living *çikñä-guru*. Through the senses he receives the Vedic teachings, which begin with *äcära*, behavior. The spiritual master is *äcärya*, one who teaches by example how Vedic knowledge is to be practiced. By *pratyakñä*, seeing, hearing and following the teacher's practical example, the *jéva* is established in *bhakti-yoga*. This is the first of five stages of Vedic knowledge:

- 1) *pratyakñä* knowledge through one's own senses
- 2) *parokñä* knowledge through another's senses
- 3) *aparokñä* direct knowledge
- 4) *adhokñaja* revealed knowledge
- 5) *apräkåta* spiritual knowledge.

Following the saintly behavior of his teacher, the disciple ascends from *pratyakñä* to the second stage of learning called *parokñä*. *Parokñä* means indirect knowledge, seeing the truth with the eyes of a superior. For instance, at midnight we might call a friend living thousands of miles to the west of us and ask if he sees the sun. Hearing his report, Yes, it is a sunny day here, we see the sun through *parokñä* vision.\* By hearing and repeating authoritative testimony, and shunning speculative interpretation, one takes shelter of those with superior vision. Philosophical understanding gradually follows. This is called *aparokñä*, direct knowledge by realizing what was heard from authorities. At this stage, one's *anumäna* (logic and reason) is attached to Vedic knowledge. This is not mental speculation but *vicära*, the philosophical considerations of a disciple who follows strictly the example and teachings of his spiritual master.\*

*Vicära* means you just try to understand the gift of Lord Caitanya by logic, *vicära*. Don't follow blindly. Following blindly something, that is not good. That will not stay. But one should take everything with logic.\*

*Aparokñä* leads the disciple to the *adhokñaja* platform, the fourth stage of Vedic knowledge. *Adhaù* means downwards, and *akñä-ja* means born of the senses. The idea is that *adhokñaja* knowledge defeats, or pushes downwards, all knowledge born of the senses and mind. At the *adhokñaja* stage, the shroud of the occult is at last lifted from the *éçvara*, *jéva*, *prakåti*, *kåla* and *karma tattvas*. In *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 7.7.37, Prahlåda Mahäräja explains *adhokñaja-ålbham* (constant contact with *adhokñaja* knowledge) as being the result of meditation and worship of the *håt-éçvara*, the Lord in the heart. All doubting ends here. Now at last *çabda* is directly perceived in its self-evident glory as the truth beyond mind and matter. Spiritual sound is tasted as nectar at the fifth and ultimate stage of Vedic knowledge, called *apräkåta* (not manufactured, or not *prakåti*, not within the range of material nature). *Apräkåta* knowledge is the divine perception of the Lord's transcendental pastimes, beyond the mechanical functions of material nature (i.e. *prakåti*, *kåla* and *karma*) in which the fallen *jévas* are entrapped. *Apräkåta* is spiritual activity, Çréla Prabhupåda said.\* Surpassing the logic of material causation, surpassing even the discrimination of spirit from matter, *apräkåta* knowledge reveals the *jéva's* original position as an eternal loving associate of Kåñëa in the spiritual world, Vaikuëha. This is *pratyakñä* of the highest order (called *divya-pratyakñä*), direct perception through spiritual



senses of Kāñëa and His divine abode. It floods the devotee's consciousness with unending bliss. Such *divya-pratyakñä* is knowledge of the Lord in full through *yoga*, the linking of the spiritually transformed body, mind, intelligence, and senses to Kāñëa. This linking process begins with the ear. And the permanent fixing of the ear, body, mind and the rest in *yoga* is effected by *anurakta*, attachment to the spiritual master, and *bhakti*, pure devotion to Kāñëa.\*

## The transmission of knowledge through sound

To receive Vedic knowledge, the disciple must surrender his full attention to the spiritual master. And to transmit the message onward, a disciple must faithfully and accurately represent his spiritual master's words. Even when a disciple has his own realization of the philosophy, he still uses that realization in the service of the message of his *guru*. If he tries to reinvent the philosophy, his link to the *paramparä* is lost. What to speak of deliberate invention, a break of attention is enough to separate the disciple from the potency of *çabda*. As Çréla Prabhupäda warns:

An illusion is a misunderstanding which arises from inattention while hearing, and cheating is the transmission of such defective knowledge to others.\*

In the next two chapters, we will examine more closely how defects attempt to infiltrate the transmission of *çabda*. But even if there is no deviation or break of attention, how can words transmit transcendental knowledge? To give attention to words, we must hear and read them. And for that, the words must be tangible, *physical*. How can materially formed words convey nonmaterial information? The answer is that the vibration of the spiritual master's words is untainted by false ego. This is the meaning of *çästramülaka*: words that are ever- rooted in pure Vedic knowledge. Even though conveyed by a tangible medium (a voice, or printed matter), *çästramülaka* words remain pure. We all know that sound is a most versatile medium. For instance, if I speak with a dear friend over the telephone, I experience much more than a tinny voice in the earpiece. I experience his warmth, his humor, his concern for my well-being. In short, I experience his personality. But because the potency of his words are limited, his smiling face, his firm handshake and so many other features are not made explicit through the telephone. I do not experience his *total* personality. But *çästramülaka* words have the particular potency to make fully explicit the source of all experience, Kāñëa. Çréla Prabhupäda said, This sound and the person who is transmitting the sound are identical.\* As this sound cuts through the darkness of false ego surrounding the heart, the personalities of the Lord and His eternal associates gradually appear in the five stages of knowledge. At the transcendental stage, every word vibrating in any language is known to be rooted in the spiritual sky of Brahman, which eternally resounds with the glories of the Lord and His devotees.\* Commonplace *laukika* words, when spoken from the Brahman platform where they originate, convey the supramundane Absolute Truth. But how can a person still on the *pratyakñä* stage reasonably believe in the spiritual potency

of words spoken by a *brahmavit* (knower of Brahman)? Via *pratyakñā*, the Personality of Godhead is not directly seen through words that describe Him. But the proof of His potency is the effect of those words. A blazing fireplace, the heat of the fire, and the servant tending the fire are equally responsible for keeping a room warm on a winter's night. Sleeping in this room, I cannot see throughout the course of the night how the fire is burning nicely, nor whether the servant tends it. But the proof of all this is the effect: the room does not grow cold at any time. Similarly, as Çréla Prabhupāda said, the potency of spiritual sound, the potency of the person speaking that sound, and Kāññā's own potency, can be understood through spiritual warmth.\* When one is warmed by the potency of spiritual sound, he becomes transcendently joyful. Sense gratification and mental speculation, which chill the heart and cause us distress, are dispelled as soon as the heart is flooded by the joy of Kāññā consciousness.

### Where is the meaning of words?

Someone may respond, You say that spiritual sound has the potency to reveal the Personality of Godhead. You say the immediate proof is the joy of hearing that sound. Then you speak of higher stages of knowledge that will come later. Well, I don't share your joy of hearing Vedic sound because I am frankly sceptical that words can refer to anything higher than *pratyakñā*. For a word to be understandable, it must convey a meaning that I can link to an experience. You speak of transcendental forms. My experience is that all forms are material, perishable and limited. Whatever could an 'eternal self' be? All the selves I know die. How can anyone grasp these occult meanings you give to words? I find them impossible to accept, and so I get no joy from what you say. Apart from your 'proof of joy', which neither appeals nor applies to me, can you give a sensible reason why you think this so-called transcendental knowledge can be transmitted through the language of my present experience? But before challenging the meaningfulness of spiritual sound, a person on the *pratyakñā* level should explain how words transmit knowledge *within* his experience.\* The word airplane does not apply simply to winged flying vehicles that I have had personal experience of. It refers to the Wright brothers' first biplane and the Japanese dive bombers that attacked Pearl Harbor. I have never seen these. It refers to thousands upon thousands of propeller-driven planes, jet airliners, supersonic interceptors, and the odd top-secret experimental aircraft. I have not seen most of these either. Every example on earth of a winged flying vehicle, in the past, present and in the future, is called airplane, or an equivalent name in other languages *Flugzeug* in German, *bimān* in Bengali, and so on. Each person on earth who is acquainted with modern civilization knows instantly what the word airplane means, and can match it with any example he or she may come to know. Yet each person on earth has had a direct experience of only a small percentage of all airplanes. So the claim that a person on the *pratyakñā* level can only understand a word in terms of experience does not match up to our easy familiarity with the word airplane. Our *pratyakñāvādē* might then transform into an *anumāna-vādē*. Actually,

the word 'airplane' evokes a concept, a 'universal' that includes all examples of winged flying machines. When we hear the word 'airplane', we refer to that concept. That is why we understand the word. But this just makes it more complicated. Before we had a word and innumerable examples. Now we have a word, innumerable examples, and a concept. Why should a word, which is just a certain noise in the air or mark on a page, evoke a concept in our minds? What, indeed, is a concept? Why does the concept airplane include all examples? Why does the word airplane fit any or all innumerable examples of the concept? These puzzling questions just lead us to the conclusion that there is an occult power behind words that our perceptions and thoughts fail to grasp. Perhaps it is simpler to ask, Where is the location of the meaning of the word 'airplane'? It is clear that it is not merely located in our experience. Nor does it sit on some reference shelf in the back of our minds, if that's what a concept is supposed to be. I do not need to check some mental dictionary every time I hear the word airplane. Without the slightest mental effort, I know what an airplane is. The meaning transcends time and space, even the duality of truth and falsity. An airplane in the sky means the same whether it refers to the flight of an airplane here and now, or a flight ten years ago, or a future flight, or a flight that is merely being imagined. It means the same even if the speaker is lying about an airplane in the sky that isn't there. Why do we hundreds and hundreds of millions of people instantly recognize the meaning of airplane in all these different cases? Now, by saying, a Vaikuëöha airplane in the spiritual sky, the word airplane does not suddenly lose meaning. The meaning is as clear as it would be about any airplane outside of our experience. Perhaps a few details have to be explained. This particular airplane, the Vaikuëöha variety, is beyond ordinary perception, since it is eternal and made of pure consciousness. Another airplane, the first one flown by the Wrights, is also beyond ordinary perception, since it is now destroyed; it was made of wood and fabric that now we cannot see. In both cases, the word airplane conveys meaning. In neither case do we perceive why the word airplane conveys meaning. The logic of, We have no experience of a Vaikuëöha airplane, therefore such a thing can't be understood, can be applied to hundreds of thousands of other instances of the word airplane for which we have no experience: a Japanese dive bomber, the Spirit of St. Louis, an Air Bhutan passenger plane. But in spite of the sceptic's logic, we do learn about these airplanes through the medium of words. We may not have as much faith in the sources of words about Vaikuëöha airplanes as we do in the sources of words about material airplanes. But that does not make us men and women of superior reason. After all, we do not even know the reason why we know what the word airplane means. Similarly, we know what a form is without knowing why. We know what a self is without knowing why. As with airplane, the word-meanings of form and self are not simply our limited experiences of particular examples of material forms or bodies. Nor are they particular concepts stored in our heads. For instance, nobody thinks of the self as an automobile, unless he is crazy. Yet if a car bumps mine in city traffic, I may spontaneously shout, You hit me! Someone else hearing this statement immediately understands what I mean, even though me and automobile are dissimilar concepts. You hit me transcends both experience (since I am not perceived as an automobile) and concepts (since I don't fancy myself as an automobile). Yet still it conveys meaning. When our *pratyakñavädé* argues, I can't understand what you mean when you say 'transcendental form', since I have no present experience of that, we might ask him how he can understand a statement

about the human form a hundred years in the future. Any talk of form in the future transcends our present experience of form.

## The original sense of language

Wittgenstein wrote, language itself is the vehicle of thought.\* As far as it goes, this accords with the Vedic version. But a question remains. *Whose* thought does language convey? Only the thought of humanity, it might be supposed, since Wittgenstein said language is just a game that people play. If that is true, then humanity should be able to explain why words have meaning, what meaning is and what an idea is. But no clear answer is forthcoming even from the most erudite philosophers. \* The Vedic version is that the transmission of commonplace topics is only a secondary function of words. Primarily, there is a transcendental sense to language. Words originate in the heart of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. They mean just what Kåñëa wants them to mean. The *Kena Upaniñad* 1.2. explains:

*çrotrasya çotraà manaso mano yad  
väco ha väcaà sa u präëasya präëau  
cakñuñaç cakñur atimucya dhëräu  
pretyäsmäl lokäd amâtä bhavanti*

The Lord is the Ear of the ear, the Mind of the mind, the Speech of speech, the Breath of breath and the Eye of the eye. Knowing this [having given up the notions I am the hearer, thinker, speaker, breather and seer], the wise transcend this world and become immortal.

The desire to fly in a winged vehicle is originally Kåñëa's own. The glorious airplanes of Vaikuëöha are the eternal servants of that particular desire. Whatever Kåñëa desires within His mind is immediately true and self-existent; hence He is called Satya-saikalpa.\* And so His airplanes are meaningful and true beyond all relativities of human thought; they are an eternal feature of the divine glories of Vaikuëöha. These glories pervade the spiritual sky as transcendental vibration. That same vibration energizes the egoistic sky deep within the hearts of human beings. It generates millions of names and forms in the mind, including the name airplane and the form of a winged vehicle. Agitated by the material representation of airplane in consciousness, men developed through *jñäna-karma* (theory and experiment) this subtle name and form into the gross examples of airplanes we see today. By our inclination to illusion, we use the words Kåñëa gave us for purposes other than His pleasure. But the actual purpose of words whether airplane, form and self, or any other is to glorify the Lord, His pleasure pastimes, and His devotees who share His divine qualities. When so utilized, the power of these words to invoke a meaning that transcends our senses, minds, time, place, circumstance and even relative truth and illusion, is, on the *apräkåta* platform, *fully realized as the eternal Absolute Reality*. When we use words for a separate purpose, their power binds us to temporary relativities.

It is very much regrettable that unfortunate people do not discuss the description of the Vaikuëöha planets but engage in topics which are unworthy to hear and which bewilder one's intelligence. Those who give up the topics of Vaikuëöha and take to talk of the material world are thrown into the darkest region of ignorance. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 3.15.23)

A materialist, his intelligence perverted by the action of his deceptive senses, cannot recognize You at all, although You are always present within his own senses and heart and also among the objects of his perception. Yet even though one's understanding has been covered by Your illusory potency, if one obtains Vedic knowledge from You, the supreme spiritual master of all, he can directly understand You. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 12.8.48)

### Notes to Chapter Three

1. Kitty Ferguson, *The Fire in the Equations*, 1994, p. 174. One modern speculative equivalent to *äkäça* is called the Higgs field. Another is quantum ether, a term used by the distinguished physicist David Bohm.
2. According to Bohm, reality is a *holomovement*, a complex of infinitely subtle vibratory phenomena out of which so-called stable material structures are abstracted.
3. Çréla Prabhupäda, lecture on *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* in Bombay, January 9, 1975.
4. Çréla Prabhupäda, *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 3.26.32, purport.
5. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 9.4.18)
6. From Çréla Prabhupäda's purport to *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 2.6.32: This external energy is also displayed in the three modes of goodness, passion and ignorance. Similarly, the internal potency is also displayed in three spiritual modes *samvit*, *sandhiné* and *hlädiné*. The terms *sandhiné*, *samvit* and *hlädiné* mean the same as *sat*, *cid* and *änanda* (cf. *Çré Caitanya-caritämäta*, *Ädi-lälä* 4.62).
7. Çréla Prabhupäda, lecture on *Bhagavad-gétä* in New York, February 19, 1966: Impersonal Brahman realization is the realization of His *sat* part, eternity. And Paramätmä realization is the realization of *sac-cit*, eternal knowledge part realization. But realization of the Personality of Godhead as Kåñëa is realization of all the transcendental features like *sat*, *cid*, and *änanda*, in complete *vigraha*. *Vigraha* means form. *Vigraha* means form. *Avyaktaà vyaktim äpannaà manyante mäm abuddhayaù*. People with less intelligence, they consider the Supreme Truth as impersonal, but He is a person, a transcendental person. This is confirmed in all Vedic literature.

8. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 3.9.11)
9. Çréla Prabhupäda, *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* lecture in Delhi, November 16, 1973.
10. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.21.38-40)
11. Çréla Baladeva Vidyäbhüñaëa, *Govinda-bhāñya* commentary on *Vedānta-sūtra* 1.3.14.
12. *Āg-Veda* 10.129.4: *kāmas tad agre sam avartatādhi manaso retaù prathamaà yad äsét*: In the beginning there was desire (*kāma*), which was the primal germ of the mind.
13. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.21.28)
14. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 1.5.15)
15. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 3.5.30)
16. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 2.10.32)
17. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.21.36)
18. In *The Return to Cosmology*, 1982, p. 24, Stephen Toulmin compares the making of humanity's myths to the trickiest of crime stories, in which the detective himself turns out to have done the deed.
19. *Yävat sakhä sakhyur iveça te kâtaù*: O my Lord, the unborn, You have shaken hands with me just as a friend does with a friend [as if equal in position]. (from *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 2.9.30)
20. Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura, *Tattva-sūtra* 31.
21. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 2.9.17)
22. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1922, 6.522.
23. Richard H. Jones, *Mysticism Examined (Philosophical Inquiries into Mysticism)*, 1993, pp. 12-13.
24. Richard H. Jones, *Mysticism Examined (Philosophical Inquiries into Mysticism)*, 1993, p. 101.
25. These are the words of Meister Eckhart. Jones credits this quotation to *Meister Eckhart* by John M. Watkins (1924), volume 1, p. 143.
26. Richard H. Jones, *Mysticism Examined (Philosophical Inquiries into Mysticism)*, 1993, p. 123.

27. (*Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 1.5.31)

28. In *The Mysticism of Rāmānuja*, Chapter One (An Understanding of Mysticism), Cyril Veliath typifies mystical realization as mysterious and wholly other, and totally beyond human language or understanding. To practice mysticism, one should let oneself go, be quiet and receptive. A mystic who attempts to communicate his experience to others, may continue to use the religious language of his own respective tradition, but all his efforts to communicate are doomed to failure.

29. Çréla Prabhupāda, conversation in Los Angeles, June 10, 1976: Just like *pratyakñā*, directly, you do not see the sun on the sky, but the same example, if you phone your friend, 'Where is the sun?' then he'll say, 'Yes, here is the sun.' So this is called *parokñā*, means you get the knowledge by other sources. Your direct sources, you cannot see, but you get from other sources, you understand, 'Yes, sun is there in the sky.'

30. Çréla Prabhupāda defined *aparokñā* as realizing in Detroit on July 18, 1971. He spoke about *ācāra* and *vicāra* in a *Bhagavad-gétā* lecture in Hyderabad on December 15, 1976. So *vicāra-päëòita*. Unless one is very learned, he cannot consider things. But *ācāra*, *ācāra* everyone can do. *ācāra* means just like to rise early in the morning, to take bath, chant Hare Kāññā, have *tilaka*, observe *maigala-ārati*. This is called *ācāra*. Then there is hygienic. And *vicāra* means consideration.

31. Çréla Prabhupāda, *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* lecture in Calcutta, January 6, 1971.

32. Çréla Prabhupāda, conversation in Honolulu, June 10, 1975: Then *aprākāta*, spiritual. Spiritual platform is not understood by machine, material machine. Then what is the spiritual platform? Kāññā is understood not by machine. Kāññā says, *bhaktyā mām abhijānāti*: 'Through devotion only.' So devotion is not machine. That is spiritual activity.

33. Çréla Prabhupāda explained the five stages of Vedic knowledge (*pratyakñā*, *parokñā*, *aparokñā*, *adhokñāja* and *aprākāta*) on several occasions. The reader may refer to the following for more details: 1) a *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* lecture in Montreal, July 6, 1968 (680706SB.MON); 2) an initiation lecture in Detroit, July 18, 1971 (710718IN.DET); 3) a *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* lecture in Bombay, January 12, 1975 (750112SB.BOM); 4) a conversation in Honolulu, June 10, 1975 (750610RC.HON); 5) a conversation in Los Angeles, June 10, 1976 (760610RC.LA).

In *The Bhāgavat*, Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura presents *pratyakñā* and *parokñā* as methods of the ascending (inductive) process of knowledge. He defines *parokñā* as the collective sense perception by many persons past and present. In other words, the term refers to the acceptance of mundane authority. Çréla Prabhupāda uses *parokñā* in that sense too, but also in terms of the acceptance of *paramparā* authority (see the Bombay lecture). Çréla Bhaktivinoda Öhäkura says *aparokñā* is ascending if it merely negates the previous two stages. *Aparokñā* is descending (deductive) knowledge when it positively searches for transcendence. Only *adhokñāja* and *aprākāta* are fully descending. The former is devotional service under

rules and regulations, says the Öhäkura, and the latter is realization of love of Godhead. Likewise, in a *Bhagavad-gétä* lecture in London on August 8, 1973, Çréla Prabhupäda said, Kåñëa consciousness means *adhokñaja* and *apräkåta*. But in the Montreal class he placed the first four stages within *vaidhi-bhakti* and the last within *räga-bhakti*.

34. Çréla Prabhupäda, *Çré Caitanya-caritämåta, Ädi-lälä* 7.107, purport.

35. Çréla Prabhupäda, lecture in Boston, December 23, 1969.

36. *Vedänta-sütra* 2.3.15: *caräcära-vyapäçrayas tu syät tad- vyapadeço 'bhäktas tad- bhäva-bhävitvät*, As will be learned from hearing the Vedic *çabda*, every word is a name of the Lord, because He resides in all moving and non-moving things.

37. Çréla Prabhupäda, lecture in Boston, December 23, 1969.

38. The cue for some of the arguments that follow next comes from Thomas Nagel's *What does It All Mean?*, 1987, chapter 5.

39. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 1953, p. 329.

40. W.V. Quine, held to be one of the most influential American philosophers of the twentieth century, on why words have meaning: I see no prospect of a precise answer, nor any need of one. As to what meaning is, he said: Evidently then meaning and ideas are the same things. About what ideas are: The way to clarify our talk of ideas is not to say what ideas are. His conclusion: There is no place in science for ideas. From *Quiddities*, 1987, under the entries for Meaning, and Ideas.

41. (See for example *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.1.5 and 11.15.26)

42. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 3.15.23)

43. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 12.8.48)

## Chapter Four: A Discussion on the Means to Knowledge

And now, in the order of their appearance, Dr. Viçva Parägdåñöi (a scientist), Vedasära däsa (a Bhakti-Vedäntist), Khagäkña (a religious rationalist), Vidyäviruddha (an impersonal monist), and Svapnarätri (a subjective idealist), will discuss some of the topics raised in the previous chapters.



**Dr. Parāgdāññōi:** The fact is that scientists are not ideologists. We are practical men and women, most of whom are not very concerned with philosophy. That's why I suppose Paul Feyerabend declared back in 1975 that the only principle of progress we scientists really have is anything goes. Speaking as a scientist myself, that's what makes science so exciting. Within the range of modern scientific disciplines you'll find believers in Christianity, Vedānta, Platonism, Cartesian dualism, logical positivism, materialism, idealism, functionalism, phenomenology, and more. But scientists share the same common denominator, which is the scientific work ethic: get off your theoretical backside, go into the lab or out in the field, and come back with some hard results, something the rest of the world can get their hands on. That's the criterion I think a method of knowledge has to be judged by what it does for the rest of the world. Science is what works. And what is special about the scientific community, what sets us apart from religious people and even philosophers, is that we make *sure* it works, or we just don't have time for it. It's got to stand up to criticism yes, rigorous and unforgiving criticism. But that's how you tell if something works or not. Hermetic logic, pure theory, abstruse super-sophistication, secret wisdom from ancient texts, doesn't impress me. There is nothing certain in any of that. Just give me something that passes the tests. Then I'll use it. Among my scientist friends, I don't know a single one who does not believe that the universe is governed by objective laws from which all phenomena can be deduced. On the basis of this belief, we theorize the big picture. But to see that big picture, you've got to inductively investigate what's out there, bit by bit. See what works, see what's real, and as you fit the pieces together, the deductive logic of the universe is made manifest.

**Vedasāra dāsa:** Thank you, Dr. Parāgdāññōi, for your defense of the method of modern science. I must say with all respect to you that your remarks confirm our analysis of the modern scientific method. You told us there's a bottom line in science, and that is getting tangible results in the lab and in the field results the world can get its hands on. From this, I gather you mean technology, which enhances material life. But material life is in the hands of death, the ultimate suffering. At the time of death, our hands lose their grip on technology. Then how is technology a tangible gain? Whatever the results of the scientific method may be, they do not answer life's substantial questions: why was I born, why must I die, and what is the purpose of this temporary human life? You've quoted Mr. Feyerabend's phrase, anything goes, as if he meant to say that the scientific method is freethinking. Actually, what he really meant he made clear in another phrase: there is no scientific method. I agree. Science is insubstantial, both in method and in goal. You said that scientists are not ideologists. You've suggested that the attitude of science is one of philosophical uncertainty. I think what you're getting at is that the philosophy of science *is* uncertainty. Science does not know whether anything it does is based upon fact. Herbert Feigl, a leading philosopher of science, admitted that it may very well be that all the theories of science are born false. Yet scientists continue to give birth to new theories. This is why we insist the whole enterprise of scientific induction is just gambling.

**Khagākñā:** I'd like reply to that. Vedasāra, you and I share a theistic view of the world. But unlike you, I firmly believe that from knowledge of a part of a thing, a

valid inductive conclusion may be drawn about the whole thing. May I remind you, Vedasāra, that your *ācārya* Çréla Prabhupāda taught this very principle himself when he said that the test of a single grain of rice can prove whether the whole pot is cooked. You seem to only want to look at the whole pot, not at any one grain. Of course, any individual rice grain cannot be the whole pot. But that does not mean we should reject the testimony of a grain of rice about the whole pot. We should learn how to test the whole by induction from the single grain. There are so many religious people in the world, so many philosophers, scientists, and other people with insight into the meaning of life. Any one of them won't have the whole truth. But from any one of them you can get a sense of the truth, one that will help you see the truth of the whole pot. You have to keep an open mind. I suggest you may be forgetting that in your own Kāñëa conscious philosophy, utility is the principle. Dr. Parāgdāñöi was saying that the bottom-line principle of science is practicality. So didn't Çréla Prabhupāda mean the same when he said utility is the principle? In utility you have the possibility of a common ground between Kāñëa and modern science. You've unnecessarily closed your mind to the good use the inductive method can be put to in service to Kāñëa. You've said the scientific method is gambling; well, I say your method is dogmatic.

**Vedasāra dāsa:** We are in agreement that utility is the principle. Modern science and technology can be used in Kāñëa's service, there is no doubt about that. But utility is not just knowing how to use something. We have to know *why*. However expert we may be in technique, if we use Kāñëa's energy with wrong intentions, we will remain sunk in the ocean of repeated birth and death. Çréla Prabhupāda taught us that the why of utility is understood by the basis, essence and force of our intention. The intention to serve *māyā* is based upon material instinct (*svabhāva*), which is our ignorance. But the intention to serve Kāñëa is based upon knowledge for example, the books of his pure devotee, Çréla Prabhupāda. Devotees sometimes read other books to learn how to do certain things. But the actual basis of intention is seen not in how but in *why* we do a thing. And the essence of our intention is seen in the message we broadcast by our use of Kāñëa's energy. Materialistic utility broadcasts egoism, I and mine. But the essence of a devotee's use of Kāñëa's energy is that Kāñëa is the Supreme Self, and everything belongs to Him. Thus preaching Kāñëa consciousness is the essence. The force that powers Kāñëa conscious utility is purity of intention. Purity depends upon *anurakta* (attachment to *guru*), not *svabhāva-rakta* (attachment to our material inclinations). As for your example of the single grain and whole pot of rice, this is how Çréla Prabhupāda explained that analogy:

So everything, what you have got, the same thing God has also got. The difference is that you are like a drop of seawater and He is vast sea. That's all. Big quantity. Quantitatively, we are different, but qualitatively, we are one. The same quality. ... If you are cooking rice, you take one grain of rice and you press it, if you see that it is now soft, then the whole rice is cooked.\*

Çréla Prabhupāda is not being inductive. Though he uses the analogy of cooking rice, he is not referring it to a material experience or experiment. You cannot test What you have got, the same thing God has also got by trial and error. Remember,

induction is the logic of empiricism. Can you empirically measure that what you've got, God has also got? No. You have to accept on authority that there is a God, that He is the cause, and that you are related to God as an effect is related to a cause. Then, through the use of deductive and abductive reasoning, you can try to understand more about this relationship, guided by *çāstra*. Even if you take the grain/pot example as a lesson in nothing more philosophical than cooking, you have to first accept on authority that one cooked grain means the whole pot is cooked. Once you've accepted that, you can deduce a conclusion about any pot of rice by testing just one grain. If you assume the inductive stance, then the grain/pot example can only be a hypothesis. That hypothesis would have to be tested by pressing every grain of rice in the pot to prove that one grain is the measure of them all. Finally, the question is not why a devotee of Kåñëa is forbidden to use inductive logic. It is common, everyday logic, and of course we use it in the Lord's service. For instance, in 1966, when ISKCON was just a storefront on New York's Second Avenue, Çréla Prabhupāda sent a disciple to the IBM company. He'd heard of its policy of donating typewriters to educational institutions, and told that devotee to ask for one. You might say it was a kind of an inductive gamble to approach IBM on behalf of such a small, unknown and highly unusual society as ours was then. The company representative refused, saying ISKCON didn't qualify. Still, there was nothing lost in trying. Even though he did not get a typewriter, to this very day that disciple considers himself fortunate to have had the chance to serve Çréla Prabhupāda in that way. Çréla Prabhupāda encouraged his disciples to take risks in preaching. So there is plenty of scope for engaging the inductive method in Kåñëa's service. The question we are disputing is whether metaphysical induction has validity as a method of higher knowledge. The Vedic answer is no. On the basis of *pratyakñā* and *anumāna*, we do not hypothesize what the original cause of sense perception might be. Knowledge of that, the substance of reality, comes to us as *çabda*. When induction is applied to *çabda*, it immediately thwarts the proper understanding, as Çré Caitanya-caritāmāta, *Madhya-lélä* 6.137 confirms:

*svataù-pramäëa veda satya yei kaya  
'lakñäëä' karila svataù-prämäëya-häni haya*

The Vedic statements are self-evident. Whatever is stated there must be accepted. If we interpret according to our own imagination, the authority of the Vedas is immediately lost.

**Vidyäviruddha:** But it is admitted that there is a stage when a person sufficiently learned in Vedic knowledge explains the *çāstra-pramäëa* from his or her realization *aparokñā*. I don't see the difference between this and imagination.

**Vedasära däsa:** In the purport to the verse I just quoted, Çréla Prabhupāda writes that imagination proceeds from our intention (what we want to do). The intention of a scientist to bring material nature under his control manifests as his attempt to measure matter by observation and imagination. Similarly, one who attempts to measure the Vedic knowledge has a wrong intention. His measurement is his imagination. But *aparokñā*, or *vicāra* philosophical speculation, does not try to

confine the Absolute Truth within human limits. *Çré Caitanya-caritāmāta, Madhya-lälä* 21.16 explains:

*seha rahuvraje yabe kãñëa avatära  
täira caritra vicärite mana nä päya pära*

Apart from all argument, logic and negative or positive processes, when Lord Çré Kãñëa was present as the Supreme Personality of Godhead at Våndävana, one could not find a limit to His potencies by studying His characteristics and activities.

**Vidyäviruddha:** I agree that Vedic knowledge is as vast as an ocean. The *çästra* says, *ekaà sad viprä bahudhä vadanti*, the truth, though one, was described differently by different sages.\* The sages are people, people are limited, and so no one sage's explanation can represent the pure, original Vedic intention. They all had to fill out the gaps of their limited realization with some amount of imaginative interpretation. That's why you end up with different explanations from different *gurus*. But that's all right, since the Vedas are meant to be explained differently. They have unlimited meaning. I don't think the authoritarian approach you take does justice to the true Vedic tradition, which always invites new ideas.

**Vedasära däsa:** The intention of the Vedas is clear: that we *stop mental speculation*. The various kinds of mental speculation, word jugglery and bluffing are clearly defined in the Vedas, and they are just as clearly rejected. For instance, we have verse 4.30 from *Manu-saàhitä*:

*pãñaëòino vikarma-sthän baiòäla-vratikäi chaöhän  
haitukän baka-vãttéaç ca väòmätreëpi nãrcayet*

One should not give honor, even with mere words, to *pãñaëòis* (those who argue that God can be worshiped in some imaginary way), *vikarmés* (those who are engaged in sinful actions), *baiòäla- vratikas* (those whose meditation is like that of a cat before a mousehole), *çäöhäs* (those who are hypocrites), *haitukas* (metaphysicians who try to make *çästra* subservient to inductive logic), and *baka-vãttis* (people who behave like wicked herons and yet think they are superior to the *haàsas*, the swan-like devotees).

What impels such speculators to speak is the false ego, another term for ignorance. They are ignorant, yet still they opine, each trying to outdo the other. A genuine Vedic sage is *pratibuddha-västu*. He knows that Kãñëa, not the ego, is the very substance (*vastu*) of reality. That *vastu*, Lord Çré Kãñëa, is an unlimited ocean of wonderful qualities. Different sages do explain Him from different angles of vision but not for argument's sake. In modern science, new theories are put forward for argument's sake, simply to refute other theories. This is egoism. *äcäryas* in the line of disciplic succession do not argue against the explanations of previous *äcäryas*. The example is given of a valuable gemstone that reflects different colors of light according to the angle from which it is observed. I may say it is a green stone, you may say it is a red stone, but if our purpose is to glorify *the substance* this wonderful gem we have no occasion to argue. The argumentative approach of the speculators is condemned in the *Mahäbhärata* as being *apratinöhä*, without any basis or

foundation.\* It ushers one into the shadow of Vedic knowledge. Lost in that shadow, one imagines a sage to be just someone who has a different opinion from other sages. For one lost in that shadow, the various Vedic texts are full of contradictions. For one lost in that shadow, the factual goal of the Vedas Lord Kāñëa is never found, because he is too busy splitting hairs.

**Svapnarätri:** I have a point to make about the logic of Vedänta. If I understood correctly, the followers of the Vedas think that their logic is unique, in that it is the only real deductive logic. An example was given from the *Vedänta-sütra*. The logic there is that the goal of life must be the cause of all desirable objects. Hence, the goal is the cause, and the cause is the goal. I would say this logic is not unique at all. Buddhist philosophers say *asmin sati, idaà bhavati*, When this is, that is. Now, this, the cause, is *abhütaparikalpa*, the imagination of unreality. And that is *çünyatä*, the void. In other words, imagination creates all the many objects of perception, which are actually just void. So the object of life is just our own imagination. But that's not an object either, because there is no object. All objects are only imaginary. Thus the only real cause is the void, and the only real goal is the void. When imagination arises from the void, the void appears to have attributes. These illusory attributes simultaneously provoke imagination. When this is, that is.

**Dr. Parägdåñöi:** Now this is interesting. According to Niels Bohr's Complementary Principle, the only things we can say about matter arise from the act of measurement. The material attributes we experience are the joint relationship of the object observed and the method of observation. If you take one or the other away, there can be no attributes.

**Svapnarätri:** Yes, that is my point exactly. The logic of the cause as the effect and the effect as the cause is self-evident and universal. It can be understood from many points of view, not just the Vedic way.

**Dr. Parägdåñöi:** The Buddhist conclusion is not that far away from Bohr's principle: there is no big truth, no deep reality, to talk about. We can only describe what things *seem* to us to be. But that doesn't really mean there is nothing to know. As Bohr himself said, The opposite of a big truth is also a big truth.

**Svapnarätri:** That reminds me of the old Chinese paradox of Chuang-tzu's dream: One night I dreamed I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither. Suddenly I awoke and I was Chuang-tzu again. Who am I in reality? A butterfly dreaming he is Chuang-tzu or Chuang-tzu dreaming he is a butterfly? When you said the opposite of a big truth is also a big truth, I remembered this riddle. Is the world a dream, and am I the dreamer? Or am I the dream, and the world the dreamer? Or do I and the world dream of one another? Any one is a big truth. And any one is just a dream at the same time. Does it matter which truth we choose to dream?

**Vedasära däsa:** Thank you both for making it so clear that material knowledge rests upon ignorance. Regarding the dream of the butterfly, the story is cute. But if he were a real person in the world today, Chuang-tzu would probably be advised to seek professional help. In any case, the philosophy is not sound. We know the

difference between dreamer and the dream because when we awake from our dreams, we are the same person. One night I may dream I am a butterfly. Another night I may dream I am a king. But each morning I awake as the same person I was the day before. That's how I know I dreamed of the butterfly, and not that the butterfly dreamed of me. Our perception of attributes is not caused by imagination, but by *vastu*, a real substance. That substance is the Supreme Person and His energy. But our perception of Him is limited and imperfect. To compensate for our ignorance, we invent imaginary ways to measure the substance empiricism, voidism, whatever. Imagination (*mānina*) arises from our wrong intention (*durāçaya*) towards the substance. *Māyā* (illusion) then reciprocates with our imagination and captures us. Why does a thief intend to steal? That intention is nothing else than his wrong attitude towards Kåñëa, the supreme proprietor. So he takes measures to burgle houses at night. *Māyā* gives him the chance to commit crimes. But in the end he is caught and punished. It is here that the thief's illusion becomes clear. It is not that the illusion is his perception of a house. The thief's imagination does not create *ex nihilo* a house to plunder. His perception of the house is caused by Kåñëa. Then what does the thief imagine? He imagines how to rob the house and get away with it. But the fact is that while he may or may not be caught by the police, he will surely be caught by the law of *karma*.

**Dr. Parägdāñöi:** I thought your standpoint is that empirical measurement is imagination. Yet now you say the thief's imagination does not create the house he plunders. But a house, or any object we can perceive, is just the result of our sensory measurement of the infinity of the total material energy. So why do you now say the house is a creation of God?

**Vedasära dāsa:** The Lord is the efficient, material, formal and final cause of every object we perceive. In other words, *why* we perceive something is not due to empirical measurement. It is due to Kåñëa. Consider something very ordinary, like a cup filled with flour. It is an aspect of Kåñëa's infinite energy we are permitted to see with our material senses. Being an aspect of infinity, *that cup of flour is infinite*, meaning that we can never describe or quantify it completely. Still, we can see it, and we can try to measure it. Measurement is *how* we estimate a thing in relation to other things Kåñëa reveals before our mind and senses. It turns out that there is a valid reason *why* we may try to measure the flour in that cup. It is that Kåñëa makes certain objects manifest within our perception so that we may offer them back to Him in devotion. Therefore, when a devotee prepares an offering of food, he carefully measures the ingredients (such as flour) so that his cooking will please the Lord. It is only because empirical measurement is not capable of completely quantifying or describing something that we say it is imaginary. If we speak of a cup as a measurement of flour, we're talking about a mental *image* of an amount of flour. Our image is likely to be that one cup is a small amount of flour. But that much flour is made up of more tiny individual particles of finely ground wheat than we can possibly count. Each of these particles is made of smaller particles chemical, molecular, atomic, subatomic particles, on and on indefinitely. The notion of a cup as a small amount of flour says more about our state of mind than the state of the flour. Still, measurement is useful and desirable when done in Kåñëa's service. But if our intention towards the objects of perception is wrong, then our measurement of

these objects is not only imaginary, it encourages a dangerously misleading goal of life: the domination of material nature. That goal is due to *svabhāva*, the lower instinct of the fallen soul, his ignorance, or egoism. The egoist that house robber, for instance is either ignorant of the punishment that awaits him for trying to dominate nature, or he knows but ignores it due to lust. Within the shadows of his ignorance, imagination makes visible many illusory ways to measure and take control of nature. These seem substantial by *māyā's* grace. But *māyā* has no substance. The explanations of cause and effect you've given are not based upon *vastu*, the substance of reality. They are your imagination, directed by *māyā*. As Dr. Parāgdāññi said, There is no deep reality. This logic without depth, without substance, is *māyā*, illusion. Logic with depth, with substance, is Vedānta. You must know what reality is *first* before you can explain illusion. To give a practical example, you cannot explain counterfeit money unless you know what real money is. Just as counterfeit money is the perverted reflection of real money, the realm of shadow is a perverted reflection of the realm of substance. Now, let's ask ourselves, why on earth do some people go through all the risk and botheration of printing illegal bank notes? You can say the cause is cheating. And you can say that the effect is illusion, because counterfeit money is unreal money. Now you have a logical formula similar to Svapnarātri's: cheating causes illusion. But what compels one to cheat by printing illusory bank notes? To answer this, Svapnarātri simply reverses the logic: illusion provokes cheating. However, this doesn't say anything substantial. It does not explain why anyone, either the cheater or the cheated, would see value in counterfeit money. The answer is that *real* money has value. Honest people will give goods in exchange for it. Therefore rascals try to cheat the unwitting with false money. Yes, the whole material world is nothing but an arrangement of cheaters and cheated. However, the world does not appear out of thin air by cheating or illusion. It is a perverted reflection of the spiritual world. *Spirit is the substance upon which the shadow is based.*

**Vidyāvīruddha:** I don't find the example you gave of money very satisfying. Real money and counterfeit money are made exactly of the same substance paper. And real money can be used for cheating and illusion just as much as counterfeit money can.

**Vedasāra dāsa:** That may be. But that does not mean it's all one. The difference between real and counterfeit money remains. We can compare real money to the *apara-vidyā* of the Vedas. *Apara-vidyā* is Vedic knowledge appearing within the three modes of material nature: logic, grammar, astrology, medicine, social organization, martial arts, music, dance and so on. Though all this is material, it comes from Kāññā. Because it is Vedic, it is backed up by Kāññā. Kāññā is the substance of Vedic knowledge. Similarly, money is just paper, but it is backed up by substance the government's gold reserves. When money is used lawfully, the government recognizes it as good as gold. When it is used to break the law, the same government will seize the money, nullify the illegal transaction and punish the cheater. So when it is not used for Kāññā's satisfaction, *apara-vidyā* is *māyā*. When it is, it is as good as He is. In other words, it is spiritual. Counterfeit money, however, is comparable to *avidyā* complete ignorance. This is so-called knowledge aimed only at sinful ends: how to slaughter animals and prepare the flesh for eating, how to

brew intoxicants, how to seduce girls into prostitution, and how to gamble and speculate wildly, even in the name of philosophy and science. *Avidyā* promotes human degradation; but Vedic civilization promotes step-by-step human upliftment. The goal of all Vedic goals is *para-vidyā*, Kāññea consciousness.

**Khagäkñña:** So if we dedicate ourselves to truth in our daily lives, we'll see it right here in the so-called world of illusion. That's true oneness of cause and effect. But truth cannot be neatly packaged into a fixed doctrine. Truth calls for us to regularly revise our maps. I don't mean that we should revise the ultimate goal of life. I agree with you, Vedasära, that the goal is the original cause, God. But I also find resonance in Dr. Parägdåññoi's view that criticism is needed to make progress in understanding the truth. After all, the revealed scriptures from which we make our maps are unlimitedly deep. I may read scripture one way, and you may read it another. Correct me if I am wrong, Vedasära, but I think an *avatära* of Kāññea named Caitanya explained just one verse from *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* in sixty-one different ways. The mind has to break out of narrow doctrines in order to locate the goal of scripture at the end of the journey of life. The only way we can be certain that our map to the goal is valid is to expose it to the criticisms and challenges of other map-makers.

**Vedasära däsa:** No doubt, because we are so imperfect, even with a good map, we can get lost. And if we get lost, we need criticism. But it should come from someone in knowledge. One in knowledge *knows* where we've gone wrong. He *knows* where we are supposed to be. He points this out to us on the map. If you are lost, what is the use of different conflicting opinions? Trying to redraw your map from various opinions is no way to get back on the right track. The method of reading the map of *çabda* is to take the help of those who know the way the *guru* (spiritual master) and the *sädhus* (pure devotees of the Lord). This method brings us to the goal, or rather, this method satisfies Kāññea, and *svayam eva sphuraty adaù*, by His kindness, He reveals Himself to His devotee. Khagäkñña, Çré Caitanya Mahäprabhu's manifold explanation of a single verse in the *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* is not a justification for interpreting *çabda* through *anumāna*. I noted already that Lord Caitanya taught:

The Vedic statements are self-evident. Whatever is stated there must be accepted. If we interpret according to our own imagination, the authority of the Vedas is immediately lost.

How are we to comprehend this term self-evident (*svataù-pramäëa*)? The sun is self-evident, obviously. But how are the Vedic scriptures self-evident? They are books. Books contain words, and from our experience, words are *about* things, they are not the things in themselves. To this it may be rightly replied, In the Vedas the words are *çabda*, spiritual sound. Thus they are not different from what they mean. So the next question is, But how can we realize that? The self-evidence of *çabda* is not obvious at first. This question, *how* the self-evidence of the Vedic scriptures is to be perceived, is answered in terms of taste:

*çrémad-bhägavatärthänäm äsvädo rasikaiù saha*



One should taste the meaning of *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* in the association of pure devotees.\*

In Bengal, when the devotees of Kåñëa take their meals, a bitter vegetable called *shukta* is served first. This is the culinary culture. It's healthy. It helps your digestion. Now, if you come from the West to Bengal for the first time, you may be surprised and even disappointed when you taste that first morsel of *prasädam* they serve you. Oh, why this bitter stuff? Let me have a nice fried savory first. But if you just learn the culture of tasting *prasädam* in the association of those who know it, you quickly become attached to it. That does not mean you lose your personal preference for eating sweets or whatever. But if you follow the culture, it becomes self-evident that this way of taking meals, starting with bitter, is most healthy and satisfying. Similarly, there is a culture of tasting the scriptures that is to be learned from advanced devotees. To actually taste the meaning of scripture is different from just gulping down facts and figures any way you like off of a printed page. The message of *Bhagavad-gétä* and *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* is the Supreme Person Himself. So developing a taste for hearing and discussing that message means entering deeper and deeper into a personal relationship with Kåñëa. Çré Caitanya Mahäprabhu is Kåñëa Himself come in the role of Kåñëa's own devotee. The Lord descended as His own devotee to show us what love and devotion to Kåñëa really means. His explaining one verse in sixty-one different ways was not a matter of mental speculation. It was a demonstration of His incomparable taste for the *Çrémad-Bhägavatam*. Not one of His explanations contradicted the other, because the substance of each one was the same Kåñëa. So there's no controversy. When a group of devotees come together to discuss scripture, if they are actually advanced, their mutual taste draws them together at the Lord's lotus feet. That does not mean that each devotee in the group sacrifices his or her individual point of view. Point of view is never lost, because the goal of the whole process of Kåñëa consciousness is personal. Every devotee has an eternal, individual relationship with the Supreme Person that becomes clearer and clearer as we develop our taste for serving Him. But the common ground shared by the whole group is the satisfaction of the Lord, not the mere satisfaction of individual minds. To interpret scripture by mental speculation is not pleasing to Kåñëa. It is a disservice. Arguing divisive points of view cannot be justified by Lord Caitanya's teachings.\* Actually, it is a symptom of a lack of higher taste. Thus one's attraction is drawn away from serving the Lord to trying to control His energies. This results in agitation of the mind and senses, which produces divisive arguments. Lord Kåñëa confirms this in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.22.6:

*yäsäà vyatikääd äséd vikalpo vadatää padam  
präpte çama-dame 'pyeti vädas tam anu çämyati*

By interaction of My energies different opinions arise. But for those who have fixed their intelligence on Me and controlled their senses, differences of perception disappear, and consequently the very cause for argument is removed.

Yes, because Lord Caitanya revealed many ways of appreciating a verse, let us appreciate that verse in *those* ways. Let us not invent new interpretations that

conflict with Lord Caitanya, and then try to defend ourselves by citing His example. Kåñëa consciousness does not mean inventing new ways to imitate the *écvara*. Kåñëa consciousness means getting liberated from that contaminated *svabhāva* by which we try to imitate Kåñëa whenever we see a chance to. Kåñëa declares in the *Bhagavad-gētā* that by hearing His message, the mind becomes attached to Him. This is *yoga*. In Kåñëa consciousness, the urges of the mind and the senses are subordinated in devotional service. Kåñëa is the center of our life, not passionate desires that inflame the mind with agitation, contradiction and argument.

**Vidyāvīruddha:** I follow the Vedas. But there is much of what Vedasāra says with which I cannot agree. He speaks of *écvara* as the cause. But the *écvara* is not the absolute truth. *Écvara* is represented by the root of the Vedic *çabda*, which is the syllable *oà* or *auà*. The letters *a-u-à* stand for creation, maintenance and destruction, and also for the three phases of the mind, deep sleep, dreaming and wakefulness. This is material consciousness. Only in material consciousness does the logic of cause and effect apply. The *écvara* is the ultimate logical conception. But beyond this conception of cause and effect is the eternal awareness of *tat tvam asī* am that. Above *écvara*, above logic, even above the Vedic *çabda*, the pure self is absolute. All of us here are one in that absolute self. That is the only reality. Everything else is duality, *māyā*, illusion, and must be given up.

**Vedasāra dāsa:** So if we are one, then why do you say you don't agree with me?

**Vidyāvīruddha:** It is on the lower platform of logic that we don't agree. On the higher platform of reality, we are one.

**Vedasāra dāsa:** Well, if the lower platform is just duality and illusion, then why are you trying to establish something on that platform by logical argument?

**Vidyāvīruddha:** I just want you to know that I have realized the oneness, but you have not. Therefore my explanation of *çabda* surpasses yours.

**Vedasāra dāsa:** Your criticism is reflexive. You say that logic only applies to material consciousness, and you say you have transcended material consciousness. And yet you use logic to tell me that you have realized the oneness, and that your explanation is therefore better. But logically, if you know everything is one, why talk at all? Speech itself is logic, and your philosophy says logic must be given up. But in my philosophy, speech and logic are to be brought in line with *çabda*, not given up. So, if as you say, you follow the Vedas, as I do too, then why not let me do the talking? After all, according to your theory, you and I are one.

**Svapnarātri:** Vidyāvīruddha's point, that *écvara* is a logical construct, I agree with completely. I wish to add that it is a construct that fails in the end. Merely from extending the chain of cause backwards into time, all we could ever know of the first cause (*écvara*) would be that it was a cause. It would therefore be perfectly in order to ask, What was the cause of *écvara*? As soon as you posit *écvara* as a cause of so many other causes, you face the paradox of infinite regress. What caused *écvara*? And what caused the cause of *écvara*? And what caused the cause of the cause of

*éçvara*? Thus the logic of a first cause never reaches a conclusion. I find Vidyāvīruddha's admission that *éçvara* is just an ultimate logical concept harmonizes very well with the points Dr. Parāgdāññōi and I made earlier. Yes, cause and effect are the superficial logic of the material world. But there is no deep reality of causation. Causation has nothing to do with the Beyond. In the Beyond, there is no logic. There, being and non-being are one and the same.

**Vedasāra dāsa:** May I focus for a moment on the essence of what you've just said, to make sure I've understood you correctly? You said that *éçvara* is nothing more than a logical hypothesis. The truth beyond this hypothesis is that there can be no first cause. In the ultimate end, we can really make no logical sense out of anything.

**Svapnarātri:** Yes, I suppose you could put it that way.

**Vedasāra dāsa:** In other words, you're saying that what the Vedic scriptures teach about causation is imaginary. When Kāññēa declares in *Bhagavad-gētā*, I am the source of everything, your reply is that He is not telling the truth. In other words, Kāññēa and the Vedas have no authority.

**Svapnarātri:** Well ... I can't say that your analysis of what I said is wrong. Yes, that is what I mean.

**Vedasāra dāsa:** So the conclusion is that you are the authority.

**Svapnarātri:** No, not at all. Logic is the authority. I am not merely telling you what I believe. It is logical that if everything is caused, and Kāññēa says, I am the cause, then there must be a cause behind Kāññēa, since *everything* is caused. Everything includes Kāññēa too.

**Vedasāra dāsa:** No, my point still stands. The Vedas say that *anumāna*, logical thought, is subordinate to *çabda*, the Vedic sound. We should use logic in support of the Vedic revelation. Apart from that, logic has no authority. This is the Vedic method of knowledge. Now my question to you is, what is your authority to say the Vedic method is wrong? What is your authority to say that *anumāna* has authority over *çabda*?

**Svapnarātri:** Well, it makes sense to me.

**Vedasāra dāsa:** But a few moments ago you agreed that the conclusion of your philosophy is that we can really make no sense out of anything. Then how can you argue that it makes sense that *anumāna* is superior to *çabda*?

**Svapnarātri:** I am not saying Vedic testimony makes *no* sense. What the Vedas say may be *logically* correct. But beyond logic, being and non-being are one and the same. There is something other than the logic of causation. It is infinite, mysterious, and silent.

**Vedasära dāsa:** It seems that the only way you can properly represent this doctrine of yours is by being infinitely mysterious and silent.

**Svapnarātri:** Yes, this is the teaching that cannot be taught.

**Vedasära dāsa:** From *çabda* we learn that eternal being is logically consistent with causation. *Sarvaà khalv idaà brahma*, everything is Brahman. That means everything is eternal substance. Even matter (*prakāti*) is not created or destroyed. *Éçvara* is eternal, *jéva* is eternal, *prakāti* is eternal and *kāla* is eternal. Only *karma*, or the activity seen within matter, is temporal. Matter, the insentient energy of *éçvara* from which unlimited universes are formed, periodically acts, periodically sustains, and periodically rests. When, on the order of *éçvara*, *prakāti* acts, that is called creation. When *prakāti* rests, creation dissolves into inert potential. The paradox of infinite regress troubles those who think that substance is created. If the chain of causation meant that a substance took being from a previous substance, and this previous substance took being from an even earlier substance, back and back until we arrive at a first substance, then we are left with the question why the chain of causes stops with this particular substance. In the Vedic version, causation starts with *tattva*, the eternal truth Kāñëa and His energies. Neither spirit, matter nor their source are ever created. All is eternal and all is substance, *vastu*. The chain of material causation is a chain of activity, sustenance and rest, activity, sustenance and rest, on and on. It is not a chain of one substance giving being to other substances, one after another.

**Svapnarātri:** But still, when you said neither spirit, matter nor the source of both are ever created, the word source implies that spirit and matter are not original. They come from something else.

**Vedasära dāsa:** Source implies the source of stimulation. The dictionary definition of stimulate is, to rouse to activity or to increased action or interest; stir. This is a good description of the influence of the *éçvara* over His eternal energies. By His mere glance upon *prakāti*, He stimulates the endless chain of creation, maintenance and dissolution. In this way, because He inspires His energies to act creatively, Kāñëa is the source of creation.

**Dr. Parägdāñöi:** You're saying that God has no choice about whether to exist or not. Nor does God decide what shall exist and what shall not exist. Everything just is. This means God is subject to being, while nothingness is not subject to God.

**Vedasära dāsa:** The choice between being and nothingness is really no choice at all. Nothing means no thing. It does not exist. The actual choice is between being and illusion the self as it is (the spirit soul) versus the self as it isn't (the false ego). For God, there is no illusion. But there is for us. It is clear that illusion exists. We know illusion by its consequences the sufferings of this material body. Yet though it exists, illusion is unreal (*asat*). The true vision (*tattva-darçana*) of the self reveals that the self we imagine this body to be is nonexistent.\* But you are suggesting that nonexistence could be an entity in its own right: an *abhava-tattva*, a real nonexistence, a void state existing as an alternative to being. What can be more useless than discussing the existence of nonexistence? This is *māyā*. Of course, if

you insist on sustaining within your mind a choice between existence and nonexistence, *māyā* will respond by keeping you here in the material world, which is subject to destruction by time. During the dissolution, the deluded living entities are plunged into the illusion of nonexistence for aeons of time. Each of you is desirous of knowledge. There is a verse spoken by Uddhava in *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* (11.29.3) that explains what true knowledge is:

*athāta ānanda-dughaà padāmbhujāà  
haàsäù çrayerann aravinda-locana  
sukhaà nu viçveçvara yoga-karmabhis  
tvan-māyayāmé vihatä na mäninaù*

*Athāta* means now therefore, and *ānanda-dughaà pada-ambhujam* means Kāññä's lotus feet, the source of all ecstasy. *Haàsäù* refers to the transcendentalists, those who are truly wise. *Çrayeran* means they take shelter of, they surrender. *Aravinda-locana* is a name of Kāññä, meaning He has lotus eyes. *Sukhaà nu viçveçvara* means the devotees are happy under the shelter of the *viçva-éçvara*, the Lord of the universe. So, the meaning so far is that the devotees happily take shelter of Lord Kāññä's lotus feet, which are the source of all spiritual ecstasy. This is real knowledge. The verse goes on to say *yoga-karmabhis tvan-māyayā amé vihatä na mäninaù*, those who take pride in their accomplishments in *yoga* and *karma* fail to take shelter of Kāññä and are defeated by His illusory energy. The word *yoga* here refers to all kinds of physical, mental and mystical sciences and philosophies. *Karma* refers to works of accomplishment in these areas. *Mäninaù* is the mental plane, where egoistic speculation flourishes. *Vihatäù* means defeated or obstructed, and *tvan-māyayā* means by Your material energy. The message is that anyone who remains on the mental platform, even if he is greatly accomplished in works of speculation, is sure to be overcome by illusion. To get beyond the mental platform, we must surrender to Kāññä's lotus feet, for the happiness we seek is *there*, not in egoistic speculation. The mind bereft of *ānanda* is dragged by *māyā* down to the most abominable state of consciousness all in the name of so-called knowledge. Lately, there was a report from China that scientists managed to artificially impregnate a woman with the embryo of a chimpanzee. But a public outcry forced them to abort that pregnancy. An Indian biologist expressed regret over the termination of the experiment, as so much new knowledge was lost. But such works of speculation are not knowledge. This is *māyā's* degradation of the human mind, which may lead to birth in lower species. Knowledge without *ānanda* is called *çuñka-jñāna*, dry knowledge. It is said in *Çré Caitanya-caritāmāta* (*Madhya-lälä* 24.130) that, *çuñka-jñāne jévan-mukta aparādhe adho maje*. Even if by dry knowledge someone achieves *jévan-mukta*, the release of his soul from material distress, that knowledge becomes perverted for want of *ānanda*. Perverted knowledge leads to offensive activities, which throw the living entity down into the pit of illusion again.

**Dr. Parāgdāññöi:** If you take away the choice of nonexistence, then existence is eternal, timeless, and necessary. But then how is it possible for the universe to be ever-changing? Unless, of course, everything that happens is planned out to the smallest detail, and free will is just an illusion.

**Vedasära däsä:** Please don't mind, but I feel I should point out a significance I note in your line of questioning. From existence or to be precise, from what you understand about your own existence you are trying to determine the plausibility of the existence of God. We share existence with God, so it is not unnatural for us to try to establish contact with Him on the ground of being. But He is not to repeat a phrase you used earlier *subject to being*. In His personhood, He transcends mere existence. It is we who are stuck with existence. The ground of being is *sat*, the eternal existence of consciousness, of which the *jévas* are a part. *Sat* is a feature of Kåñëa's spiritual potency. That potency playfully becomes different media through which the Lord enjoys Himself. So *sat* is the medium through which the Lord enjoys Himself as the infinite, all-pervading, effulgent Brahman. Through the medium of *cit* or perfect knowledge, the Lord enjoys Himself as the Supersoul, Çré Viñëu, who creates, maintains and destroys countless universes filled with countless living entities. He dwells transcendently within the hearts of each of those living entities, giving them knowledge, remembrance and forgetfulness as they deserve. *änanda*, unlimited happiness, is the medium of Kåñëa's confidential pastimes of divine love with His personal associates in the spiritual world. Now, we souls separated from Kåñëa are stuck on the *sat* platform. Even that fact, that we exist eternally, is obscured due to our strong attachment to this temporary body, the very form of our ignorance. Thus eternal existence becomes perpetual bondage. But if we rationally distinguish body from soul, renounce attachment and fix our minds upon the self, *sat* is as far as we can go. It is the limit of the ascending process (*äroha-panthä*), or the inductive method. I find it significant that because you are fixed in the inductive method, you see existence as a great problem. But it is a mistake to project your problem with existence upon Kåñëa. He enjoys His existence eternally. We can choose to likewise enjoy existence eternally if we turn to Him, and are thus blessed by the *cit* and *änanda* potencies to enter His direct association. Your question if existence is eternal, timeless, and necessary, how is it possible for the universe to be ever-changing? is a problem for the dualistic mind, not for Kåñëa. It simply speaks for the failure of our powers of measurement. Kåñëa is *acintya*, inconceivable, and His energy is *acintya-çakti*, inconceivably powerful. Because both are inconceivable, they act in ways that appear contradictory to the dualistic mind.

*acintya-çakti éçvara jagad-rüpe pariëata*

Inconceivably, the *éçvara* transforms His energy into the form of the universe (*jagad-rüpa*).

*jagad-rüpa haya éçvara, tabu avikära*

The *éçvara* Himself is the form of the universe. Yet at the same time He remains unchanged in His eternal, transcendental form.\*

The *jéva* floating in the sky of the heart has the free will to choose between the *éçvara* Himself and His expanded *jagad-rüpa*. Which way he chooses depends on how he receives the Vedic *çabda*: in ignorant egoism, or in pure devotion.

**Khagäkñä:** Vedasära, it is not fair of you to say that inductive thinkers can't get beyond the problem of existence to knowledge and bliss. Or are you just not aware of the vast wealth of knowledge and happiness to be found in the inductive tradition?

**Vedasära däsa:** But it is *mundane* knowledge and bliss. Induction is confined within the limits of human existence, which is always problematic. If there are always problems with material knowledge, then how is it real knowledge? If there are always problems with material happiness, then how is it real happiness?

**Svapnarätri:** I agree with you on this point. But I would go a step further to say that is not reasonable for you to argue that Vedic knowledge transcends human existence. *Çabda* depends upon *pratyakñä*. You have to hear it to understand it. To hear something, both the sound and you have to exist materially. So Vedic *çabda* and the knowledge it conveys is also mundane.

**Vedasära däsa:** No, *çabda* is originally spiritual. Therefore it conveys meaning. Why words have meaning cannot be understood in terms of our material experience. It is true that we have to receive the Vedic sound through our material ears. But that does not mean the sound itself is material. To fully realize the spirituality of sound, you have to accept the Vedic method of knowledge, which starts with *pratyakñä* as you've said. But that knowledge graduates through *parokñä*, *aparokñä*, *adhokñäja* and at the end comes to *apräkñäta*. If you insist on staying at the *pratyakñä* level, then you'll persist in perceiving sound as material which just means that you're persisting in ignorance. But then be honest and don't ascribe *any* meaning to Vedic sound. If *pratyakñä* is really all there is to knowing sound, then give up the concept that it can't be spiritual. That concept comes from your *anumāna*, not from *pratyakñä*. If you are a pure *pratyakñävädé*, you shouldn't have *any* concept. On the *pratyakñä* platform there are no conceptions of verbal meaning whatsoever, whether spiritual or material. A baby hears speech purely from the *pratyakñä* platform. She can't understand a word, because her *anumāna* is undeveloped. As soon as you say, Vedic *çabda* and the knowledge it conveys is mundane, you've already gone beyond *pratyakñä*. If you can't stop yourself from deriving meaning from *çabda*, then you should derive a meaning appropriate to the method of knowledge by which Vedic sound is transmitted. According to that method, Vedic sound is transcendental. If I am going to derive meaning from the words in a book about the ocean, I should derive a meaning appropriate to oceanography, the method of knowledge by which the book was written. I should not interpret the book according to my experience of the water in my bathroom sink. I have no right to suppose that the book is full of falsehoods about the size and depth of the ocean and the millions of life forms it contains, simply because my bathroom sink holds only a little water and exhibits no undersea life. I have no right to assume the book is sadly ignorant because it does not say that somewhere on the bottom of the sea is a plug, which when pulled, will empty the oceans of the world of all water. Similarly you have no right to assume Vedic sound is material simply from your limited experience of sound.

**Vidyäviruddha:** *Çabda* is but broken light upon the depth of the unspoken. The Vedic sound only points us in the direction of the truth, but as *Kaöha Upaniñad* declares, The Supreme is beyond *çabda*.

**Vedasära dāsa:** Lord Kāñēa tells Arjuna that there are many followers of the Vedas who are attracted only by flowery words of heavenly sense enjoyment. These people He calls *veda-vādés*. They perform sacrifice (*yajña*) for selfish purposes like material elevation and salvation from sin. Their egoism blinds them to the fact that beyond these sensual and mental fruits, Kāñēa is Yajña, the supreme sacrifice.\* Our English word sacrifice comes from a Latin expression that means to make sacred. So the actual purpose of *yajña*, which begins with hearing and chanting the Vedic sound, is to transform our existence from material to spiritual. But for this to be accomplished, as Kāñēa tells Uddhava, the material rendition of Vedic sound must cease (*vacasā virāme*). (*Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 11.28.35) To bring us over the obstacle of the egoistic material sounds of *karma-vāda* and *jñāna-vāda*, the Lord personally spoke the *Bhagavad-gétā*.

If you become conscious of Me, you will pass over all the obstacles of conditioned life by My grace. If, however, you do not work in such consciousness but act through false ego, not hearing Me, you will be lost. (*Bhagavad-gétā* 18.58)

*Na çroñyasi vinaikñyasi:* if you do not hear Me, you will be lost. Kāñēa is the supreme authority, the origin of Vedic knowledge. To know the true meaning of *çabda*, we have to hear His explanation. As long as we hear in our own way, the absolute truth will ever remain *açabdama*, outside of that egoistic sound. Hearing in our own way means to take *anumāna* as our *guru*. But the mind cannot give us real knowledge, because it is limited by the false ego. It is only logical that *éçvara*, being the Supreme Lord, is not within the range of our egoism. Therefore it is stated:

*anumāne nahe éçvara-jñāne*

One cannot attain real knowledge of the Supreme Personality of Godhead by logical hypothesis and argument. (*Çré Caitanya-caritāmāta, Madhya-lélā* 6.81)

*anumāna pramāēa nahe éçvara-tattva-jñāne  
kāpā vinā éçvarere keha nāhi jñāne*

One can understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead only by His mercy, not by guesswork or hypothesis. (*Çré Caitanya-caritāmāta, Madhya-lélā* 6.82)

**Khagäkñā:** But how do you know that you're getting the mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead?

**Vedasära dāsa:** Here is the answer:

*vastu-viñaye haya vastu-jñāna  
vastu-tattva-jñāna haya kāpāte pramāēa*

Knowledge of the substance, the Absolute Truth, is evidence of the mercy of the Supreme Lord. (*Çré Caitanya-caritāmāta, Madhya-lélā* 6.89)

The word *vastu* is repeated three times to stress that knowledge of the substance is the *pramāēa*, evidence, of *kāpā*, mercy. Kāñēa, the *éçvara*, is the substance. His



substance is expanded as the *tattvas* of *jéva*, *prakâti*, *kâla* and *karma*. *Vastu-tattva-jñâna* means true knowledge of the *tattvas* of *vastu*. It is practical knowledge. If practically we are entangled in these *tattvas*, agitated by their influence and thus unable to check sinful activities that hold us fast to the gross bodily conception, we should know we are in ignorance. As mentioned before, one who actually knows the truth passes over all the obstacles of *karma-vâda* and *jñâna-vâda* by Kâñëa's mercy. There are so many obstacles that foil the progress of the *karmés* and *jñânés*: faultfinding, the desire for name and fame, envy of other living entities, accepting things forbidden in the *çâstra*, desires for material gain, and hankering for popularity. Unless one has the mercy of Kâñëa, one's attempt to follow the Vedic method will be riddled by such defects, which are all symptomatic of ignorance. The mercy of Kâñëa is transmitted by pure sound vibrating from a devotee whose heart is completely bound to Him by attachment. That devotee is personally protected by the Lord, and thus he exhibits by his life's example *vastu-tattva-jñâna*. The instructions of such a devotee brings us in contact with Kâñëa's lotus feet.

**Vidyâviruddha:** But at the highest stage, so Çaikarâcârya taught, each living being is the nameless, formless One Soul. Names, forms and distinctions are illusory. You speak of surrender to Kâñëa and His pure devotee. But these words are concerned with difference, not oneness. Oneness is absolute, for oneness is all-inclusive. As soon as you tell us to surrender to a particular individual, a particular person, you exclude others. You create a sectarian viewpoint. For humanitarian unity, the Supreme should not be given a name or a form. Rather, God should be seen and served within every human being. Then men and women all over the world will love and worship one another. Peace and brotherhood will reign everywhere.

**Vedasâra dâsa:** Yes, Çaikarâcârya's philosophy is *advaita*, the non-duality of God and the soul. We agree that in pure spiritual consciousness, God and the souls share the same quality of eternality, knowledge and bliss. They are one. But since it is a oneness of love, there is a difference of love too. For example, a boy and a girl who love one another are one in that they are inseparable. Yet again, only the difference between them makes their mutual enjoyment possible. Now, a relationship of love is voluntary. Some souls choose not love Kâñëa in pure devotion. They would rather be independent lords. God sends them forth into material existence where they can attempt to enjoy separately from Him. In this condition of ignorance, the oneness between the soul and God seems lost, while the difference between them seems terrifying. You've said that when I advise you to surrender to *guru* and Kâñëa, I create a sectarian viewpoint by excluding others. But Çaikarâcârya is a *guru* too. His followers surrender to him, and those who don't are excluded. You say that because the doctrine of difference is exclusive, it cannot be true, whereas Çaikarâcârya's doctrine of oneness is the absolute truth because oneness is all-inclusive. But yet even the doctrine of oneness is not one. After Çaikarâcârya departed this world, his followers split into two rival groups, the Bhâmaté school and the Vivarana school. They found enough differences in Çaikarâcâryas's teachings to disagree even over oneness. Down to this very day, the impersonalists continue to divide into more and more schools. The actual Vedic philosophy is that oneness is real *and* difference is real. Together, oneness and difference are all-inclusive. You cannot dispose of

difference just by labelling it unreal. Even Çaikaräcärya admitted this. In his *Ñäö-padé-stotram* (3) he wrote:

*satyapi bhedäpagame nätha  
tavāham na māmakénaś-tvam  
sāmudro hi taraigau kvacana  
samudra na taraigau*

O Lord, even when difference is removed, I am Yours (I am Your servant). You are not mine. As the wave belongs to the ocean, the ocean does not belong to the wave. A wave lives in the ocean. The ocean does not live in the wave.

You've said every human being is God, and men and women all over the world should love and worship one another. This will establish peace and brotherhood. My reply is that your formula is the problem, not the solution. The basis of material consciousness is the false ego. In this world, everybody *already* thinks they are God. There are humanitarian socio-political systems that try to get these gods to serve one another. But they never serve one another. They serve the demands of their senses. And that is animal life. Where is the peace and brotherhood in animal society? When men become servants of their senses, human society becomes a jungle. The downfall of impersonalism is that it does not have a method of subduing the five knowledge-acquiring senses (ear, tactile sense, eye, tongue and nose), the five active senses (hand, leg, belly, genitals and rectum), and the common sense, the mind. As things in themselves, to borrow Kant's phrase, these eleven are personal attendants of Hãñékeça, the Master of the Senses Kãñëa. Lord Kapiladeva explains:

*devänää guëa-liigänäm änuçravika-karmaëäm  
sattva evaika-manaso vättiù sväbhäviké tu yä  
animittä bhägavaté bhaktiù siddher garéyasé*

The senses are symbolic representations of the demigods, and their natural inclination is to work under the direction of the Vedic injunctions. As the senses are representatives of the demigods, so the mind is the representative of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The mind's natural duty is to serve. When that service spirit is engaged in devotional service to the Personality of Godhead, without any motive, that is far better even than salvation. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 3.25.32)

These attendants of the Lord, the mind and the senses, are devotees. If we do not take care to engage them carefully in Hãñékeça's service, we offend them, and they punish us in return by dragging us into sinful activities. According to Çaikaräcärya's philosophy, the absolute can be realized only after the functions of the senses and mind have been utterly stopped. The world's people are not going to do that. The real answer is given by Nārada Muni in his *Paicarätra*:

*sarvopädhi-vinirmuktaà tat paratvena nirmalam  
hãñékeëa hãñékeça- sevanaà bhaktir ucyate*

*Sarvopādhi-vinirmuktam* means liberation from bodily designation. *Tat paratvena nirmalam* means purification from all contamination. So how is that to be attained? By surrendering the senses in the service of Hãñékeça, the Master of the Senses. As I mentioned before, He is also known as Yajña, the supreme sacrifice. By sacrificing our senses and mind in His service, we realize in stages the original transcendental nature of the senses and mind in the spiritual world. The spiritual senses in turn reveal the true oneness: the inseparability of our desire from Kãñëa, Who is the only *viñaya* (object of desire). Finally, your argument that God should not be given a name or form for humanitarian reasons is mundane rationalism. It is a myth that God is a human invention. Humanitarianism is an insignificant, ephemeral mental concoction. God, His holy name and His form are the eternal absolute truth. Who among mortal men shall compel God to renounce His name and form? The sane course is for mortal men to renounce their arrogance, chant the holy name of the Lord and worship His transcendental form. Earlier you remarked that the *éçvara* is the ultimate logical conception, as if to say that Kãñëa is fabricated in the mind of some philosopher. But the Vedas are *apauruñeya*, not made by mankind. What gives you the right to interpret the Vedic knowledge as if it were just a hypothesis? That means that first of all *you* have hypothesized it is a hypothesis. You claim to be a follower of the Vedas, but your argument amounts to decrying the Vedas as mythology. But this is just *your* mythology. Do you think you know the Vedas better than Lord Kãñëa, Brahmä, Devarñi Närada, Vyäsadeva and Çukadeva Gosvämé? If you were a follower of another scriptural tradition, one with an uncertain philosophy of causation, I could understand your attempt to fill in the gap with hypothesis. But in the case of the Vedic scriptures, such an attempt is uncalled for. The tradition speaks for itself: *äcäryavän puruñö vedaone* who knows the teachings of the *äcärya*, the *paramparä* authority, is a knower of the Veda.

**Khagäkña:** Often authorities expect us to follow blindly. But one only becomes free from doubt and delusion by accepting nothing blindly. We cannot grow by giving up our capacity to observe and reason and apply critical thinking.

**Vedasära däsa:** But kindly look again at what you've just said from an epistemological point of view. You say authorities expect you to follow blindly but sense perception *is* blind. You say we cannot grow by giving up our capacity to observe, reason and apply critical thinking. What are these capacities? We observe sense impressions, not the substance of reality. We reason from *svabhäva*, our conditioned psychology. We apply critical thinking by measuring phenomena against standards we hatch from our imagination. This all amounts only to an imposition of our own intentions upon *mäyä*, who then deceives us into thinking we are right. Vedic knowledge is not mental speculation. It is a *method*. One must be trained to practice it properly.

**Khagäkña:** So are you saying that Vedic knowledge belongs to an elite intellectual circle? What if that circle is just an intellectual Mafia, *brähmaëas* whose only goal is to protect their privileged position in society?

**Vedasära däsa:** It is said, *brahma jänätéti brähmaëa*: one who knows the Absolute Truth he is a *brähmaëa*. But a *brähmaëa* is not an armchair intellectual. Neither is

Vedic knowledge idle navel-gazing. It is a method. Anyone can become a *brähmaëa* and have Vedic knowledge *by accepting the Vedic method of knowledge* as his life's duty. *Manu-saàhitä* 4.14 defines the main duty of a *brähmaëa* thusly:

*vedoditaà svakaà karma nityaà kuryäd atandritaù  
tad dhi kurvan yathä-çakti präpnoti paramaà gatià*

Tirelessly he should carry out the prescribed activities given in the Vedas, for by doing so to the best of his capacity he attains the supreme goal of life.

The method, then, is to hear the Vedic sound and act upon it. The following of the path of Vedic sound is defined in the *Åg-Veda* as *yajñä*. The Laws of Manu explain that the regular performance of *yajñä* gradually elevates the performer to knowledge. As Lord Kåñëa declares in *Bhagavad-gétä* 4.33:

*çreyän dravya-mayäd yajñaj jñäna-yajñaù parantapa  
sarvaà karmäkñhilaà pärtha jñane parisamäpyate*

O chastiser of the enemy, the sacrifice performed in knowledge is better than the mere sacrifice of material possessions. After all, O son of Prtha, all sacrifices of work culminate in transcendental knowledge.

In the next two verses, Kåñëa says that one can attain this knowledge of sacrifice (*tad viddhi*) in one step by approaching the *tattva-darçé*, the spiritual master who sees reality beyond *pratyakñä* and *anumäna*. Having gained this knowledge from him, one is freed from the illusion of thinking the living entities are anything but the Lord's own parts and parcels. But we should not think that by accepting a spiritual master and becoming Kåñëa conscious, we are freed from sacrificial duties. Rather, they should be performed in higher knowledge.

*sarva tu samavekñyedaà nikhilaà jñäna-cakñuñä  
çruti-prämäëyato vidvän svadharme nivijeta vai*

When a learned man has looked thoroughly at all this with the eye of knowledge, he should devote himself to his own duty in accordance with the authority of the revealed scriptures. (*Manu-saàhitä* 2.8)

As Lord Kåñëa confirms in *Bhagavad-gétä* 6.1, he who performs his prescribed sacrifices as a duty to the Lord is the real transcendentalist, not he who lights no fire and performs no work. The sacrifice of this age is the *saikértana-yajñä*, the congregational chanting of the holy name of the Lord, which is meant to deliver all living entities. Manu says, *kurvanyathä-çakti*, sacrifice is to be performed with full power. This is how a *brähmaëa*, one in knowledge, is to be recognized.

*saikértana-yajñe kalau kåñëa-ärädhana  
sei ta' sumedhä päya kåñëera caraëa*

In this age of Kali, the process of worshiping Kåñëa is to perform sacrifice by chanting the holy name of the Lord. One who does so is certainly very intelligent,

and he attains shelter at the lotus feet of the Lord. (*Çré Caitanya-caritāmāta, Antya-lélä* 20.9)

Khagäkña, Vedic knowledge is not restricted to a small circle of intellectuals. It is available to anyone who takes the Vedic method *yajña*, which begins with *çruti* (hearing). Someone who does not take the method, but just speculates on the meaning of the Vedas, simply hovers on the mental plane. Conversely, one may not be a so-called intellectual, but yet attains the supreme goal simply by following the prescribed method:

*kevala jñāna 'mukti' dite nāre bhakti vine  
kñēonmukhe sei mukti haya vinā jñāne*

Speculative knowledge alone, without devotional service, is not able to give liberation. On the other hand, even without knowledge one can obtain liberation if one engages in the Lord's devotional service. (*Çré Caitanya-caritāmāta, Madhya-lélä* 22.21)

The Vedic verdict is that dry speculative knowledge is dangerous:

*çuñka-brahma-jñāné, nāhi kñēera 'sambandha'  
sarva loka nindā kare, nindāte nirbandha*

One who is attached to dry speculative knowledge has no relationship with Kñēa. His occupation is criticizing Vaiñēavas. Thus he is situated in criticism. (*Çré Caitanya-caritāmāta, Antya-lélä* 8.27)

**Khagäkña:** But criticism has priceless value. You don't grow from praise.

**Vedasāra dāsa:** You grow from love. A loving father criticizes his young son and so helps him grow into a self-disciplined adult. So criticism does have a place in love. A spiritual master sometimes has to criticize his disciples. But Çréla Prabhupāda said it is love that is the basic principle of obedience. If it were not for love, criticism would have no effect.

**Khagäkña:** That's not what I meant. You are justifying the way authorities play the sentiment card to get people to line up behind them. The real criticism takes place when the faults of the authorities are unsentimentally revealed in the cold light of logic and reason. Then society as a whole will progress.

**Vedasāra dāsa:** There is a line from the *Mahābhārata: ākroñō cābhivaktā ca brahmovākya ca dvijāna*, which means, I used to speak irreverently of the Vedas and of the *brāhmaēas*. These are the words of a jackal who in his last life was himself a *brāhmaēa*. That *brāhmaēa* was *tarkavidyāmanurakto nirarthakām* very attached (*anurakta*) to dry arguments (*tarka*), and indifferent to the Vedic goal of human life (*nirarthakām*).\* Khagäkña, you've said it is sentimental to follow the rule of love laid down by spiritual authorities. Actually, the rule of love is the means to cross beyond the agitation of the mind and senses. The word sentiment is derived from the Latin word *sentimentum*, which refers to sense-impressions within the mind. Therefore, to

be sentimental means to be subject to the rule of *pratyakñā* and *anumāna*, as was this unfortunate jackal in his previous life. Under their rule, his intelligence became the breeding ground for argument and criticism. Dry argument and criticism offer society no means of purification. Without purification, there is no question of social progress. Purification comes through sacrifice. According to *Bhagavad-gētā* 3.10, *yajña* is the God-given means of progress for human society. No doubt error will be found among human beings, even among those who take to the Vedic path. But egoistic fault-finding, dry argument and mental speculation are themselves human errors. Error versus error breeds more error, not the cure. The cure for human error is this: *duñōaraà yasya sāma cid ādhag yajño na mānuñau* chanting unassailed (by error), that *yajña* is perfect for the human.\*

## Chapter Five: The Ethics of Sacrifice

Philosophy is said to have four main branches. These are epistemology, logic, metaphysics and ethics. Epistemology covers questions about how we get knowledge. Much of this book has been epistemological. Logic, the study of reasoning, was examined in Chapter Two. Metaphysics, or the investigation of reality beyond physical limits, was a major topic of Chapter Three. Ethics (also called moral philosophy) is a system of principles behind the moral institution of life.\* A moral institution religion, law or traditional social values must be grounded upon principles that presume to determine what sort of life is good, which goals are worthy, whose intentions are respectable, how right and wrong are defined, and how to choose between right and wrong. Ethics is philosophy in action. It is the moral outcome of epistemology, logic and metaphysics. If a philosophy well-established in the world is rent by epistemological, logical and metaphysical doubts, we can expect ethical troubles in society. In modern philosophy, doubt is everything. And so doubts swamp the moral institutions of today's world. Around the world, people debate about where the limits of individual freedom should be drawn; or what role government should play in our lives; or whether abortion is good or bad. There are hundreds of such questions. When clear, satisfactory answers are not forthcoming, doubts give way to political strife, violence, revolution and war. Such conflicts are endless, and at last breed indifference to ethical values, and disregard for essential social norms.

### Sacrificial ethics

The moral institution of Vedic culture rests upon the logic of sacrifice (*yajña*) which says that the Lord makes *dravya* (material objects) and *jñāna* (knowledge) available to us on the condition that we offer these back to Him. If we do not perform

sacrifice, we waste the human form of life. For the purpose of this chapter, I do not mean the terms *yajña* and *sacrifice* to imply a particular kind of ritual (for example, an *agnihotra* sacrifice). I follow a general definition given by Çréla Prabhupāda in his purport to *Bhagavad-gētā* 4.25:

Factually sacrifice means to satisfy the Supreme Lord, Viñëu, who is also known as Yajña. All the different varieties of sacrifice can be placed within two primary divisions: namely, sacrifice of worldly possessions and sacrifice in pursuit of transcendental knowledge.

I've posited sacrifice here as the ethics of Vedic culture because, as Lord Kāñëa explains in *Bhagavad-gētā* 3.10, its performance will bestow upon you all good things. In Western philosophy, ethics presumes to determine the good life; in Vedic culture, sacrifice yields the good life. Sacrifice is the science (we may even call it the technology) upon which the prosperity of Vedic civilization depends. It is as good as life itself, for the supply of air, light, water, grains and all other natural benedictions, without which we cannot live, depends upon the pleasure and displeasure of the demigods; and their pleasure and displeasure depends upon the performance of sacrifice. In contrast, Western science is demoniac. It attempts to forcibly wrest the bounties of nature away from the demigods. Scientists of today readily admit that there is no morality or ethics intrinsic to their method. Science and technology are just blind tools of mankind's desires. But the science of sacrifice requires the mingling of the desires of mankind and the demigods on the sacred ground of Vedic morality and religiousity. Of course, modern people don't even know about, what to speak of believe in, the demigods, who are agents of Lord Kāñëa in charge of the ebb and flow of natural phenomena. Regardless, *this* is the Vedic science. It is not mythology. The efficacy of this knowledge is demonstrated by the performance of sacrifice. Sacrificial ethics makes Vedic culture a giving culture. People so cultured are happy to render service to others, especially to good persons. By giving to the good, the good is received. For example, the *gāhastās* (married householders) are considered to be in the most fortunate of the four social stations of Vedic society. Why? Because they give service to the *sannyāsés* (renunciates), *vānaprasthās* (retired householders) and *brahmacārés* (students). In ancient times, even a haughty, despotic ruler like King Jarāsandha was always eager, if only for his own prestige, to give great wealth away in charity to the *brāhmaëas*. Today, in contrast, ours is a taking culture. In glossy magazines, social and psychological theorists pontificate that there can be no self-respect in a culture of servitude. Thus there is a constant agitation from among the stations of modern society for the increase of rights and the decrease of duties. Sacrifice yields the good life. But this good is not calculated in terms of sensual and mental pleasures (though, of course, Vedic sacrifice does make such pleasures available so as to be sacrificed in further acts of sacrifice). The good is calculated in terms of morality and devotion to Kāñëa. These are blessings than which nothing is more valued in Vedic society.

The science and ethics of sacrifice was taught by Prajāpati Brahmā, the first Vedic sage, as the *factual intention of the creation*.\* In the beginning, when he sent forth generations of men and demigods, Brahmā instituted sacrifice as the one method for all to satisfy their desires *in the most beneficial way*.\* In his purport to *Çrémad-Bhāgavatam* 2.9.40, Çréla Prabhupāda explains Brahmā's plan:

He desired the welfare of all as servants of God, and anyone desiring the welfare of the members of his family and generations must conduct a moral, religious life. The highest life of moral principles is to become a devotee of the Lord because a pure devotee of the Lord has all the good qualities of the Lord.

Brahmā's universal program of sacrificial ethics anticipates Lord Kāññēa's desire: that living entities throughout the universe may return to their *original* self-interest, or their *pure* natural instinct (*svabhāva*) as His loving associates. Brahmā helps Kāññēa's plan by creating bodies for the living entities with which they can serve the Lord. But he forms these bodies from *prakāṭi*, which charms the living entities as mind and matter. Impelled by materialistic *svabhāva*, most living entities show more interest in serving these bodies than serving Kāññēa. The *rajo-guēa*, the mode of passion, deludes the self into identifying with the body. The body is born out of the passionate ties of other bodies. Thus to identify with a body means to identify with and become attached to ever-larger circles of bodies the immediate family, the extended family, the social group, the national group, and finally humanity at large. But *rajo-guēa* must sooner or later be undermined by *tamo-guēa*, the mode of ignorance. This deludes the self into rejecting the responsibilities that come with this body and the larger circles of bodies. A soul deluded by *tamo-guēa*, finding responsibility frustrating, takes shelter of ignorant mental speculation or destructive sense indulgence.\* Those under passion and ignorance are dead to the original *svabhāva* of the soul:

*jévera svabhāvakāññēa-'dāsa'-abhimāna  
dehe ātma-jīāne ācchādita sei 'jīāna'*

The original nature of every living entity is to consider himself the eternal servant of Kāññēa. However, under the influence of *māyā*, he thinks himself to be the body, and thus his original consciousness is covered. (*Çré Caitanya-caritāmāta, Madhya-lélā* 24.201)

To help the *jéva* control passionate attachment and ignorant frustration, the Vedas teach two methods of regulation: 1) religious family life, and then, after the mind is strengthened by knowledge and detachment, 2) renunciation. But the spirit soul is never really free of material entanglement until the duality of attachment and aversion to the body is completely overcome. Family life and renunciation are themselves dualities; they alone can't carry us beyond duality. Thus there are two perspectives on Vedic ethics, one from *para-vidyā* (transcendental knowledge), and the other from *apara-vidyā* (knowledge relating to the material world). The first perspective does not approve of any material (pro-matter or against matter) desires. The second does approve of them, but only in terms of sacrificial works (*karma-yajña* and *jīāna-yajña*). The two perspectives can be appreciated in this verse from *Manu-saḥitā*:



*kāmātmatā na praçastā na caivehāsty akāmatā  
kāmyo hi vedādhigamaù karma-yogaç ca vaidikaù*

Action impelled by desire is not approved. But here in the material world, there is no such thing as no desire. Even studying the Veda and performing the duties enjoined therein is based upon desire.\*

## Ethical tension in the Bhagavad-gétā

In all literature, what most arrests the reader's attention is the element of conflict. This is true of the Vedic literature too. In the *Bhagavad-gétā*, the conflict is between *para* and *apara* ethics. Arjuna, an eternal associate of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, fell into confusion on the Kurukñetra warfield, Lord Kāñëa right by his side, while viewing the army of his belligerent cousin-brothers, the Kauravas. He was a Vedic *kñatriya* (warrior) expert in the noble culture and martial skills known as *kñatriya-dharma*. In *kñatriya-dharma*, war is waged as a sacrifice. The ethical conflict here was Arjuna's doubt whether there was anything sacred about the sacrifice-at-arms that was about to transpire. Wars are usually fought out of desire for sex, honor, land, wealth and power. A *kñatriya* on the *apara* platform is impelled by these desires; but his desires are regulated by the sacrifice of fighting only when there is a need to protect the innocent for example, the *guru* (spiritual master), the *brāhmaëas*, women, children, elderly, and cows. The term *kñatriya* means one who protects from harm. Arjuna had no personal interest in winning sex, honor, land, wealth and power. He was not a *karmé* or *jñané* afflicted by desires. He was a devotee distressed by an ethical dilemma. He knew that Kāñëa intended the battle of Kurukñetra be fought so that Arjuna and his brothers, the Pääòavas, could rule the world righteously after defeating the Kauravas. But what was the good in it? Arjuna's only interest was to protect the innocent; but this war would leave millions of innocent woman and children bereft of protection. Thus the family tradition of his dynasty would be destroyed. As he argues in *Bhagavad-gétā* 1.43:

O Kāñëa, maintainer of the people, I have heard by disciplic succession that those who destroy family traditions dwell always in hell.

In *Bhagavad-gétā* 2.4 and 5, Arjuna asked Kāñëa how his waging war against his own teachers could be ethical. Like women and children, the *guru* is to be protected. Moreover, worship of the *guru* is enshrined above all other duties in the Vedic scriptures; yet on that cruel plain, Arjuna would have to kill his beloved *gurus*, or be killed by them. From Kāñëa's own example, Arjuna knew that duties to the family and superiors are sacred. Lord Kāñëa Himself observes the same duties, as He declares in *Bhagavad-gétā* 3.23: if I ever failed to engage in carefully performing prescribed duties, O Pärtha, certainly all men would follow My path. Since to preserve the universe, God Himself personally upholds the ethics of the Vedas, Arjuna failed to see why the Lord expected him to fight this terrible war. To avoid damnation, he decided to renounce his duty as a warrior. But Lord Kāñëa surprised

Arjuna by telling him that Vedic ethics demanded he perform his duty. By pacifism, he would incur sin. Now, when the *Bhagavad-gétä* is considered within the context of the *Mahäbhärata*, it is apparent that even ordinary moral considerations justified Arjuna's fighting back against the aggression of the unrighteous Kauravas. If Arjuna gave up the fight, *then* his sacred commitment to protect the innocent would be violated. If the Kauravas, headed by the evil Duryodhana, were victorious, the innocence of every person on the whole planet would be threatened by sin. *Kñätriyas* protect the people by governing them according to Vedic ethics; but when government is sinful, people stray from the path of morality and religion, and are lost. But these facts are not the essential message of *Bhagavad-gétä*. What is essential is that Kåñëa taught Arjuna how to perform his duty in the same transcendental manner as the Lord performs His. Kåñëa asked Arjuna to rise above his worry for the protection of the perishable bodies of his relatives. The Lord revealed the substance of ethics on the *para* platform, beyond ordinary moral codes that presume to make embodied life good. Transcendental morality is in relation to Kåñëa, not mind and matter. It is *lélä*, the duty of pure love through which God and His devotees enjoy themselves eternally.\* The *apara* prescription of duty is the shadow of the loving ethics of *lélä*. By religious, moral and legal restraints, *apara* ethics checks, but does not conquer, material desires. *Lélä* is the unconditional display of spiritual desire.

### Lord Yajña's bridge

But the Lord and His devotees do not disparage *apara* ethics as useless. *Apara* morality, religion and law rest upon *yajña*, and *yajña* is purifying. By following Vedic ethics, if even only externally, people are purified. Kåñëa Himself, the supreme pure, is the agent of purification behind *apara* sacrifice. The scriptures compare Lord Yajña to a bridge (*setu*) that spans the shores of material desire and spiritual desire. *Çatapatha Brähmaëa*, a *karma-käëòà* scripture, follows this bridge from earth to heaven.\* *Muëòaka Upaniñad*, a *jñäna-käëòà* scripture, follows the bridge farther, to the immortal Self.\* *Çvetäçvatara Upaniñad* follows the bridge farther still, to the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*puruññaà mahäntam*).\* Inviting *karmés* and *jñänés* to associate with His *setu* form, the Lord becomes sacrifices that attract their natures. It is Lord Yajña alone who awards *karmés* the sensual pleasures of heaven, and *jñänés* the philosophical resolution of duality:

The Supreme Personality of Godhead is transcendental and not contaminated by this material world. But although He is concentrated spirit soul without material variety, for the benefit of the conditioned soul He nevertheless accepts different types of sacrifice performed with various material elements, rituals and *mantras* and offered to the demigods under different names according to the interests and purposes of the performers. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 4.21.34)

I am the ritualistic sacrifice enjoined by the Vedas, and I am the worshipable Deity. It is I who am presented as various philosophical hypotheses, and it is I alone who am then refuted by philosophical analysis. The transcendental

sound vibration thus establishes Me as the essential meaning of all Vedic knowledge. The Vedas, elaborately analyzing all material duality as nothing but My illusory potency, ultimately completely negate this duality and achieve their own satisfaction. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.21.43)

In Chapter Two, we learned that while all human beings are endowed with reason, only Vedic reason Kåñëa's reason for creation is objective. And so it is with ethics. The Lord in everyone's heart, as seen in *Bhagavad-gétä* 8.2, is called *adhiyajïa*, the Lord of everyone's sacrifice. But His purpose in inspiring us to sacrifice is known only through the Vedas. *Manu-saàhitä* 2.3 tells us that out of human desire, a fixed intention of mind (*saikalpa*) appears. From *saikalpa* appears ethics (sacrifices, vows, regulations and duties):

*saikalpamülaù kämo vai yajïäù saikalpasaàbhaväù  
vratämi yamadharmäçca sarve saikalpajäù smätäù*

Desire is the very root of intention, and sacrifice appears in intention. All vows, regulations and duties also appear in intention.

Even the sacrifices, vows and so on that make up the ethics of a person with no connection to Vedic culture are inspired by the Lord of Sacrifice within. But without Vedic guidance, the fruits of such sacrifice are inauspicious. Today, many people have a *saikalpa* (fixed intention of mind) to avoid contracting AIDS. With this aim in mind, people ritualistically take vows, make sacrifices, follow regulations, perform duties. Now the difficulty here is that such rituals, even if (by the grace of *adhiyajïa*) they successfully stop AIDS, will not purify the populus of the real reason that AIDS became so virulent: sexual immorality. Modern sexuality is whimsical; unfortunately, people are very serious about this whimsy so much so that they go about making sacrifices in the hope that immoral sex can be enjoyed without the fear of AIDS. If such sacrifice can be called a type of ethics, then it is surely *subjective ethics*. Vedic authorities would call it *avidyä*. AIDS or not, death must come to us in one form or other. A human being who sacrifices to safely enjoy immoral sex is left with no ethical asset at the time of death. Such sacrifice is only a doorway to the lower species. What we might call *objective ethics* is a doorway to the gains recommended in the Vedic scriptures. We are spirit souls who finally achieved this human birth after innumerable births in lower species. The Vedas recommend we use this brief human life to gain control of the mind, regulate the senses and get free of sins. An uncontrolled mind, unregulated senses and sinful contamination will pull us back down into animal life or less. There can be no loss greater than this. Purification by the Vedic method takes place for no other reason than that the sacrificer respectfully approaches the Lord of Sacrifice as directed by *çästra*:

*sarve 'py ete yajïa-vido yajïa-kñapita-kalmañäù  
yajïa-çinñöämäta-bhujo yänti brahma sanätanam*

All these performers who know the meaning of sacrifice become cleansed of sinful reactions, and, having tasted the nectar of the results of sacrifices, they advance toward the supreme eternal atmosphere. (*Bhagavad-gétä* 4.30)

As a person continues to perform sacrifice, he or she develops the qualities of goodness. Goodness (*sattva-guëa*) frees one from the demands of the body and mind; as he or she advances in purity, the sacrifices so performed increasingly satisfy the Supreme Pure. This is brahminical life. When at last a *brähmaëa* gives up every trace of material desire (*käma*), fruitive work (*karma*), and mental speculation (*jïäna*), and simply engages his or her senses and mind in favorable service to the Lord, that *brähmaëa* attains pure devotion (*bhakti*) to Çré Kåñëa. It is for this reason the Lord Himself becomes the ethics of sacrifice, to help people approach His devotional service. In the neophyte stage, the egotistical performer of *yajïa* exhibits many faults. A famous example is Dakña, whose pompous sacrifices were offensive to the great soul Çiva.\* But still, Lord Yajïa is the steady bridge that leads mankind away from selfish intention to pure, transcendental intention. If one sticks to this path of satisfying Yajïa, he gradually comes to know that the Lord Himself is the only substantial blessing obtainable from sacrifice. Thus he sacrifices everything for Him.

*mayy arpitätmanau sabhya nirapekñasya sarvatau  
mayätmanä sukhaà yat tat kutaù syäd viñayätmanäm*

O learned Uddhava, those who fix their consciousness on Me, giving up all material desires, share with Me a happiness that cannot possibly be experienced by those engaged in sense gratification. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.14.12)

This, at last, is where Vedic ethics is meant to bring us. Through shadowy landscapes and misty mindscapes we've searched for substance. Where is it to be found? With Lord Kåñëa and His devotees, who share a happiness that cannot possibly be experienced by those obsessed with mind and matter. Here, sacrifice loses every trace of the sense of loss that nags at the edge of our false ego whenever we have to give something up that we are attached to. The devotees happily sacrifice their very selves in love of Kåñëa, and Kåñëa happily sacrifices His own self in love of His devotees. This sharing of happiness on the spiritual platform defeats all material desires. And though devotees have no desires for anything other than Kåñëa, He is the source and shelter of all ideal attainments sought by wise, noble, moral and just philosophers throughout the history of the world. In the beginning of *Bhagavad-gétä*, Arjuna asked whether there could be any morality in the battle of Kurukñetra. At the end, when Arjuna at last did exactly what Kåñëa desired him to do ride on the war chariot piloted by the Lord, sharing with Him the chivalrous bliss of the Lord's mission at Kurukñetra morality became Arjuna's constant companion. *Dhruvä nétir matir mama*, says Saijaya at the close, In my opinion, morality is certain wherever there is Lord Yogeçvara, the Master of all Mystics, and Dhanur-dhara, the wielder of the mighty bow Gandiva. (*Bhagavad-gétä* 18.78)

**Questions and answers**

The following questions and answers bring out the relevance of sacrifice to our lives in today's world.

**Question:** You said that Arjuna was not a *karmé* or a *jïäné*, but a devotee in distress. How did he fall into such distress, if Kåñëa shares spiritual happiness with His pure devotee?

**Answer:** It could be said that it was all the Lord's *lélä*, or play. Thus Arjuna's distress was impelled within the heart by Kåñëa's wish to speak, for the benefit of the whole world, *Bhagavad-gétä* to His dear friend. But we should not assume that because we, unlike Arjuna, are *really* in illusion, Arjuna's distress has no relevance to our own. One of the great lessons of *Bhagavad-gétä* is that even a personal associate of Lord Kåñëa can become bewildered by the influence of the Lord's energy. Then how careful we have to be! A famous verse from the *Kaöha Upaniñad*, often quoted by Çréla Prabhupäda, warns that even after one has approached a bona fide spiritual master, even after one has embarked upon the path back home, Back to Godhead, he may have difficulty at any time due to inattention. One must be ever-vigilant.\* What I've understood from Çréla Prabhupäda is that Arjuna proposed to serve his own pious nature (his *svabhäva*) instead of Kåñëa. From the standpoint of *pratyakñä* and *anumäna*, his compassion, his gentle behavior, his readiness to renounce name, fame and social status, were all very good. But when good differs with the best Kåñëa that's not very good. Therefore Kåñëa asked Arjuna, How have these impurities come upon you? (*Bhagavad-gétä* 2.2)

**Question:** I thank you for your explanation of why Arjuna's killing his relatives was ethical both in an ordinary and transcendental sense. But still, Çréla Prabhupäda writes that anyone desiring the welfare of the members of his family and generations must conduct a moral, religious life.\* It's hard for me to see how killing one's own kinsmen can be moral and religious. If I slaughter my relatives, it is a heinous crime deserving the severest punishment. How was it moral for Arjuna to slaughter his? How could such slaughter be for their welfare? Is this divine culture? Does Kåñëa slaughter His own family?

**Answer:** In one sense, you could say Kåñëa does slaughter His own family. We are all the family of Lord Kåñëa, for He is our original father (*ahaà béja-pradaù pitä*). (*Bhagavad-gétä* 14.4) But He is also our destroyer. It is said in *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 6.12.12:

*bhütaiù säjati bhütäni grasate täni taiù svayam*

The Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself creates and devours the living beings through other living beings.

Arjuna thought it would be good for him to spare the lives of his kinsmen fated to be annihilated by the Lord. But Kåñëa told him that his compassion was useless. Every living creature great or small is under sentence of death by the order of the Supreme. Why did Arjuna care only for those particular ones facing him at Kurukñetra?

While speaking learned words, you are mourning for what is not worthy of grief. Those who are wise lament neither for the living nor for the dead.  
(*Bhagavad-gétä* 2.11)

Consider this: we who would question why God destroys His own children forget that we ourselves enjoy that destruction. Having accepted this body as the self, we are *çinodara-tåpää*, very devoted to the genitals and the belly. (*Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.26.3) Enjoying the genitals, we participate in Kåñëa's creation of bodies. Enjoying the belly, we participate in His destruction of bodies, for it is on a diet of bodies of other living entities that we maintain our lives. Even on a diet of spoiled fruit, as taken by certain renunciates trying to live non-violently, countless unseen microbes are consumed with each bite. With every step we take, untold innocent creatures are crushed underfoot. Using fire, we burn them alive by the millions. According to the ethics of the ego, as long as I find these arrangements enjoyable, they are good. If they cause me suffering, they are bad and God is bad for having arranged them. But actually my intentions are bad. It is obnoxious of me to live comfortably at the cost of others. My every selfish act in this body must therefore be repaid under the law of *karma*. The Lord of all creatures impartially arranged the material world to facilitate the selfish desires of His wayward children. And so, helping each one to gratify his desires, He creates and devours other living beings. But He has nothing personally to do with the pleasures and pains of any of them, for He is the Supreme Transcendence. Neither have we anything to do with pleasures and pains, for we are tiny sparks of His transcendence. The pleasures and pains of the material body are experienced not by transcendence but by the *ahaikära*, the false conception of our separateness from the Lord. As *Çrémad-Bhägavatam* 11.13.29 states:

*ahaikära-kåtaà bandham ätmano 'rtha-viparyayam  
vidvån nirvidya saäsära- cintää turye sthitas tyajet*

The false ego of the living entity places him in bondage and awards him exactly the opposite of what he really desires. Therefore, an intelligent person should give up his constant anxiety to enjoy material life and remain situated in the Lord, who is beyond the functions of material consciousness.

Kåñëa is compared to a *kalpa-taru*, a wish-fulfilling tree. He placed us in this dog-eat-dog world because we wanted to be the *éçvara*, the controller. In truth, Kåñëa is the only controller. Our wish should be to remain situated in Him as His eternal servant, instead of being anxious to imitate Him by playing with His energies. As soon as we try to imitate Him, His energies (*prakåti, kåla, karma* and the other *jévas*) conspire to wreck our plans and lock us up in eternal bondage. To rescue us from this predicament, the Lord appears as the spiritual master either personally, as He did for Arjuna, or through His pure devotee. One who is intelligent learns from the spiritual master how to give up his vain exploitation of Kåñëa's energies, and instead to assist in Kåñëa's enjoyment of them as the *yajña-puruña*, the Enjoyer of Sacrifice. Kåñëa directed Arjuna to fight the battle of Kurukñetra as a sacrifice solely for His pleasure. After all, fight and kill we must in this material world. Fighting for ourselves perpetuates bondage; but fighting for Kåñëa is liberating. Now, *we* are not going to fight armed conflicts for Kåñëa, because we are not *kñatriyas* like Arjuna. But we can still learn from Arjuna how to sacrifice all our abilities in the Lord's service. Arjuna

became Kåñëa's instrument. The soldiers who died by his hand gave up their lives in the presence of the Lord on the holy Kurukñetra field to achieve freedom from the bondage of repeated birth and death. Material welfare work, rooted in the ethics of the bodily concept of life, is incapable of delivering the soul from *saàsåra*. In the Eleventh Chapter of the *Bhagavad-gétå*, Kåñëa revealed His Viçvarüpa form by which He would receive Arjuna's sacrifice of war. As he watched this furiously effulgent feature of the Supreme Person span the sky with unlimited faces and arms, Arjuna cried out in amazement:

O Lord of lords, so fierce of form, please tell me who You are. I offer my obeisances unto You; please be gracious to me. You are the primal Lord. I want to know about You, for I do not know what Your mission is. (*Bhagavad-gétå* 11.31)

In Kåñëa's universal form, the real form of the universe, there is no correspondence with selfish perception (*pratyakñå*), nor coherence with selfish speculation (*anumåna*). This form of the universe corresponds and coheres to Kåñëa's mission. By Kåñëa's grace, Arjuna saw the shapes of things beyond the constraints of his sense perception and mental speculation. After this, in the beginning of the Twelfth Chapter, he intelligently inquired how the Lord is to be worshiped best.

**Question:** How can a person like me, with no background in Vedic knowledge, perform sacrifice?

**Answer:** In our time, the congregational chanting of Kåñëa's holy names *nåma-saikértana-yajña* replaces all other sacrifices as the only effective one.\* The Lord who enjoys this sacrifice is the Golden Avatåra, Çré Caitanya Mahåprabhu the combined form of the original *éçvara*, Çré Kåñëa, and His original *daivi-prakåñti*, His divine consort Çrématé Rådharåëé. Whenever and wherever His devotees chant His holy names, and induce other living entities to do the same, Çré Caitanya personally crosses the bridge of sacrifice to distribute the rarest of spiritual gifts pure love of Kåñëa (*prema*).\* This completely satisfies the mind and senses of the devotee. When satisfied, the mind and senses, in their eagerness to taste the nectar of the Lord's association, become the best friends of the soul. This is Vaikuëoha, where minds, senses and souls have one purpose to serve Kåñëa. Just by raising our arms to chant and dance in *saikértana*, we enter Vaikuëoha. The stubborn obsessions born of empiricism, rationalism and egoistic ethics flee far away.

**Question:** Is *saikértana* as effective a sacrifice today as were the fire sacrifices in ancient times?

**Answer:** The *saikértana-yajña* is so powerful that it cannot be compared to *yajñas* of old performed to fulfill material desires. Neither can the *saikértana* devotees be compared to performers of Vedic rituals. In his purport to *Çrémad-Bhågavatam* 5.19.24, Çréla Prabhupåda explains:

In *Caitanya-caritåmåta*, Kåñëadåsa Kaviråja Gosvåmé says that since Çré Caitanya Mahåprabhu is the inaugurator of the *saikértana* movement, anyone who performs *saikértana* to please the Lord is very, very glorious. Such a

person has perfect intelligence, whereas others are in the ignorance of material existence. Of all the sacrifices mentioned in the Vedic literatures, the performance of *saikértana-yajña* is the best. Even the performance of one hundred *açvamedha* sacrifices cannot compare to the sacrifice of *saikértana*.

Like the sacrifice performed by Arjuna at Kurukñetra, *saikértana* is for the transcendental good of the whole world. Arjuna liberated millions of men with his divine weapons. Today, millions of people are made sacred (in this sense, sacrificed) by the public chanting of Hare Kåñëa and the distribution of the books of Çréla Prabhupāda. This method of sacrifice Kåñëa personally identifies with: *yajñānā japa-yajño 'smi*, Of sacrifices, I am the chanting of the holy names. (*Bhagavad-gétā* 10.25) Sometimes *saikértana* is misunderstood as a disturbance. But that is because it is ever-outside the narrow limits of the dreary ideologies that oppress men's minds today: mechanomorphism, anthropomorphism, humanism, egalitarianism, authoritarianism, male chauvinism, feminism, voidism, and so on. The *saikértana-yajña* overturns all such materialistic conceptions by teaching the best philosophy Lord Kåñëa's exact plan for successful human life.

Our Kåñëa consciousness movement is designed to teach people (and to learn ourselves) the exact instruction of the Personality of Godhead. In this way we shall continuously perform the *saikértana-yajña* and continuously chant the Hare Kåñëa *mantra*. Then at the end of our lives we shall certainly be able to remember Kåñëa, and our program of life will be successful.\*

**Question:** Can we really compare Kåñëa's mission at Kurukñetra to the *saikértana* mission in Kali-yuga? Arjuna blasted the Kaurava soldiers back to the spiritual sky. The *saikértana-yajña* leaves everyone here in their bodies to carry on with life. Is chanting of Hare Kåñëa enough to solve our day-to-day problems? Arjuna's role as a *kñatriya* was so clearly defined in the society of his time that he was spared from niggling concerns like paying the rent, keeping his kids out of trouble or getting along with envious neighbors. But nowadays, all of us have so many other duties that it is impossible for us to focus only on *saikértana*.

**Answer:** The *saikértana* movement of Çré Caitanya Mahāprabhu is destined to be much more than a weekly *kértana* in the local marketplace. It is more than a few books passed out here and there. *Saikértana* is the *yuga-dharma*. *Yuga* means age, *saikértana* means glorifying together, and *dharma*, means essential purpose, religion, occupation and attribute. The main occupation and attribute of our time is mass propaganda: religious, scientific, political, social, commercial, technical, and recreational. In this Information Age, people's success *already* depends upon publicity, advertising, promotion, media exposure, getting your message into every home, opinion polls, ratings, networking, prime time airplay ... all that is simply a shadow of the substance of *saikértana*. If the *shadow* can provide a livelihood for millions of people all over the world, then the *substance* most certainly will. Our mission, should we decide to accept it, is to bring the substance forth from the shadow. It's not impossible. In fact, it is a Mission Unstoppable, because it is Kåñëa's own plan.



## From shadow to substance

The philosophy presented in this book leads to the following three conclusions:

- 1) Whatever is seen in the shadow, has its source in the substance.
- 2) To move from the shadow to the substance, we must completely sacrifice our egoism.
- 3) Doing that requires us to surrender to the instructions of a bona fide spiritual master who perfectly teaches how we may offer *pratyakñā*, *anumāna*, *çabda*, *dravya*, *svabhāva*, *āçaya*, *prakāti*, *karma*, *kāla* and *jēva* in sacrifice to *éçvara*.

But our free movement from shadow to substance is now blocked by evil. Evil is the persistence of ignorance. Ignorance is material knowledge based upon a two- fold egoistic belief: that substance 1) corresponds to sense perception (*pratyakñā*) and 2) coheres to induction (*anumāna*). Real knowledge, however, comes from *çabda*, authoritative Vedic testimony, or revelation. The English word revelation is derived from the Latin *revelare*, which approximately translates as removing the veil that covers real knowledge (*svataù-siddha-jñāna*). The veil is this most persistent of evils, ignorance. Where does ignorance persist? In the conditioned nature, the *sva- bhāva*, of the deluded soul. This *svabhāva* is not difficult to analyze. We do not need to visit a hypnotherapist to know that what persists in our hearts life after life is the desire to be the masters of our own fates in other words, to be the *éçvara*. By practicing the Vedic method of knowledge, one leaves the shore of blind egoism and moves through the stages of *karma* and *jñāna* along the bridge of sacrifice. At last surpassing these stages to render favorable service to Kāñēa, he or she touches the transcendental shore of Vaikuēōha.

*anyābhilāñitā-çūnyaà jñāna-karmādy-anāvātam  
ānukūlyena kāñēānu- çēlanaà bhaktir uttamā*

One should render transcendental loving service to the Supreme Lord Kāñēa favorably, without contaminated desires or fruitive work and mental speculation.\*

This is our real *svabhāva*, to serve Kāñēa the substance. But when, due to the paradoxical influence of *māyā*, our *svabhāva* serves itself, that is false ego the shadow. In the First Chapter of *Bhagavad-gētā*, Arjuna proposed to serve his own *svabhāva*. But Kāñēa's revelation of the *Bhagavad-gētā* removed the evil of self-referential *svabhāva*, preserving Arjuna's true nature.

In the *Bhagavad-gētā* we can see that Arjuna desired not to fight with his brothers and relations just to satisfy his own personal desires. But when he heard the message of the Lord, *Çrémad Bhagavad-gētā*, he changed his decision and served

the Lord. ... The fighting was there, the friendship was there, Arjuna was there, and Kåñëa was there, but Arjuna became a different person by devotional service.\*

Let the evil that threatens us be similarly removed.