

## The ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ in *Advaita Vedānta*: A Moral Interpretation

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### *Abstract*

*The paper examines the metaphysical and ethical approaches underlying the image of the self and the other in Advaita Vedānta (hereafter AV). AV examines the nature of the conceptual division between the self and the other, referred to by the terms ‘I’ (asmad) and ‘you’ (yuṣmad) respectively. Behind the mundane expressions of these terms AV identifies superimposition — adhyāsa as a metaphysical precursor, which generates a cognitive error in all such expressions where we use personal pronouns ‘I’ and attributes such as ‘fat’, ‘tall’ etc. thereupon. The position of AV is that the distinction between the self and the other is due to a cognitive error caused by superimposition. In other words, to see differences in reality is ignorance (avidyā). Moreover, if this ignorance is replaced by true knowledge, i.e., knowledge of reality as Advaita, i.e., Non–duality, we shall see the development of a different kind of understanding revealing the underlying unity of self and other. This knowledge of the underlying unity generates a different attitude which dissolves social problems such as socio–political inequality, hatred and violence, etc. grounded in the ‘self’–‘other’ distinction. Like any piece of knowledge, the knowledge of the realization of an underlying non–duality or advaita brings about an attitude change towards reality. In this case, the attitude of taking granted the distinction between ‘I’ and ‘you’ is changed to seeing non–duality in all individuals.*

*However, in principle, since AV advocates non–duality, it cannot meaningfully talk about morality or ethics, since ethics presupposes duality between ‘I’ and ‘you.’ So the challenge is to show that, according to AV, the non–duality of self and other is the source of morality. In addition, an ethics of active love is proposed which is congruent with AV’s metaphysical commitments. The ethics of active love develops when one gives up the idea of differences and identifies oneself with others. It is a well known fact that the root of most social evils is the discrimination between ‘I’ and ‘You’. Moreover, it is the ego (I) that creates a rift between one man and another, and as a result, society suffers from various problems such as violence, hatred, social discrimination and corruption, etc. The conception of*

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*the oneness of all beings advocated by AV creates a spirit of love and harmony among individual selves, and this love is the foundation stone of ethics or morality. Taking recourse to the AV's exposition of the issue, a moral interpretation of the underlying unity of self and other is also intended.*

*The aim of the paper is twofold: 1. To examine and present the metaphysical position of AV vis-à-vis the distinction between self and other. 2. To respond to the problem of the possibility of moral or ethical actions within AV metaphysics with a new kind of morality that is based on the identification of one's self with others. In other words, an ethics based on and compatible with Advaita metaphysics.*

*Key words: Advaita, superimposition, enworlded subjectivity, Self, individual self, identity, differences, morality.*

## Introduction

AV is one of the prominent schools among the Indian philosophical systems. Śaṅkara, its main proponent, begins his philosophical analysis in his commentary on *Brahma Sūtra* (Thibaut, 1890, pp. 108–111) by examining the nature of the conceptual division between self and other, which are referred to by the terms 'I' (*asmad*) and 'You' (*yuṣmad*) respectively. Here, "I" refers to the subject of consciousness and 'you' refers to the object of consciousness. The subject of consciousness can never become an object of consciousness. Moreover, according to AV, the subject of consciousness is of the nature of pure un-individuated, non-dual, absolute consciousness, which is termed *Brahman* (ultimate reality). The distinction between self and other is the product of superimposition<sup>2</sup> (*adhyāsa*) which results from attributing properties of the object of consciousness to the subject of consciousness or *Self*. This superimposition (*adhyāsa*) generates a cognitive error, due to which we use "I" as the term for the subject and ascribe the attributes of mind, senses and body as in statements such as "I" am fat', "I"

- 1 In this paper 'I' is used in two senses. The first sense of 'I' is the individual referring to himself as an agent, enjoyer etc. This 'I' will be used with single inverted commas. The second sense of the "I" is the person referring to his/her inner soul or *ātman*; and it will be used in the paper with double inverted commas. In this context 'I' refers to the individual self. The terms 'self' and 'other' are used to refer to the empirical 'I' (self) and 'you' (other) on the basis of which all human interactions, behavior and morality etc. are explained. "I" in the transcendental sense is referred as *Self* or *Brahman* in order to convey the metaphysical non-duality of *Self* and *Brahman*. The overlap between them is always used in the transcendental sense; and the distinction in the empirical sense.
- 2 Superimposition is defined as attributing the property of one thing upon another (Thibaut, 1890, p. 108). All the Advaita Vedāntins agree about the perception of superimposition as proposed by the Śaṅkara. Śaṅkarācārya in *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya* writes: »Some indeed define the term 'superimposition' as the superimposition of the attributes of one thing upon another thing. Others, again, define superimposition as the error founded upon the non-apprehension of the difference between that which is superimposed and that onto which it is superimposed. Others again, define it as the fictitious assumption of attributes contrary to the nature of the thing onto which something else is superimposed. Still, all these definitions concur in so far as they define superimposition as the apparent presentation of the attributes of one thing in another thing« (Thibaut, 1890, p. 108).

am tall' etc. One uses the first person pronoun 'I' for oneself and the second person pronoun 'you' for others who are never recognized as being connected with "I", neither epistemologically, nor metaphysically. This unexamined distinction is caused by a fundamental ignorance (*avidyā*), which further causes numerous unaware behavioral patterns such as "I am fat", "I am tall" etc. This fundamental ignorance is regarded as beginning-less and natural (Thibaut, 1890, p. 111).

Ignorance gives rise to superimposition, i.e., the *Self* is attributed to the object and an object is being confused with the *Self* or subject (Thibaut, 1890, p. 108). Again, *Self* (ultimate reality)<sup>3</sup> when confused with something other than itself, i.e., objects such as mind, senses and body, give rise to expressions like "I am this (the body)", 'this is mine,' "I am fat", "I am thin" etc. The *Self* is therefore mistakenly identified with mind, senses and the body (objects). Actually, the *Self* is different from the Objects (BSBh, p. 1)<sup>4</sup> in as much as the light is different from the darkness. In the first passage of the *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*, Śaṅkara states:

yuṣmadasmatpratayagocarayor viṣayaviṣayaṅṅos tamaḥprakāśavad  
viruddhasvabhāvayor itaretarabhāvānupapattau siddhāyām taddharmāṅām api  
sutarām itaretarabhāvānupapattir ity ataḥ (BSBh, p. 1).

The 'subject'<sup>5</sup> and 'object' are absolutely dissimilar and by nature are mutually opposed to each other and thus cannot be mutually superimposed. It is natural on the part of human beings to superimpose the 'object' upon the 'subject' which are totally different from one other and incapable of being identified, i.e., of one being taken as the other. Here Sankara makes two points clear, namely that: 1) there is a dissimilarity between Subject and Object; 2) reciprocal superimposition or rather superimposition is impossible.

The *Self* whose essential nature is pure consciousness, is without attribute, devoid of any type of activity and difference. However, when objects like mind, senses and body are attributed to the *Self*, then the *Self* becomes an individual

3 *Self* refers to *Brahman*. *Self* is *ātman* and *ātman* is no other than *Brahman*, according to AV. AV formulates the criterion of the real as that which remains uncontradicted in all spans of time — *trikālikādyaśābādhyatvam*. The world and its objects can be sublated at any time, therefore, these cannot be regarded as real. However, the experience of the identity between *ātman* and *Brahman*, once realized, is never contradicted by any other experience. So, considering the criterion provided by AV, the *Brahman* (*Self* or *ātman*) is called the real (ultimate reality). Now, the *Brahman/ātman*, limited by ignorance, appears as the individual self or *jīva* with mind, senses and body. The individual self identifies itself with mind, senses and body and says "I am this" (Body), but the *ātman* in the individual self is none other than *Brahman*, and *Brahman* is absolute, without qualities of any kind and devoid of activity, a mere witnessing consciousness. Therefore, it is only under ignorance that the *Brahman/ātman* becomes limited and the notion of individual self or 'I' emerges.

4 Objects like mind, senses and body are also regarded as the not-self by AV.

5 The subject is pure consciousness. Pure consciousness conditioned by ignorance is the individual consciousness. If it is merely a passive observer or indifferent to the perceived object, it is called the witness-consciousness (*sākṣī-Caitanya*), and if it is actively involved with the object, it is called engaged-consciousness, the subject (*jīva-caitanya*). Both are essentially pure consciousness. However, when they operate under the spell of ignorance, they become individual consciousness.

self<sup>6</sup> — the agent (I), and enjoyer of all activities. The mind, senses and body are the product of ignorance and have no reality of their own. These are regarded as unreal/non-real, as opposed to the real (Apte, 1960, pp. 24–32). The real is that which remains uncontradicted over all spans of time (Dasgupta, 1922, p. 444). Now, the mind, senses and body perish at the time of death,<sup>7</sup> so they cannot be regarded as real. Therefore, they are unreal, i.e., false (*mīthyā*) and are mistakenly attributed to the *Self*. The absence of discrimination between subject and object, which are opposed to each other, gives rise to identification of the *Self* with the body in the form of expressions like “‘I’ am fat’.

Similarly, an identification with the mind gives rise to expressions like “‘I’ am happy, sad’, and so on. The identification of the *Self* with attributes other than the *Self* is erroneous (Robbiano, 2016, pp. 138–142) since the *Self* is beyond these qualities. The *Self* in AV is pure consciousness, *Brahman*, the ultimate reality,<sup>8</sup> one without the second (*ekam advītiyam*). *Self* being pure consciousness cannot be lean, fair, happy, sad, etc.<sup>9</sup> because these are the states or conditions of the body. *Self* under ignorance is limited by attributes of the not-self which gives rise to the notion of the individual self or *jīva*. *Self* is one and indivisible. It will not be possible to prove that there is a plurality of consciousness.

However, there does exist a plurality of individuals. Individual selves are a composite of mind, senses and body. Two individuals differ, not on account of the consciousness in them, but on account of the mind and body. Mind, senses and the body are the products of ignorance and have no reality of their own. They are regarded as unreal as opposed to the real:

For the real is known to us as that which is proved by the *pramānas*, and which will never again be falsified by later experience or other means of proof. A thing is said to be true only so long as it is not contradicted; but since at the dawn of right knowledge

- 6 *Self* in AV is the witness consciousness. Pure consciousness, on account of its association with ignorance becomes the witness of the perceived objects. This witness consciousness, when limited by mind-senses and body, becomes the individual self. In this paper, *Self* (with a capital ‘S’) is taken to mean Pure consciousness or *Brahman*. *Self* (with a small ‘s’) is the individual self; the agent and enjoyer of the fruits of action. The difference between *Self* and individual self is that *Self* is devoid of any type of activity, but individual self performs actions and is limited.
- 7 The body is reduced to ashes, but there is no destruction of *Self*, because *Self* has the nature of being always in existence, i.e., being eternal.
- 8 The examples given “‘I’ am fat’ “‘I’ am tall’ etc refer to *ātman*. In simple words attributes of the body (fat, tall) are ascribed to the *Self/ātman* under superimposition.
- 9 *Self*, pure consciousness and *Brahman* are identical in AV. *Self* does not become consciousness but rather *Self* is pure consciousness or *Brahman*. This consciousness is not a contingent quality that emerges and disappears in conjunction with the presence and absence of objects. Nor does this consciousness expand or contract with the appearance or disappearance of objects. It shines forth eternally in unabated form. Pure consciousness is the very basis of existence. It is in and pervades all. Without pure consciousness there would be nothing. Everything that is present is by its very nature pure consciousness, and if there was nothing present, pure consciousness would still be present. Pure consciousness is the ultimate reality and all else is a mere appearance of this consciousness/*ātman/Brahman*. The fundamental assertion of AV is “*ātman* is *Brahman*” (*ātma ca Brahma*) (Apte, 1960, pp. 5–9). *Self* is not an aspect of *Brahman* but is the *Brahman*. ‘*Brahman*’ and ‘*Self*’ are two different labels for one and the same ultimate reality.

this world–appearance will be found to be false and non–existing, it cannot be regarded as real (Dasgupta, 1922, p. 444).

Now, since the mind, senses, and body perish at the time of death, they cannot be regarded as real; therefore they are unreal, i.e., false (*mithyā*) and are mistakenly attributed to the *Self*. One and the same consciousness appears to be plural as it is qualified by the plurality of adjuncts (*upādhi*).<sup>10</sup> The individual self projects the notion of self and other while in reality there is no duality. In order to show the reality of the *Self* and unreality of the object, AV formulates the criterion of the real in another way. The real is that which can never be contradicted and which is uniformly present in all our experience. Individual *jīva* has three states of experience — the wakefulness, dream and deep sleep states. In the wakeful state the individual self is conscious of and encounters the objects of the external world through the functioning of the mind and senses. In the dream state, the mind alone functions and projects objects of its own. The deep sleep state is bereft of the functioning of the mind and senses and, as a result, there remains no awareness of objects. It depicts that in the wakeful and the dream states, the mind and senses are sometimes present and sometimes absent, but *Self* remains uniformly present in all states of experience. It reveals that the *Self* alone is real while all attributes other than *Self* have no reality of their own (Balasubramanian, 1989, pp. 32–37).

*Self*, limited by “adjuncts”, becomes finite. The result of superimposing these adjuncts is that the individual thinks oneself to be limited in knowledge, power and in other aspects. The individual becomes subject to pain and pleasure and is caught up in the transmigratory existence. Ignorance is the foundation of all aspects of the cognitions. Worldly activities based on the sense of difference and duality between self and other (born out of ignorance) lead to serious consequences in society. The difference, when used to discriminate oneself or one’s group from all ‘others’, leads to some perplexing evil of the present time, such as communal violence, violence against women, corruption, etc. The focus of the paper is to reveal that in the context of AV, the difference has no ontological existence of its own. All existent beings have one ground i.e., pure consciousness or *Self*, and this concept, if apprehended properly, can lead to generating greater social harmony. The duality of self and other is based on error, and it can be dispelled only by the knowledge of ultimate reality (*Brahman*).

### 1. *Superimposition and some prevailing misconceptions*

Śaṅkara introduces this notion of superimposition (*adhyāsa*) to support the perceived distinction between the subject and object of consciousness. According to him, we identify the subject of consciousness with the object of consciousness

10 *Upādhi* is that which »seems to alter or limits the true nature of object« (BSBh, p. 58).

because we superimpose attributes of one upon the other, and vice versa.<sup>11</sup> Superimposition (*adhyāsa*) is an apparent presentation of the attributes of one thing upon another.<sup>12</sup> Śaṅkara further reiterates that »superimposition is cognizing something as something else«. <sup>13</sup> According to AV, the true nature of reality is concealed due to superimposition. Moreover, what we see is a projection of reality after superimposition. However, this concept of superimposition on which the AV thesis relies heavily, has become the target of criticism. One particular criticism of AV is that, it claims the empirical world is to be regarded as false. *Brahman*, which is pure, absolute and non-dual consciousness,<sup>14</sup> is said to be the sole reality,<sup>15</sup> and the world is regarded as false (CVS, p. 64). This viewpoint has given rise to various objections. If the world is false, so the world has no existence just like a snake has no existence in the case of the rope–snake illusion. The world is merely our fancy or imagination (Singh, 1989, pp. 75–80). Another misunderstanding about AV is that, if all that exists is *Brahman* and the world is merely illusory or false, then there cannot be a real distinction between good and evil, right and wrong. The world is illusory, implies that the social and moral obligations are also merely the product of the illusion, then why should one walk on the path of truthfulness if truth and falsity are nothing but illusions? (Ranade,

11 »The superimposition of the object which is the content of the concept “you” and its attributes, upon the subject which is the content of the concept ‘I’ and which is the nature of pure consciousness« (Apte, 1960, pp. 2–4): *asmatpratyayagocare viṣayini cidātmake yuṣmatpratyayagocarasya viṣayasya taddharmāṇām cādhyāsaḥ*.

12 »What is superimposition? It is an awareness of what was seen in another locus and is a form of memory. Some say that it is the superimposition of the attributes of one thing upon another. Others say that superimposition upon another is an illusion because of non-discrimination. Others still, say that superimposition on another is the imagination of opposite attributes present in themselves. In any case, there is no straying away from the awareness of one thing as being something else. Similar to this is worldly experience –a shell appears like silver and a single moon appears like two« (Apte, 1960, pp. 5–9): *āha-ko ‘yam adhyāso nāmeti. ucyate-smṛtirūpaḥ paratra pūrvadr̥ṣṭāvabhāsaḥ. taṃ kecid anyatrānyadharmādhyāsa iti vadanti. kecid tu yatra yadadhyāsaḥ tadvivekāgrahanibandhanā bhrama iti. anye tu yatra yadadhyāsaḥ tasyaiva viparītadharmatvakaḥpanām ācakṣate iti*.

13 *adhyāso nāma atasmīṃs tadbuddhir ity avocāma* (CVS, pp. 108–109).

14 According to AV anything that never changes and remains uncontradicted is ultimately real. It is *Brahman* only that is real, according to AV. Again, *Self* (*ātman*) is identical to *Brahman*. The *ātman* veiled by ignorance appears as the individual selves, just as indivisible space appears plural on account of its limitation. Space appears to be divided into pots, rooms, etc. The material of pots cannot divide space into parts. For the sake of particular reference we differentiate between pot–space, room–space, open— space, etc., but space as such is indivisible. Similarly, *Self* being one and indivisible appears as being many due to ignorance. The ego, mind, body, senses etc. are the products of ignorance. When the non-dual and part-less knowledge of *Brahman/ātman* is realized, *ignorance* and all the products thereof are destroyed. Thus, one can realize the non-dual ultimate reality as one’s own *Ātman* itself, and that *Ātman* is the *Brahman* (Swami Madhvananda, 1921, p. 101).

15 *janmotpattir ādir asyeti tadguṇasaṃvijñāno bahuvrīhiḥ* (Apte, 1960, pp. 9–14). Translation: “*Brahman* is that from which something proceeds, originates, etc. i.e. origin, subsistence, destruction, control, enlightenment, nescience, bondage and liberation of this known animate and inanimate world.”; *sarvaṃ khalv idam brahma* Translation: “*Brahman*, you see, is this whole world” (Śaṅkarācārya, 2015, 3.14.1).



1970, p. 146). The falsity of the world thesis, thus, would destroy the very foundation of morality. Everything in the world is brought into existence as a result of superimposition. Śāṅkara's three main presuppositions that *Brahman* is the sole reality, the world is false and the individual self is none other than *Brahman* (CVS, p. 64), has led to two major misunderstandings about AV: 1) If the world is false, then the world is non-existent. This would render the world a fancy or the product of our imagination (Singh, 1989, p. 75–80). 2) If the world has an illusory existence, then ethics or morality<sup>16</sup> are meaningless.

However, these prevailing views hinge on a misconception. It is not possible to regard the individual self which is conscious of itself as being illusory, in the same manner, the world of our experience, in which all actions and experiences occur, cannot be regarded as illusory. »Just as it is not possible for me to know that 'I do not exist,' so also it is not possible for me to know that I am illusory« (Sen, 1989, pp. 72–74). The world, according to AV, has *Brahman* as its substratum (Swami Madhvananda, 1921, p. 104). It is not right to regard the world as mere fancy and a product of the imagination. Against the first misunderstanding, it is contended that the fancy or imagination implies that the object perceived is a projection of the mind. However, Śāṅkara never admits that the world is a projection of the mind (Apte, 1960, pp. 402–403). The mind may know the world but does not constitute it or determine its nature. The system of AV advocates empirical realism, i.e., the view that whatever is perceived exists independent of the perceiving mind (Apte, 1960, pp. 397–398). The object perceived by a perceiver must be granted some reality, for what is totally non-existent such as »the son of a barren woman« can never be perceived by anyone at any time (Ranade, 1970, p. 146). On the other hand, the world is perceived, experienced and, most importantly, the world is commonly shared by selves. Therefore, the world can never be regarded as a product of the imagination through a cognizing mind.

The second misunderstanding which has to do with the meaninglessness of ethics and morality is further amplified by asserting that there cannot be a real distinction between good and bad, right and wrong if the world is a mere illusion. On the contrary, these distinctions are pivotal for moral discourse. If we suppose this world is illusory, this implies that social and moral obligations are also merely the product of illusion. Consequently, no one should walk on the path of truthfulness, since truth and falsity are nothing but illusions (Ranade, 1970, p. 146). The falsity of the world, thus would destroy the foundation of morality. It leads to the view that AV cannot uphold ethical discourse within its framework.

These prevailing views rest on a false premise.<sup>17</sup> It is not logically possible to regard an individual self which is conscious of itself as being illusory. In the same manner, the world of our experience in which all our actions take place and perceptions are shared cannot be regarded as illusory. The world according

16 In the present paper ethics and morality are used interchangeably.

17 A proposition such as *Brahman* is real and the world false (*brahma satyam, jagan mithyā jīvo brahmaiva naprah*, CVS, p. 64).

to AV has *Brahman* as its substratum.<sup>18</sup> *Brahman* is the ground and the world is grounded in it. In order to defend the AV system Radhakrishnan argues:

The inference of the unreality of the world from the sole reality of Brahman is legitimate, if the world is viewed as separate from Brahman. But is there any ground for such an assumption? [...] The reality of the Brahman everywhere asserted in the Upanishads, instead of implying the unreality of the world, logically involves its reality (Radhakrishnan, 1914, p. 445).

All misconceptions about AV are based on the initial misreading that *Brahman* and the world are two numerically different entities. In the classic example of the rope–snake illusion, the snake is being perceived but not without a ground or substratum, i.e., the rope. We consider the snake as illusory, but it is not altogether non-existent, (like the hare’s horn, which has no substratum) (Apte, 1960, pp. 398–410). The perception of the snake is made possible by means of an actual existent substratum — a rope. So, whenever there is the perception or experience of something, the experience is possible only because there is some underlying reality. Similarly, the world and all experiences undertaken in the world cannot be illusory. Since *Brahman* is the ground upon which the world of phenomena is projected, all other existence depends upon *Brahman* for its reality and being (Swami Madhvananda, 1921, p. 222). *Brahman* appearing as the world is analogous to the rope mistakenly perceived as a snake. The snake could never be perceived if there was no underlying reality of rope and can only last as long as the rope is not perceived.

Similarly, the existence of the world cannot be denied. The experience of the world stands confirmed. Śāṅkara assigns empirical reality to the world (Apte, 1960, p. 306). In Śāṅkara’s schema there are three levels of reality: *pāramārthika* (transcendental/absolute), *vyāvahārika* (empirical) and *prātibhāsika* (illusory). The *Brahman* is the *pāramārthika sattā* (absolute reality), the world of space–time–causality belongs to *vyāvahārika*, while an erroneous perception of objects like silver in the shell, the snake in the rope, are at the *prātibhāsika* level. Śāṅkara admits that the world is as real as anything possibly can be at the empirical level of reality (Apte, 1960, pp. 306–307). It is undoubtedly true that the main presupposition — *Brahman* is real, the world is false and the individual self is none other than the universal soul *brahma satyaṃ jagan mithyā jīvo nāparaḥ* (CVS, p. 64) is found in the writings of Śāṅkara. This assertion indicates that the plurality of the world is false or unreal because it disappears at the moment when the effect of ignorance disappears. Thus, the world is unreal from the standpoint

18 Śāṅkara repeatedly asserts that *Brahman* is the ground (*adhiṣṭhāna*), Efficient cause (*kāraṇa*), Material cause (*upādāna*), support (*āspada*) of the world appearance. All these expressions are used to reveal the oneness of the world with *Brahman* (*Brahmaiva idaṃ viśvam*). The finite multiplicity of the world is ontologically non-different from the Absolute. Their finitude and multiplicity consists in the names and forms which are being superimposed on the *Self*–absolute. An individual self and its multiple world differ only in name and form from *Self* and does not have its own ontological status. Ontologically the undivided unity of *Self* remains unimpaired by the multiplicity of sublatale names and forms.



of transcendental reality. The world is regarded as real (empirically) because it is being experienced, and notably *Brahman* is the substratum or ground on which this world of plurality appears. Thus, the world is neither absolutely real nor absolutely not real, but it is relatively 'real'. The world is real in relation to the *Brahman* and apart from *Brahman* the world can have no existence (Swami Madhvananda, 1921, pp. 102–104). Moreover, prior to the realization of *Brahman* all the transactions of the phenomenal world are real enough (BSBhS, p. 57). Again, this remark can be strengthened by Śaṅkara's writing in the *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*:

It would be reasonably sustainable to understand that prior to the realization of Brahma as the self of all, all transactions (of the phenomenal world) for the time being are real enough, even as the transactions in dreams are real enough (for the time being) until waking consciousness returns [...]. Therefore prior to the realization of Brahma as the Self of all, all the worldly and religious transactions based on the scriptures, are reasonably sustainable i.e., valid, even as ordinary man, while he is asleep and dreaming, sees all the high and low entities, and definitely considers his experiences quite as real as they are when they are directly perceived, and has no notion, then, of their having only an unreal appearance (of direct perception) (Apte, 1960, pp. 306–307).

From the above statement, it is obvious that AV advocates empirical realism. Any experience at the empirical level cannot be rejected out rightly. If a person erroneously perceives a pillar before him in the dim light as a man, then his experience is considered as being right until and unless it is not sublated by the experience of the pillar. It implies that all worldly experiences are phenomenally real.<sup>19</sup> The world cannot be sheer illusion. Sheer illusion can never be perceived or experienced. The reality can thus be viewed from two standpoints or types of experience, first from the standpoint of relational experience (*yuktidarśana*) in which one relates oneself to the entities of the world; and secondly from the standpoint of the experience of ultimate being (Shrivastava, 1968, pp. 57–80). Śaṅkara emphasizes that from the former standpoint (empirical level) reality of all our experiences, including the identity of 'Self' with the body and creation of its co-relate 'other' and the behaviors resulting from the creation of these images cannot be denied, but at the level of the latter type of experience (transcendental level or experience of ultimate being, i.e., *Brahman*), the sense of difference between self and other is removed (Apte, 1960, pp. 306–312). Moreover, the activities performed with the apprehension of the distinction (resulting in social disharmony) between self and other (particularly unethical activities) also fade away (Shrivastava, 1968, pp. 105–117).<sup>20</sup>

19 Empirical actions are real from an empirical point of view but from a *paramārthika* point of view, the empirical world and its activities are false.

20 Since at this level there remains no plurality, the self experiences the oneness of all beings.

## 2. *The Problem of Enworlded Subjectivity*

From the perspective of a *Brahman* realized self, there is no duality, and hence there is no distinction between self and other. Furthermore, the question of right and wrong actions or making a moral choice does not make sense. In other words, at the level of absolute reality (*pārmārthika sattā*) AV does not need any ethics or guiding principles for action, since at this level (transcendental or absolute level) pure consciousness is ultimately undifferentiated, de-individualized and absolute. Furthermore, where there is an absence of duality, the question of doing good or bad to the other does not make sense. However, at the level of phenomenal reality (*vyāvahārika sattā*), there is duality, difference and the self–other dichotomy seems so real that we need guiding principles for choosing the right action with respect to oneself and the other. Now, given that at the level of absolute reality the self–other distinction is not real, AV has to explain how absolute, non-dual, unqualified consciousness gets involved in the phenomenal world and perceives the self–other dichotomy. This is the basic problem, according to Balasubramanian (1992), which the system of AV faces: the problem of ‘enworlded subjectivity’.<sup>21</sup> Balasubramanian defines the problem of Enworlded Subjectivity for the Advaita as follows:

There is, on the one hand, the dichotomy between consciousness and the world of objects presented to consciousness; there is, on the other hand, involvement of consciousness in the objects of the world. How is it possible, Advaita asks, that consciousness which is essentially different from everything else presented to it as its object, get itself involved in the objects of the world surrounding it, losing its identity in such a way that it is not even reckoned as an entity in its own along with other objects?« (Balasubramanian, 1992, p. 77).

Enworlded consciousness and the object presented to consciousness are two different entities, but when consciousness becomes engaged in the objects of the world and does not realize its essence as real, then the problem of enworlded subjectivity arises. The philosophy of Śāṅkara deals with the problem of enworlded subjectivity, i.e., *Self* being involved in the world falsely identifies itself with the world. The dichotomy between consciousness and the world of objects presented to consciousness shows that the objects presented to consciousness are different from it and therefore are the object of consciousness. On the other hand, consciousness which reveals the object is only the subject. The object which is unconscious can never be designated as the *Self*, but, it is natural for the individual self to regard objects such as mind, senses and body as conscious. Since, it is the mind which thinks, it is the body which feels and acts; the individual under ignorance thinks of mind and body as conscious. Superimposition of the mind, senses and body on consciousness leads to the false identity of the *Self* with the objects giving rise to day–to–day activities. All our worldly transactions comprising all kinds of

<sup>21</sup> Enworlded subjectivity simply means subject or individual self actively engaged or involved in the affairs of the world.

activities — conative and affective (*lokavyavahāra*) rest on the discrimination between subject and object.

The individual self cannot be owner of anything that is different from it,<sup>22</sup> be it mind, sense organs, the body or any external object outside one's mind, senses and body. (Balasubramanian, 1992). The nature of *Self* or consciousness is such that, being the principle of awareness in human knowledge and experience, it remains untouched and unaffected by all that is known or experienced. All experienced objects cannot belong to *Self* or can affect it. This means attributing anything to *Self* is logically impossible, because all that we know, think and speak of cannot be about *Self*. It reveals the fact that the conception of self taken in our normal activities is always predicated. Again, the other is always seen along with predications (mind, senses and body); while AV establishes that *Self* (pure consciousness) is beyond all predications and is to be realized as one and non-plural. This realization of *Self* (*Self* without predications) leads to the identification of one's self as not being different from another, i.e., self-in-other and other-in-self (Sarukkai, 1997, p. 1408).

### 3. *The Higher Identity: Ground for Advaita*

Predications to *Self* result in the feeling of distinctiveness and separation from other selves. This feeling gives rise to a particular attitude or behavior towards others, which is the root of most of our misery and suffering. In AV, metaphysical ignorance occupies a significant position. It is only because of ignorance that the cycle of birth, death, pain and pleasure is associated with the individual self. The individual self without knowing its essential nature gets involved in the affairs of the world and performs actions. The results of actions lead to a future life involving pain and pleasure. Moreover, it is on account of these painful experiences in the "life-world" that the self experiences bondage. This bondage generates an inner urge to *know the Real* and attain liberation. AV advocates that in yearning for liberation (*mumukṣa*) from suffering, one realizes that the cause of the suffering is ignorance about the real nature of the self. While everything is *Self*<sup>23</sup> and all the predications to *Self* rest upon a mistake, then such mistaken thinking leads to recognizing the reality of the other as being different from the self. There occurs discrimination<sup>24</sup> between self and other due to this misconception,

22 Individual self is different from mind, senses and body because the true nature of the individual self is pure consciousness while the mind, senses and body are devoid of consciousness. They are sometimes present and sometimes absent (eg in deep sleep), but the *Self* remains constantly present in all stages (of consciousness) (sleep, dream and deep sleep).

23 It means that the all are one, i.e., *Self/Brahman* but due to limitation the one appears as many. Swami Nikhilananda writes in his introduction to the translation of *Ātmabodha* »it is the association with the *upādhis* of various material bodies that makes *Brahman* appear as gods, angels, men, animals, birds, trees and stones« (Swami Nikhilananda, 1946, pp. 58–59).

24 Discrimination is the unfair and unequal treatment of a person based on some personal characteristics like gender, race, caste etc. It has created various social evils like the problem of untouchability, apartheid, exploitation of the poor, bribery, corruption etc.

which leads to consequences which are not good for the individual and society as a whole.

One of the causes of social problems is the ego or *ahaṃkāra*.<sup>25</sup> Sibajiban Bhattacharya defines the function of the ego as:

i) 'Ego' the source of 'I' consciousness, ii) owner of all mental states and acts of the individual...iv) restricts a person and separates him from other persons and the objects of the world, v) is the center around which all thoughts and actions revolve, vi) usurps all functions of pure consciousness as the foundation of a person, vii) is the principle of identity and identifies itself with the mind–body complex.... (Bhattacharya, 1992, pp. 59).

It reveals the fact that the ego is the major vehicle or carrier of all activities. The ego expresses itself as 'I' or 'mine' and the idea of self identity is created. This ego is the foundation on which all other identities are framed such as that of family, religion, nationality, etc. (Rao, 2012, pp. 202–206). The ego constantly strives to be always in the right, always superior, never wrong and never inferior. It constantly seeks self–importance, power and superiority over others. The root of most conflicts in society is the ego or an image of the self constructed under ignorance (Rao, 2012, pp. 201–202).

All activities in the world are associated with self and other, and so the distinction between them plays an important role.<sup>26</sup> However, if the source of the distinction is not properly understood, this may lead to chaos in society because this distinction is the source of further discrimination based on caste, color, creed, sex, and religion. This discrimination is an extension of the distinction between self and other and most problems such as social discrimination, exploitation and political oppression of the people of one group by the people of another group is generally fueled by the feeling that they are different, inferior and deserve to be ruled and exploited.<sup>27</sup> This is not all; namely, most of our present conflicts due to economic competition are also rooted in this distinction between self and other. Instead of helping the economically weak, there are trade wars going on, which have the potential to trigger a full scale armed conflict between nations. It is due

25 Ego is the aspect of mind that expresses individuality. It is known in Sanskrit as the *ahaṃkāra aham* meaning 'I' and *kāra* meaning 'maker'. Therefore, it is the composer of individuality and distinguishes itself from other 'I's' (ego's). It is the ego that gives the sense of 'I' or mine. In every action one is conscious of oneself as 'I am the doer.' The ego occurs due to the association of the *Self* with the limiting adjuncts (mind, senses and body). Ego is the covering over the *Self*.

26 *AV* advocates non–duality or non–difference. Duality according to *AV* is a false appearance, but it is a well known fact that ethics is possible only if there is a duality between self and other. For instance, charity is practiced not towards oneself but towards the other. So, if duality is to be regarded as false, then how can *AV* hold ethics within its metaphysical framework? There is no doubt that every action presupposes a duality between one self and other. *AV* proposes three levels of reality and ascribe empirical level to the world. At the empirical level world is not false. At this level, it is the difference between one self and other that makes possible all worldly affairs (*lokavyavahāra*). Therefore it is evident that ethics is possible in the system of *AV*.

27 We have numerous examples of this in human history. The Nazi genocide of the Jews is well documented and recent examples include conflict in the Middle East among various factions divided on religious grounds; also, there are violent clashes between Burmese Buddhists and the Rohingya Muslims.

to this distinction between self and other and hatred for the other that today we have economies based on violent conflicts which justifies the production of guns, tanks, missiles and even nuclear weapons, which can annihilate the population of the entire earth many times.

Hence, it is crucial to note that AV goes beyond this distinction by teaching the oneness of all selves. The oneness of all implies absence of the 'other.' The absence of the other does not indicate the elimination of the other, but rather an absence of the feeling of distinction between one and the other. Thus, once the feeling of distinction (discrimination based on this distinction) between self and other is removed, the treatment of the 'other' in an undesirable way is also dispensed with. When we consider others as being different from ourselves, we are not bothered about the harm caused to the other by our actions, but on the other hand, if we have some concern for the other, we cannot harm the other. This is because we now look upon the other person as no longer being the 'other'. Rather, we are treating the other as an extension of ourselves (Rao, 2012, pp. 202–206). It is natural for us to desire to preserve our own identity and existence. However, in the course of our existence one may behave and act inappropriately for reasons of self— subsistence. This causes harm to the other many a time. In sharp contrast, once the self has recognized its unity and non-difference with the other, it functions in an amicable fashion. This sense of 'oneness of all' brings transformation in the attitude of the individual self, which further leads towards an ideal, peaceful and just society.

#### 4. *The Schema of Moral Discourse*

Morality, in general, is based upon a differentiating<sup>28</sup> consciousness — a consciousness that necessarily grasps itself through the distinction between 'self' and 'other'. The argument for sustaining such a position is that every action is performed upon someone else, and based upon the same argument the idea of reciprocity is constructed and nurtured. This position confirms the necessity of the *other* for morality (Rao, 2012, p. 206). The ordinary understanding of *karma* theory is also justified on the same grounds. Presuming the dichotomy between self and other which is constructed upon apparent differences between the enworlded subjects, moral thinkers have built numerous theoretical models for addressing basic questions on how one should behave towards the other. The assumption of any kind of 'I' and the idea of self based upon that will, by default, demands or produces a 'you' — the other. Otherness is an inevitable spin-off of identity.

28 Consciousness which differentiates itself from the other's consciousness is the differentiating consciousness. In morality, differentiating consciousness occupies a significant position. The ethical questions arise only for the individual consciousness (which differentiates itself from another individual consciousness) and not for pure consciousness which is simple and without any subject-object distinction. Similarly, all ethics or morality is based upon differentiating consciousness. AV must maintain the reality of differentiating consciousness at an empirical level but this differentiating consciousness is not to be taken (in AV) as the discriminative force which leads to turmoil in society.

Most of the moral discourse is an arduous attempt to develop a roadmap for achieving harmonious co–existence between the ‘self’ and the ‘other.’

AV does not develop any such theory; rather, it addresses a fundamental problem of the aforesaid dichotomy and systematically argues that the apparent or empirical phenomenon of using ‘self’ and ‘other’ for referring to distinct beings involves a cognitive error. Also, it further proceeds to correct the error by explaining the superimposition, which is not merely an exercise in the epistemological or metaphysical sense, but it carves out a ground for the essential oneness of beings, which brings about a significant transformation of attitude. Śaṅkara teaches the absolute oneness of all beings (Swami Madhvananda, 1921, pp. 102–103, 112–114). Recognition and realization of absolute oneness bring about a compassionate attitude, which impregnates the self in sharing suffering and joy, i.e., a spontaneous attempt to remove the other’s suffering and to rejoice in their happiness (Alladi Mahadeva Sastry, 1977, pp. 311–312). An enlightened being — *jīvanmukta*, a person liberated while alive has the experience of oneness of the *Self* and the absolute. He has become a boundless ocean of love and compassion. Prior to the realization of the individual self as the *Self*, he lives and acts as an isolated agent. All his actions are directed towards self–interest, but after the rise of knowledge of *Self*, he lives and acts in oneness with *Self*. He feels the interest of all living beings as his own and in this sense he may be said to enter into all things as »the wise who have control over their passions, find the all–pervading everywhere and enter into all things« (Datta, 1888, 532).<sup>29</sup> Deutsch comments:

The quality then that ought to inform human action is non–egoism, which, positively expressed, is what the Advaitin understands to be ‘love’.<sup>30</sup> One must interrelate with ‘others’, one must conduct oneself, with the knowledge that the other is non–different from oneself. Love, the meeting of another in the depth of being, must be grounded in knowledge, and when it is so grounded, it expresses itself in every action that one performs (cf. Robbiano, 2016, pp. 146–147).

It is the knowledge of non–difference that is the motivating force behind the performance of actions directed towards the welfare of all. In ethical activities or moral actions, the individual is enjoined to cultivate the spirit of non–difference and this spirit can be explored in the teachings of Śaṅkara. In enlightenment — the realization of unity of *Brahman* in all things — the sense of boundless equality becomes manifested. As Swami Nikhilananda holds, »Seeing all beings in himself and himself in all beings, the sage treats others as if they were their own self« (Swami Nikhilananda, 1948, p. 28).<sup>31</sup>

29 In this work, Datta (1888) has cited this quotation but does not provide any reference of such a citation, since the quote seems to be from an ancient text.

30 Love is the expression of affection towards someone. Love in this context springs from the union of one’s self and an other when the distinction between my interest and the other’s interest is overcome. Love emerges at the moment when the connection between ‘I’ and ‘you’ is stronger than the apparent separation.

31 Similarly, Śaṅkarācārya holds that »that which is superimposed upon something else is observed by the wise to be identical with substratum as in the case of a rope appearing as a snake — the



One who has understood and experienced the higher identity — the oneness of all beings — is beyond the distinction of good and evil and thus free from crime. This simply means that the realized self has surpassed the realm of duality and has a new perception of life and the world. With this, the moral distinction between good and evil is no more significant or relevant to the enlightened. Thus, he develops a new vision of integrity with all beings and this vision is full of a compassionate attitude towards all selves. This forms a new moral perspective. The concept of good and evil presupposes self — good actions are directed towards the welfare of the self, and evil actions interfere with the well-being of others. The essence of evil actions lies in the postulation of the individual self, but when the error of the postulation is removed then the sense of non-difference among all individual selves supervenes (Radhakrishnan, 1959, pp. 102–105). Identification of *Self* with the other (oneness of all creatures) by the enlightened mind precludes the possibility of inappropriate actions towards the other. Thus, the sense of oneness in AV becomes the basis of morality.

Certainly, the distinction of good and evil forms the basis for ethical discourse, but there is a unique and exclusive schema of ethical discourse in AV which lies, not in the difference but in the identity of all selves. The sense of oneness is revealed in one of the great statements (*mahāvākya*)<sup>32</sup> asserted in the *Upaniṣhads*, *tat tvam asi* (that thou art).<sup>33</sup> The intention of the statement is to indicate that the individual self 'thou' limited by adjuncts is no other than the absolute, which is referred to as 'that.' Identity is obtained by discovering the integral meaning of apparently incompatible and contradictory terms<sup>34</sup> 'that' and 'thou' and thereby arriving at their common ground, i.e., consciousness. If the individual self is regarded as 'thou' and the *Brahman* is taken as 'that', then it would be diffi-

apparent difference depends solely on delusion« (Swami Madhvananda, 1921, p. 178). Wise is the person who has realized the *Self*. The wise one understands that the difference in empirical existence is mere appearance. All existents have one substratum, and there is non-difference in reality.

- 32 There are four *mahāvākyas* cited in four *Upaniṣhads*. The aim of these *mahāvākya* is to express the identity between *ātman* and *Brahman*. These are: 1) *Prajñānam Brahma* — *Brahman* is supreme knowledge. It is asserted in *Aitareya Upaniṣhad*. 2) *Tat tvam asi* — you are that, soul/*ātman* in the individual self is *Brahman*. It is found in *Chāndogya Upaniṣhad*. 3) *Ayam ātma Brahma* — *Self* (*ātman*) is *Brahman*. It is found in *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣhad*. 4) *Aham Brahmāsmi* — "I" (*Self*) am *Brahman*. This statement is found in *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣhad*.
- 33 *That thou art* is a *mahāvākya* (great statement) used in the sixth chapter of *Chāndogya Upaniṣhad*; Uddālaka teaches his son Śvetaketu about the nature of *Self*. The statement implies the non-difference between the essential nature of soul which is consciousness and the essential nature of *Brahman* which, too, is consciousness. The aim of this statement is to dispel the ignorance surrounding *Self*, as *Self* is veiled (*āvaraṇasakti*) by the limiting adjuncts of the not-self, i.e., the mind, senses and body. This composite of relativities is falsely regarded as "myself"; then is imposed on *Self* such that the unique and universal subject is falsely regarded as having the objective characteristics of a particular individual. The *mahāvākya* affirming the true nature of the self, by dispelling this superimposition of the differentiation born of ignorance, awakens the *jīva* to his true identity as *Self* being *Brahman*. *Ātman* is unborn uncreated, undying and eternal: it is pure, objectless consciousness not to be identified with the empirical ego.
- 34 They are contradictory in the sense that 'thou' is the individual selves with limitation while 'that' is the infinite, all pervading consciousness.

cult to maintain their identity since their nature is different. However, there is 'secondary sense' in the sentence, namely, 'that' and 'thou' which reveals the integral meaning of the terms. Secondary sense discloses that if 'thou' refers to pure consciousness underlying the individual and that 'that' denotes pure consciousness which is the essential nature of *Brahman*, then the identity between them emerges. The pure identity of 'that' and 'thou' is the essential nature of all existent beings in the world.<sup>35</sup> This identity of all individuals with the one *Brahman* is directed towards the unity of all selves, which forms the basis of ethics or morality. Śaṅkara cites »The *Self* abiding in all beings and all beings (abiding) in the *Self* sees he, whose self has been made steadfast by yoga,<sup>36</sup> who everywhere sees the same« (Alladi Mahadeva Sastry, 1977, p. 198).

Furthermore, in his commentary on *Bhagavadgītā*, Śaṅkara cites the warrior Krishna: »working for the welfare of others itself is non-violence (*ahimsā*)« (Alladi Mahadeva Sastry, 1977, p. 225). Various virtues<sup>37</sup> are emphasized which are to be cultivated: an individual self who is desirous of liberation must cultivate virtues like temperance (self-control), prudence, courage etc. The practice of various good actions such as the study of scriptures, penance, sincerity, non-injury, truthfulness, absence of anger, self-abnegation, peace, absence of jealousy, kindness, softness, forgiveness, cleanliness of body and mind, celibacy, renunciation of all possessions, withdrawal of senses from their objects, austerities, softness, modesty, etc. leads to the cultivation of virtues (Dasgupta, 1994, p. 115). These virtues evoke a transformation in the behavior of the seeker leading to the highest good (liberation) and also prove instrumental in the creation of a conflict-free society.<sup>38</sup>

If one understands the essential unity of all beings (even if one does not realize the *jīva-Brahman* identity in a transcendental sense), one's attitude towards others and all actions upon others will incur significant transformation. A supporter of AV might argue that, despite refraining from theorizing about morality, the system provides a substantial foundation for moral living in which any

35 Once the identity is established, the world and its objects exist but without a trace of *avidyā*. The world is not dissolved, only the *avidyā* is removed. Moreover, *avidyā* is not the basis of all existent entities in the world. *Avidyā* is the basis of all distinctions only. When *avidyā* is removed, all attributes of *Self*, which is the cause of distinction and discrimination, are removed.

36 Yoga is a discipline for developing one's inherent power in a balanced manner. It is a means of attaining *Self*-realization. Simply stated, yoga is defined as a means of uniting the individual soul with the Universal soul (*Brahman*).

37 Virtue is a quality which is considered morally good or desirable in a person, for instance patience, courage etc.

38 It is possible to have a conflict-free society if every individual in society understands and performs his duty well, for then society can be a beautiful place to live in. No doubt society has always been in conflict. Although people understand the importance of a peaceful world, manmade disasters are far worse than any natural catastrophe. Disagreements, differences over ideologies, beliefs, etc. are bound to cause conflict, but there is a fragile aspect to man also. As the proverb says, 'man is harder than a rock but also more fragile than an egg'. This fragile aspect of man is to be explored, and it can be explored within the message of AV. The teaching of non-difference between one individual self and the other will scatter the seed of brotherhood and love among beings. This can be a boon to society.

normative (deontological, virtue ethical or consequentialist) concerns are not the primary issues, but the consciousness that works behind all knowing and doing is what matters. In brief, the norms of action or its consequence, are of secondary importance; and the attitudinal transformation before all actions is of primary importance.

The AV's position can also be seen in view of the fact that despite knowledge of good and evil, right and wrong, human beings are not prompted to genuinely engage in doing what is right and refraining from doing what is wrong. The proper inducement to virtuous living demands or presupposes a consciousness or a preceding cognition, which in the case of AV is represented by the 'essential unity of 'self' and 'other'. Without this consciousness as a necessary condition of virtuous living, mere knowledge of good and evil does not prompt human beings to lead a morally commendable life. In ordinary experience, the said consciousness is instantiated by our expressions of empathy, care, cooperation, love, etc. When one portrays these traits and experiences these mental states, essential human unity with all beings is experienced in fact.

### *Conclusion*

Based upon the above discussion, it follows that the empirical identity of ego in reference to the 'enworlded subjectivity' is based upon an error. AV argues for a metaphysical basis of oneness — a superseding identity of the *Self* that absorbs all possible otherness. This is a kind of oneness, the absence of which functions as the basis of all discrimination of self and other, and the realization of which brings about an attitudinal transformation. Accordingly, a new kind of moral discourse becomes possible, which calls for attitudinal transformation and the cultivation of virtues as the foundation for moral living.<sup>39</sup> In a conventional treatment of morality, the 'other' remains distant and unrelated to the self and hence offers no substantial reason as to why one should strive for virtues like empathy, compassion, and love for all beings.

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*'Ja' i 'ti' u Advaita Vedanti: moralna interpretacija*

Simran Raina\*

## Sažetak

Članak istražuje metafizičke i etičke pristupe koji su inherentni slici 'ja' i 'ti' u Advaita Vedanti (AV). AV proučava narav pojmovne podjele između 'ja' (asmad) i 'ti' (yusmad). Ukazuje na superimpoziciju koja stoji iza svakodnevnih izričaja za te pojmove — adhyasa kao metafizička preteča — koja generira kognitivnu pogrešku u svim takvim izričajima u kojima se koriste osobne zamjenice 'ja' sa superimpozicijom atributa poput 'debeo', 'visok' itd. Stav je AV da do distinkcije između 'ja' i 'ti' dolazi zbog kognitivne pogreške uzrokovane superimpozicijom. Drugim riječima, uočavati razlike u realnom svijetu predstavlja neznanje (avidya). Nadalje, ako se to neznanje nadomjesti stvarnim znanjem, tj. spoznajom realnosti kao Advaita, tj. ne-dualnosti, uočiti ćemo razvoj drukčije vrste spoznanja koje otkrivaju inherentno jedinstvo između 'ja' i 'ti'. Spoznaja o inherentnom jedinstvu generira drukčiji stav, koji čini da iščekavaju društveni problemi kao što su socio-politička neravnopravnost, mržnja, nasilje itd., koji se temelje na distinkciji između 'ja' i 'ti'. Kao svaka spoznaja, spoznaja o ostvarenju inherentne ne-dualnosti ili advaita donosi promjenu stava prema stvarnosti. U tom slučaju, stav necijenjenja distinkcije između 'ja' i 'ti' mijenja se u prepoznavanje ne-dualnosti u svim osobama.

Međutim, s obzirom na to da AV zagovara ne-dualnost, ona u načelu ne može govoriti o moralu ili etici na bitan način, jer etika pretpostavlja dualnost između 'ja' i 'ti'. Stoga postoji izazov da se pokaže da je, prema AV, ne-dualnost 'ja' i 'ti' izvor morala. Osim toga, predlaže se etika aktivne ljubavi, a ona je sukladna s metafizičkim obvezama u AV. Etika aktivne ljubavi razvija se kad se osoba odrekne ideje o razlikama te se poistovjećuje s drugima. Dobro je poznata činjenica da je korijen većine društvenih zala diskriminacija između 'ja' i 'ti'. Nadalje, upravo ego (ja) stvara jaz između jednog čovjeka i drugoga, što ima za posljedicu da društvo pati od raznih problema, poput nasilja, mržnje, socijalne diskriminacije, korupcije itd. Pojam jednosti svih bića kojega zagovara AV stvara duh ljubavi i sklada među pojedinim egima, a ta je ljubav kamen temeljac etike ili morala. S obzirom na izlaganja u AV o tom problemu, moralna interpretacija inherentnog jedinstva između 'ja' i 'ti' također je naznačena.

Cilj je članka dvostruk: 1. ispitati i izložiti metafizički položaj AV s obzirom na distinkciju između 'ja' i 'ti'; 2. odgovoriti na problem mogućnosti moralnih ili etičkih čina unutar metafizike AV novom vrstom morala, koji se temelji na poistovjećivanju svojega 'ja' i 'ti' drugoga. Drugim riječima, etikom koja se temelji na i koja je kompatibilna s Advaita metafizikom.

*Ključne riječi:* Advaita, superimpozicija, empirijska subjektivnost, Ja, individualno ja, identitet, razlike, moral

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