Rethinking Advaita Within the Colonial Predicament: the ‘Confrontative’ Philosophy of K. C. Bhattacharyya (1875–1949)

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Abstract

I shall examine in this paper the distinctive way in which the prominent Indian philosopher Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya (1875–1949) engaged with Advaita Vedānta during the terminal phase of the colonial period. I propose to do this by looking, first, at ways in which Krishnachandra understood the role of his own philosophizing within the colonial predicament. I will call this his agenda in ‘confrontative’ philosophy. I shall proceed, then, by sketching out the unique manner in which this agenda was successfully enacted through his engagement with the Advaitic notion of self-knowledge. Finally, I will suggest that putting K. C. Bhattacharyya’s thought into the historical perspective of cross-cultural philosophy will reveal a number of shortcomings that need to be revised in a postcolonial setup.

Keywords Modern Indian philosophy · Advaita Vedānta · Self-knowledge · ‘Confrontative’ philosophy · K. C. Bhattacharyya

Introduction

During the second phase of the colonial period (1858–1947), several among Indian Anglophone philosophers who were schooled in the colonial education system and were academically trained in Western philosophy turned to Advaita Vedānta with the intention to building a sound cultural identity for the nation that could stand on its own, with dignity, abreast the Western Other. Thus motivated, and in search for political and epistemic empowerment, the appeal to classical Advaita during this vibrant period of modern Indian philosophy gave rise to a rich and heterogeneous group of Indian academic philosophers who, established at some of the then most prominent Indian

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universities in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Allahabad, or Banaras, engaged in a genuine though troublesome enterprise of rethinking the Sanskrit Advaita in English, through Western categories of understanding, and within the grammar of their colonial predicament. Philosophers such as Anukul Chandra Mukerji (1888–1968), Ramachandra Dattatraya Ranade (1886–1957), Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya (1875–1949), Ras Bihari Das (1886–1945), Ghanshamdas Ratanmal Malkani (1892–1978), S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri (1893–1942), and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975) to name just a few, were all to some extent acquainted with Kantian transcendental idealism, Hegelian absolute idealism, and the idealism of their British interpreters such as Thomas Hill Green (1836–1882), Edward Caird (1835–1908), and Francis Herbert Bradley (1846–1924). Surely, the acquaintances with the then in vogue Western idealisms, the English language in which they thought and wrote with ease, together with the asymmetric political and cultural relations enacted within the colonial predicament from which they embarked on their intellectual projects constituted an entirely new hermeneutical situation that deeply shaped their philosophic engagement with classical Advaita, setting as much their conditions of intelligibility as their limits.¹

My aim in this paper is to examine one paradigmatic case among those attempts: Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya's distinctive way of rethinking Advaita within the colonial context. I propose to do this by looking, first, at ways in which Krishnachandra understood the role of his own philosophizing within the colonial predicament. I will call this his agenda in 'confrontative' philosophy. I shall proceed then by sketching out the distinctive manner in which this agenda was successfully enacted through his original engagement with the topic of self-knowledge. Finally, despite my inclination to assess Krishnachandra's 'confrontative' philosophy as a meaningful translation of the Advaitic project of self-knowledge into the grammar of the colonial context, I will float the idea that putting his thought into the historical perspective of cross-cultural philosophy will reveal a number of shortcomings in his outlook that need to be revised in a postcolonial setup.

Outlining the Dynamics of Krishnachandra's 'Confrontative' Philosophy

Acting as he was within the complexity of the colonial situation, K. C. Bhattacharyya's philosophic program featured several specific attitudes and outlooks that signaled the extent and the distinctive manner in which he read and wished to respond to his historic situation. Since he believed that these features were as much imperative for his own philosophic concerns as for any modern Indian philosophy to come, he prescribed them at least once to the entire generation of Indian philosophers.² Despite that he did not engage them systematically in any of his writings,³ I will attempt to retrieve at least some of them from the remarks he made in his *Studies*

¹ For three interesting case studies (on A. C. Mukerji, P. T. Raju, and S. N. L. Shrivastava) illustrating how Indian academic philosophers were situating Advaita Vedānta on the horizon of German and British idealism, see Barua (2017). For the case of G. R. Malkani, see Deshpande (2015b, pp. 119–135).

² See his 'Svaraj in Ideas' (SI.9). I will come to this telling passage later on in my text.

³ On the whole, I think his 'Svaraj in ideas' (SI) may be the closest document of this type.

in *Vedāntism* (SV) and ‘Svaraj in Ideas’ (SI).⁴ Putting them together will allow me to highlight the dynamics of K. C. Bhattacharyya’s philosophic engagement, which I propose addressing as his agenda in ‘confrontative’ philosophy. With this aim, I shall examine in what follows the ways in which Bhattacharyya’s philosophic program was (a) cross-cultural, (b) reactive, (c) professing a distinctive theory and method towards classical Indian past, (d) ‘confrontative’, and (e) expectant.

Cross-cultural

Though he himself never used the term, by calling his philosophy cross-cultural, I mean to say that Krishnachandra conceived his philosophizing as an intellectual endeavor that cuts across cultural and historical boundaries. That is, K. C. Bhattacharyya practiced and endorsed a sort of philosophic engagement that was informed and willingly built on elements and insights from more than one cultural ground and historical periods.⁵ To be sure, he was not the only Anglophone Indian philosopher committed to such cross-cultural practice. Quite the contrary. As Jonardon Ganeri has insightfully suggested, comparative philosophy is ‘an expedient heuristic introduced at a particular moment in world history as part of a global movement towards intellectual decolonization’ (Ganeri 2016, p. 134). According to this idea, comparative or cross-cultural philosophy is a cultural phenomenon that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century precisely within the sort of political and cultural milieu in which Krishnachandra and all other Anglophone Indian philosophers lived and wrote: a colonial predicament. Far from being an exception then, K. C. Bhattacharyya practiced cross-cultural philosophy together with many other Indian intellectuals writing in English during the terminal phase of the British rule of India.⁶

We should remember, however, that the boundaries and cultural landscapes that these intellectuals were crossing and committed to exploring philosophically are not natural, homogeneous, and well-defined entities.⁷ They are, rather, conventional boundaries and often heterogeneous fields that are to a large extent fluid and culturally constructed. In the case of K. C. Bhattacharyya, I think it is hard to deny that his

⁴ ‘Svaraj in Ideas’ (SI) was first published in *Visva Bharati Quarterly*, 20 (1954, pp. 103–114); later reprinted in *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, 11(4), pp. 383–393, 1984; and recently presented to a wider audience in Bhushan and Garfield (2011, pp. 101–111).

⁵ In this sense—and leaving aside their technical meanings in which those terms may designate different cognitive activities—I would agree on calling it intercultural philosophy (Deshpande 2015a, pp. 1–39) or comparative philosophy. In this paper, I will use the terms ‘cross-cultural philosophy’ and ‘comparative philosophy’ as synonyms.

⁶ Acknowledging the cross-cultural feature of modern academic Indian philosophy is not a minor issue. Cross-cultural philosophy entered Western academy much later, despite the efforts of some pioneer Indologists such as Max Müller and Paul Deussen. The first major academic journal to host cross-cultural philosophy was *Philosophy East and West* the first issue of which appeared in 1951 and featured an article by Paul Masson-Oursel entitled ‘True Philosophy is Comparative Philosophy’ endorsing enthusiastically the practice of comparative philosophy (Masson-Oursel & McCarthy 1951, pp. 6–9). As it turns out, Masson-Oursel’s concept of ‘philosophie comparée’ explored in his doctoral dissertation *La philosophie comparée* (1923) may have been borrowed from Brajendranath Seal (1864–1938) whose work *The Positive Science of the Ancient Hindus* (1915) Masson-Oursel had consulted (Halbfass 1985, p. 6).

⁷ On the metaphor of boundary in relation to comparative philosophic activity see Larsson (1986) and Chakrabarti and Weber (2016).

conception of Indian and Western culture, and even more so of their relation, was primarily shaped by the colonial imagination and narrative on East and West. Consequently, I submit that Krishnachandra's pioneer pursuit of cross-cultural philosophy was deeply embedded in the colonial narrative on Indian and Western cultures alike. One early example from his oeuvre must suffice to illustrate what I mean. In his SV, Bhattacharyya described his engagement with Vedānta in a highly programmatic manner, stating that while he was not interested in exploring the specificities of Vedānta in relation to other systems of Indian philosophy, he put 'special care' to reproduce Vedānta in such a manner as constituting what is 'distinctively Indian' and therefore in stark contrast with 'European habits of thought'.⁸ As I read him, Bhattacharyya was simply and uncritically taking for granted that 'there are sundry deep-seated differences between Eastern and Western speculation' (Bhattacharyya 2008a, p. 5). Its problems are not hard to identify. Bhattacharyya was under the lure of essentialism that disposed him to read the relation between Indian and Western philosophical cultures through a sort of hermeneutics of radical difference while reading each of the *relata*—Western philosophy and Indian philosophy—through a sort of hermeneutics of radical sameness.⁹ I would even venture to say that his hermeneutics of radical difference could be performed precisely to the extent his hermeneutics of radical sameness was.

In this scenario and from his historical location, Krishnachandra endorsed one sort of cross-cultural exploration and though he did not explicitly exclude others, he remained silent about them. What I mean to say is that Bhattacharyya conspicuously conceived an intellectual enterprise that aimed to locate itself within classical Indian thought (and this was not a given) and move therefrom towards modern Western philosophy. The dynamism of his endeavor was oriented—in the first place—to the Indian intellectual past and then launched—in the second place—towards modern Western philosophy. Thus, again in SV, Bhattacharyya was explicit that his concern was about 'bringing out the relations' that Vedānta had with respect to modern Western philosophy.¹⁰ As I will explain in a moment, this was a choice that can be entirely accounted for by appealing to Bhattacharyya's assessment of the cultural relations between India and Europe enacted by the colonial predicament. But before I turn to do so, I wish to flag one question: if—as I am arguing—this was certainly the specific orientation of K. C. Bhattacharyya's cross-cultural philosophy (as it might have been also of many other

⁸ 'In a reproduction of Vedāntism such as we have proposed, no attempt need to be made to distinguish the points common to the Indian systems from those which are specially Vedāntic. Special care, however, should be taken to develop from first principles such Vedāntic positions as being distinctively Indian present a marked contrast to European habits of thought. There are sundry deep-seated differences between Eastern and Western speculation.' (Bhattacharyya 2008a, p. 5)

⁹ Indeed, such procedure would explain many issues in Bhattacharyya's thought; it could explain, for example, why he did not worry or bother to worry in his SV (or any other of his works on Vedānta) about the fact that the term *samādhi* (and its classification into *savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa* that he engaged and interpreted in SV.I) rarely appears in the early Vedāntic literature (not even once in those *Upaniṣads* on which Śaṅkara wrote his commentaries and only three times in his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*) and may be a much later incorporation from *yoga* literature (Comans 1993).

¹⁰ 'The following studies in Vedāntism are not so much expositions of the traditional Vedānta as problematic constructions on Vedāntic lines intended to bring out the relations of the system to modern philosophical systems.' (Bhattacharyya 2008a, p. 1) Though Bhattacharyya did not specifically make it clear in this statement that it was modern Western philosophical systems that he had in mind, this becomes obvious from his Western interlocutors in SV.I. While there are explicit references to both German and British idealist thinkers, Bhattacharyya did not make any substantial reference to classical or medieval Western philosophy.

Anglophone Indian philosophers writing during the British Rāj) then what potentially interesting and fruitful directions for cross-cultural philosophic undertaking were ruled out here from the outset?

Reactive

The reactive feature of K. C. Bhattacharyya's philosophic project should not go unnoticed. As well attested in his SI, Bhattacharyya was condemning and reacting against the cultural and political asymmetric relations enacted by the British colonialism and was willing to revert them. He thematized those relations in terms of cultural subjugation and defined it in terms of the slavery that happens when 'one's own traditional cast of ideas and sentiments is superseded without comparison or competition by a new cast representing an alien culture which possesses one like a ghost. This subjection is slavery of the spirit' (SI.1) (Bhattacharyya 1984, p. 383). Some of the terms through which Krishnachandra addressed the dysfunctional nature of colonial relations—'impact,' 'hybridization,' 'patchwork,' 'imposed ideals,' 'response,' 'mechanical adjustment,' 'conflict of the ideas and ideals,' 'confusion,' and so on—betray his overall aversion to the cultural reality that constituted his lifeworld. More telling still was his repulse towards the evil impact that this process of cultural subjugation had on the minds of modern Indian subjects, condemning them as 'habits of soulless thinking,' 'mechanical thinking of the galvanic mind,' and 'shadow mind'—'that functions like a real mind except in the matter of genuine creativeness' (SI.4) (Bhattacharyya 1984, p. 385). Bhattacharyya narrated then a powerful etiology and genealogy of this modern Indian 'habits of soulless thinking' (SI.4–9), pointing to the language policy in colonial India, the imposition of British educative system, and 'the impact of Western political, social, and economic institutions on our daily life' (Bhattacharyya 1984, p. 387) as immediately responsible for this deplorable state of affairs. To be sure, however, Krishnachandra reacted as much to the cultural dominance of the West over India as to the acritical attitude and passivity with which modern Indians were ready to put aside their native identities and adopting Western cultural standards instead (SI.3). To the detriment of and in response to the acritical amalgamation that gave rise to the dysfunctional cultural patchwork and hybridization, Bhattacharyya made a plea in SI for an 'open-eyed,' 'vital,' and critical assimilation of East and West (SI.2–3) and stressed the need for modern Indians to critically examine and assess their own cultural heritage as well as the ideas and values coming from the West. Thus, Bhattacharyya lamented the lack of a 'vigorous output of Indian contribution in a distinctive Indian style to the culture and thought of the modern world—contribution specially to the humane subjects like history, philosophy or literature' (SI.4) (Bhattacharyya 1984, p. 385) and he set out in his own philosophy to remedy the lack of such an output (Raghuramaraju 2013; Ganeri 2015).

In other words, all this meant that in countering Eurocentrism and the political hegemony of the British Empire, K. C. Bhattacharyya's project in cross-cultural philosophy was targeting a very particular audience. Its recipient was, typically, a modern Indian Anglophone subject who, knowing herself to be underrated and subjugated in her predicament as colonized and awakening from her acritical cultural assimilation of the West, was ready to strive for inverting the colonial asymmetry and restoring her agency by claiming back and exercising her political and epistemic

sovereignty. Simply put, the recipient of Krishnachandra's comparative philosophy was an epistemologically empowered modern Indian subject thinking and acting for intellectual decolonization. As avowed in several of his statements, Bhattacharyya believed that cross-cultural exercise was the *sine qua non* for modern Indian philosophy making.¹¹ The comparative philosophy that he had in mind was therefore undeniably a project in *Indian* cross-cultural philosophy, for the practice and the immediate benefit of modern Indian subjects.¹²

Theory and method towards Indian classical past

As for the theory and method for engaging with classical Indian past, perhaps the most relevant is to stress from the outset that in his outlook Bhattacharyya was responding both to historicism and Orientalism in their scholarly pursuit of objectifying classical Indian culture. As it has been discussed in the literature on Orientalism, the objectification of Indian culture by the West which was advertised as a scientific and unbiased pursuit of knowledge was instead (at least in part) a powerful tool for mastering and subduing the colonial other via providing a scientific 'objective' rationale for doing so. K. C. Bhattacharyya was undoubtedly sensitive to the intricate relation between the Western scientific pursuit of knowledge about classical Indian culture and its implicit quest for power and cultural hegemony: its Eurocentrism. I think that it is fair to submit that Krishnachandra was reacting against such a practice of objectification when he professed his alternative. Instead of aiming at objectifying Indian culture for the benefit of the colonizer, the retrieval of classical Indian philosophy became for him—the colonized subject—a *sui generis* modality of intellectual decolonization and emancipation, an act of epistemic empowerment. This meant a sort of outlook in which rediscovering the intellectual past of India had a meaningful and far-reaching cultural function to fulfill in the present: it was to be engaged by *Indian* intellectuals in order to confront the order and discourse of the colonial present. I am alluding here to what Jonardon Ganeri has recently discussed under the rubric of the colonial 'discovery of Indian classicity as a technique of intellectual decolonization' (Ganeri 2015, p. 15). Throughout this discovery, modern Indian intellectuals attempted to retrieve their

¹¹ 'In philosophy hardly anything that has been written by modern educated Indian shows that he has achieved a synthesis of Indian thought with Western thought. There is nothing like a judgment on Western systems from the standpoint of Indian philosophy, and although some appraisal of Indian philosophy has been attempted from the Western standpoint, there appears to be no recognition yet that a criticism of the fundamental notions of either philosophy is necessary before there can be any useful comparative estimate. And yet it is in philosophy that one could look for an effective contact between Eastern and Western ideas. The most prominent contribution of ancient India to the culture of the world is in the field of philosophy and if the modern Indian mind is to philosophize at all to any purpose, it has to confront Eastern thought and Western thought with one another and attempt a synthesis or a reasoned rejection of either, if that were possible. It is in philosophy, if anywhere, that the task of discovering the soul of India is imperative for the modern Indian: the task of achieving, if possible, the continuity of his old self with his present-day self, of realizing what is nowadays called the Mission of India, if it has any. Genius can unveil the soul of India in art, but it is through philosophy that we can methodically attempt to discover it.' (SI.9) (Bhattacharyya 1984, pp. 386–387)

¹² In the opening of his insightful article 'India and the Comparative Method' (Halbfass 1985) Wilhelm Halbfass asked a very pertinent question indeed: 'How was the "comparative method," whatever it may be, applied to India and the Indian tradition? How does it contribute to our understanding of India (and perhaps ourselves)? On the other hand, how was this so-called method applied *in* India, *by* Indians? How did they use it to understand the West and to reinterpret their own tradition?' (Halbfass 1985, p. 3)

Sanskrit cultural past—conceived as a reservoir and a resource—motivated by a dissident meaning making with the purpose to provincializing or decentralizing Europe. In such an outlook, reading and appealing to any Sanskrit *śāstra* or engaging with any classical Indian philosophy for that matter, had indeed nothing to do—as Bhattacharyya claimed—with armchair philosophy, nor with the attitude of a ‘mere narrator’ of the historian of philosophy (Bhattacharyya 2008a, p. 1). It was neither ‘to be regarded as the special property of academic philosophy-mongers, to be hacked up by them into technical *views*’ (2008a, p. 6) nor as an exclusively theoretic affair, which Bhattacharyya condemned as a ‘soulless jointing of hypothesis’ (2008a, p. 6). It was rather charged with the subversive energy of a ‘sympathetic interpreter’ (2008a, p. 1) who professed ‘esthetic sympathy’ towards Indian ‘ancient life-ideal’ and saw in classical Indian philosophy (particularly Advaita Vedānta) a ‘form of life’ (2008a, p. 6) that deeply questioned the hegemony of Western discourse, lifestyle, and political dominance.¹³

This heavily-loaded outlook also informed his methodology. Already in 1907, Krishnachandra made an important distinction between history of philosophy and philosophy as such in terms of their aims and methods.¹⁴ Bhattacharyya resisted reducing philosophic engagement to the one concerned with the historicity of philosophic thinking and though he did not regard those two disciplines to be mutually exclusive but supplementary, he argued in favor of the logical priority of the former over the latter. By doing so, Krishnachandra was above all endorsing a sort of autonomy of philosophic thinking and understanding from history, downplaying in this way the dimension of historicity within the philosophic understanding itself.¹⁵ He backed his stance up by reflecting on the pitfalls associated with these two disciplines. Pondering over the perils of anachronism versus those of forensic studies respectively, Bhattacharyya was happy and brave enough to stress that explaining away any philosophic problem by dissolving it into any number and whatever sort of non-philosophic causes entailed a serious epistemic violence.¹⁶ Not only that. His concern in resisting such disciplinary reductionism contained, undeniably, a cultural, and political dimension: for what Bhattacharyya was reacting against was, in the final analysis, the practice through which *Western* philologically-informed historicism engaged with *Indian* philosophy (his target figure was here the Indologist George

¹³ For an interesting interpretation of Bhattacharyya’s ‘esthetic sympathy’ towards classical Indian philosophy in terms of immersive cosmopolitanism, see Ganeri (2015).

¹⁴ ‘The historical study of a school of thought must have methods and aims different from those of a philosophical study, though the studies are mutually supplementary. The philosophical study should come first in the order of time [...]’ (Bhattacharyya 2008a, p. 1)

¹⁵ As Jarava Lal Mehta (1912–1988) has rightly observed (Mehta 1974, pp. 69–70), though Bhattacharyya was a student of Hegel, he ‘remained unappreciative of the dimension of historicity intrinsic to philosophic understanding.’ Mehta himself explained this failure appealing to the (a) ‘ahistorical climate of philosophical thought at the time in the English-speaking world in general.’ (b) ‘ahistorical bias of the Indian tradition itself,’ and (c) Bhattacharyya’s reaction to the ‘unbridled historicism that claimed to “explain” and thus to bury, the past historically without concerning itself with the possibility that in them truths may have found utterance that still speak to us and challenge us to renewed thinking.’ In my account here, I am stressing the third factor identified by Mehta.

¹⁶ ‘There is the danger, no doubt, of too easily reading one’s own philosophic creed into the history, but the opposite danger is more serious still. It is the danger of taking the philosophic type studied as a historic curiosity rather than a recipe for the human soul, and of seeking to explain the curiosity by natural causes instead of seriously examining its merits as philosophy.’ (Bhattacharyya 2008a, p. 1)

Thibaut) and aimed at reducing and explaining away its genuine philosophic contents; however, they might differ from their Western counterpart. Moving deliberately away from such kind of reductive undertaking, he excused himself for adopting and vindicating the voice of a ‘sympathetic interpreter’ of an ‘Indian student of Vedānta’ whose agenda was to engage with classical Indian philosophy with the intention to interpreting it in relation to the philosophical problems as discussed in modern Western philosophy.¹⁷

The bottom line of his outlook had everything to do with appealing to classical Indian philosophy in order to confront Eurocentrism and Western political hegemony as enacted in his colonial present. Bhattacharyya reacted against historicism and any other similar attempt to objectify Indian cultural past, which he saw undermining the ability of classical Indian philosophy to speak to the generation of modern Indians by explaining away its significance as philosophy in terms of something else, be it natural, social, or political factors.

‘Confrontative’

I have already described K. C. Bhattacharyya’s philosophic project as cross-cultural (or comparative), reactive, and distinctively Indian. I have also addressed the dynamics of the comparative exercise that he endorsed. I would like to delve a little bit further now into the specific intellectual activity that he had in mind; for addressing his philosophy as comparative or cross-cultural may give the wrong impression—I think—that his intercultural undertaking was shaped on the analogy with an open and ecumenical dialog. I contend that by doing so we will fail to appreciate the very specific terms that appear in his descriptions of the comparative endeavor he had in mind and by doing so miss the intentions of his comparativism. Those terms are—as far as I can see—*confrontation* and *contrast*, and they occur respectively in SI.⁹¹⁸ and SV.¹⁹ On these occasions, Bhattacharyya was explicitly pronouncing himself on the kind of comparativism that he professed. In the first passage, Bhattacharyya was speaking normatively about the future he foresaw for Indian philosophy. It was, indeed, a thoroughly comparative philosophy with well-identified terms of comparison. The verb expressing the activity to be done was ‘to confront,’ while the possible outcomes of such undertaking were sorted out here in terms of ‘synthesis’ and a ‘reasoned rejection of either [philosophy].’ To be sure, Bhattacharyya reflected on the possible attitudes towards the encounter of East and West on other occasions (Bhattacharyya 2008a, p. 5; 1984, p. 388). Theoretically at least, he left no place for doubt that he was open to

¹⁷ ‘When history thus sits in judgment on philosophy, an Indian student of Vedānta may well be excused if to him a reproduction of the philosophy, such as may bring it into contact with modern problems, appears far more important than any mere historical dissertation.’ (Bhattacharyya 2008a, p. 2)

¹⁸ ‘The most prominent contribution of ancient India to the culture of the world is in the field of philosophy and if the modern Indian mind is to philosophize at all to any purpose, it has to confront Eastern thought and Western thought with one another and attempt a synthesis or a reasoned rejection of either, if that were possible.’ (SI.9) (Bhattacharyya 1984, p. 386)

¹⁹ ‘In a reproduction of Vedāntism such as we have proposed, no attempt need be made to distinguish the points common to the Indian systems from those which are specifically Vedāntic. Special care, however, should be taken to develop from first principles such Vedāntic positions as being distinctively Indian present a marked contrast to European habits of thought. There are sundry deep-seated differences between Eastern and Western speculation.’ (Bhattacharyya 2008a, p. 5)

acknowledge that critical confrontation of both philosophic cultures might well result in the rejection of Eastern alternatives (2008a, p. 5). At the same time, Krishnachandra plainly and simply believed that the differences between Eastern and Western philosophic traditions were ‘deep-seated’ and unsurmountable, though this did not necessarily imply that they could not coexist side by side.²⁰

Thus, concerned as Bhattacharyya was with defining and highlighting those outlooks that he identified as ‘distinctively Indian’ and wishing to make an ‘Indian contribution in a distinctive Indian style to the culture and thought of the modern world’ (SI. 4), K. C. Bhattacharyya’s philosophy was ‘confrontative’ in that (a) it aimed to face Western and Indian philosophy with each other, (b) to clarify their fundamental notions, and then only (c) to give an assessment of Western stands from the standpoint of classical Indian philosophy (SI.9). The ‘confrontative’ feature of his comparativism lies, then, in the undeniable fact that he took sides with classical Indian philosophy, took it as *his own* culture—while he alienated modern Western philosophy, and then prioritized only one of the theoretically sketched outcomes that their comparison might have entailed. This is well illustrated in the fact that though there are plenty of philosophically interesting insights in Krishnachandra’s discussions concerning how certain philosophic problems were shaped and discussed in Western philosophy and concerning how they may be either resolved or entirely dismissed from the standpoint of classical Indian philosophy,²¹ to my knowledge there is no explicit exploration in the other direction. To be sure, in the course of Bhattacharyya’s ‘confrontative’ engagement we never come across explicit statements on how certain problems to be found in classical Indian philosophy might be solved or just dismissed through Western philosophic insights. In the last analysis I suggest, therefore, that K. C. Bhattacharyya’s comparative philosophy was ‘confrontative’ in that it professed a one-sided confronting attitude towards modern Western philosophy (particularly Kantian transcendental philosophy).

Expectant

The last building block of K. C. Bhattacharyya’s ‘confrontative’ philosophy that I will address concerns its very expectations. I have already argued that his agenda in ‘confrontative’ philosophy was *Indian* in that it was reactive and targeting modern Indian intellectuals, and in that it was to be performed by them for their own benefit as a *sui generis* technique of intellectual decolonization. There is, however, yet another sense in which Bhattacharyya’s project in cross-cultural philosophy was meant as a distinctively Indian endeavor. I am referring here to what I would like to call its therapeutic function. This is best illustrated in the passage occurring at SI.9.²² Towards the end of that highly informative paragraph, Krishnachandra outlined in unmistakable terms the therapeutic potentials that his comparative agenda entailed by linking its concerns with the issue of Indian cultural identity. Bhattacharyya foreshadowed that *Indian* comparative philosophy had the potential to aid modern

²⁰ This is well exemplified, for instance, in Bhattacharyya’s ‘The Concept of Philosophy’ (1936) where philosophy is redefined from a ‘distinctively Indian’ angle and presented as an alternative body of knowledge to (Western) science.

²¹ I will treat below once sound case of such procedure with relation to self-knowledge.

²² For the entire paragraph, see footnote 11.

Indians in their acute need to redefine their own cultural identity in the new emergent frames of a plural and cosmopolitan modern world. That is to say, in Bhattacharyya's conception of it, *Indian* cross-cultural philosophy was one indispensable chapter of a wider autobiographic narrative, a type of Indian intellectual autobiography writing within the colonial India. He foresaw that *Indian* comparative philosophy could be successfully deployed by the then still colonial Indian intellectuals as a powerful and methodic means by which to rediscover and assert their own cultural identity by restoring the 'continuity of his old self with his present day self' (SI.9) (Bhattacharyya 1984, p. 387). This, he believed, was an all-important 'imperative for the modern Indian' (SI.9) (1984, p. 387). And it is here, in this therapeutic feature—I believe—that we discover the core expectation of K. C. Bhattacharyya's agenda in 'confrontative' philosophy. It sheds light from a yet another perspective as to why and in what way it was *Indian* and why and in what way it approached classical Indian philosophy. Bhattacharyya's plea for restoring the continuity of Indian cultural identity (in self-narrative) through comparative philosophic engagement had everything to do with bridging and healing the gap of the 'epistemic rupture' brought about by British colonialism. After all, in his 'Svaraj in Ideas' (SI) Bhattacharyya was forcefully vindicating the need for the modern Indian subjects to claim and recover their own distinctive voice and agency that required in turn boring its way through the layer of the 'shadow mind' and its 'habits of soulless thinking' (hence the ferocious criticism) into the layer of the 'vernacular mind' where Bhattacharyya located the 'cultural stratum of the real Indian people' (SI.26) (1984, p. 393). I assume, however, that he contended that practicing *Indian* cross-cultural philosophy required an even deeper break through well into the layer of Sanskrit philosophic literature.

The bottom line is acknowledging that within the colonial predicament K. C. Bhattacharyya's comparative philosophy was expectant of a therapeutic reconstruction of continuity within Indian cultural identity through an active claim and appropriation of classical Indian philosophy as *one's own* (and therefore reacted against objectifying it) from where it was disposed to facing and othering Western philosophy in a 'confrontative' attitude.

Rethinking Advaita: K.C. Bhattacharyya's Philosophy of Self-knowledge

I will move on now to illustrate briefly²³ how this project in 'confrontative' philosophy was enacted in a masterful way in K. C. Bhattacharyya's philosophy of self-knowledge. In order to do so, I will draw from his *The Subject as Freedom* (SF) first published in 1930.

The explicit and immediate intention that K. C. Bhattacharyya had in writing his SF was to inaugurate a 'new' and 'special' branch of philosophy that he called 'Spiritual or Transcendental psychology' (SF.16) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 390). In order to portray the specificities of this new philosophy he contrasted its concerns, methods and prospects with that of metaphysics (SF.12; SF.15; SF.18), empirical psychology

²³ For a more in detail analysis of the project that K. C. Bhattacharyya exposed in his SF, see Garfield (2017). For a discussion on his philosophy of subjectivity, see Bhushan and Garfield (2017, pp. 262–282).

(SF.12; SF.17), and epistemology (SF.12; SF.16) as well as Kantian skepticism on the very possibility of self-knowledge and his denial of a concrete method through which the self could be known (SF.21; SF.22). In stark contrast with these shortcomings of Kantian transcendental philosophy, Krishnachandra's foremost concern in SF was, indeed, to justify critically the possibility of self-knowledge and sketching a theoretical map that could be deployed during a gradual cognitive introspection culminating in the disclosure of the self as freedom in a modality of knowing without thinking.

On the whole, his vindication of transcendental psychology as a new and special branch of philosophy concerned with self-knowledge entailed confronting Kantian philosophy on the following four major points of contention: (a) the crucial issue of self-knowledge, (b) the relation between knowing and thinking, (c) the attitude deployed in approaching the self, and (d) the issue on the method for knowing the self.

Bhattacharyya believed that Kantian transcendental idealism was unsound in denying that the self could be known and that there was no cognitive method available through which it could be apprehended.²⁴ As he understood him, Kant's denial of self-knowledge relied heavily upon his conception of knowledge as resulting from the synthesis between the a priori categories of understanding and intuition. Thus, though the self could become the object of thinking, it could not be known to the extent it was never available as an object of intuition. Bhattacharyya contended that the core of Kantian skepticism lay in the inadequate objective attitude in which he reflected on the (im-)possibility of knowing the self. The same objective attitude towards the self was also displayed in metaphysics and empirical psychology, which explained their failure to apprehend the self as such.²⁵ For Bhattacharyya, the objective attitude they exhibited was the very reason accounting for their shortcomings. By objective attitude Krishnachandra meant the outlook conceiving that the object disclosed in any epistemic act is an entity whose being is entirely independent from its epistemic apprehension. Hence, it implied a commitment to realism in that it believed in the existence of the objects independently of knowing them. Furthermore, he reasoned that the minimal sense in which this objective attitude was displayed was in addressing the objects of knowledge (likewise the subject) as being meant in speech.²⁶

When it came to the core issue of self-knowledge, Bhattacharyya thought that Kant's approach, as well as the approach displayed in metaphysics and empirical psychology, was inadequate in that they conceived of the self or subjectivity as if it was an independent entity, an object 'out there,' to be apprehended by a certain epistemic faculty and could therefore be addressed as meant. For Bhattacharyya, such engagement with the subjective was deemed to failure from the start, for he professed that to be objectified and meant in speech was actually the very

²⁴ "Self-knowledge is denied by Kant: the self cannot be known but only thought through the objective categories—unity, substantiality etc., there being no intuition of it" (SF.22) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 393); and "The persisting objective attitude of Kant in his first critique explains not only his admission of the thing-in-itself and his denial of self-knowledge but also his disbelief in the possibility of a spiritual discipline of the theoretic reason through which self-knowledge may be attainable." (SF.21) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 393)

²⁵ "The attitude of metaphysics like that of sciences including psychology is objective. It seeks to know reality as distinct from the knowing of it, as objective, at least, in the sense of being meant." (SF.12) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 387)

²⁶ "The thinnest sense in which it [the subject] is objectified is "being taken as meant."" (SF.11) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 386)

definition of the object per se. As he wrote in the first paragraph of SF, 'Object is what is meant, including the object of sense-perception and all contents that have necessary reference to it' (SF.1) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 381). With such a radical and broad definition of the object, and to the extent he took the subject and the object to be diametrically opposed to each other, Bhattacharyya believed that the subjective as such could never be apprehended in the objective attitude and addressed as meant, for attempting to know it in this manner implied objectifying it and seeking to know the subject as what *by definition* it is not: the object. Thus, for Bhattacharyya the subject could not be adequately known through the objective attitude displayed in metaphysics and empirical psychology. However, acknowledging this failure did not automatically imply professing skepticism with regard to self-knowledge. As Bhattacharyya remarked, theorizing the possibility of self-knowledge requires admitting that there is awareness of the subject or subjectivity that is not the awareness of it as meant.²⁷ Transcendental psychology as a special branch of philosophy concerned with self-knowledge was founded on such an admission and the endorsement of the subjective attitude towards the self.

Indeed, in SF Bhattacharyya claimed that the subject as such could not be apprehended in the objective attitude and addressed as what is meant. This crucial claim required clarifying the status of self-knowledge in transcendental psychology. In other words, Bhattacharyya had to precise in what way the subject was disclosed and available to philosophic thinking. In order to provide a reasonable answer to this question, he argued that (a) philosophy must start from what can be spoken—in his terminology, from the *speakable*²⁸—(b) that the subject is actually available through language as what is intended by the first-person pronoun 'I'²⁹, and (c) that this sort of acquaintance with the subjective is not the same thing as its disclosure as meant. Consequently, he maintained that what can be spoken, communicated, and understood in language is more than what can be positively meant by it.³⁰ Advocating that the self is actually presented in the awareness of it as 'I' and that transcendental psychology as a philosophy of self-knowledge builds on this sort of acquaintance in first place, allowed Bhattacharyya to pin down the idea that the self is only partially available in philosophy. To the extent it is *speakable* in language through the first-person pronoun, the subject is understood as a believed content—but not understood as meant (viz., as object).³¹ To be sure, in SF he contended that in transcendental psychology the understanding and exposition of subjectivity finds itself in an intermediate stage, midway between its full apprehension in (mystic)

²⁷ 'Object as meant is distinguished from the subject or the subjective of which there is some awareness other than the meaning-awareness.' (SF.1) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 381)

²⁸ 'The three believed contents—the subject, the positive freedom of the subject and the meant object—are all speakable and it is from the speakable that we have to start in philosophy.' (SF.14) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 388)

²⁹ 'The subject is understood as what intends by the word *I*.' (SF.127) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 450)

³⁰ 'Apparently, the significant speakable is wider than the meanable: a content to be communicated and understood need not be meant.' (SF.1) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 381) This insight was later, in 'The Concept of Philosophy' (CPh 1936), formulated with much greater clarity in terms of what is literally spoken as fact and symbolically spoken.

³¹ As later clearly thematized in CPh, Bhattacharyya endorsed the idea that (a) all the contents of philosophy are speakable, (b) they are actually not known, and (c) they are believed as to be known. Strictly speaking, philosophy dealt with speakable and believed contents.

intuition and its (mis-) apprehension as meant in metaphysics.³² Contrasting his ideas with Kantian skepticism, Bhattacharyya presented the program of transcendental psychology in the following manner:

Self-knowledge is denied by Kant: the self cannot be known but only thought through the objective categories—unity, substantiality etc.—, there being no intuition of it. The view presented so far [in transcendental psychology] is that the subject is known though neither thought (meant) nor intuited. It is known as what the speaker of *I* is understood to intend by it. The understanding is a direct believing in something that is not meant but revealed as revealing itself, a question about the reality of which does not arise and is unmeaning. The subject is thus known by itself, as not meant but speakable and not as either related or relating to the object. It is, however, believed as relating to the object and symbolized as such by the objective relations. The modes of relating are at the same time the modes of freeing from objectivity, the forms of the spiritual discipline by which, it may be conceived, the out-going reference to the object is turned backwards and the immediate knowledge of the *I* as content is realized in an ecstatic intuition. (SF.22) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, pp. 393–394)

More to the point, as already hinted towards the end of this telling paragraph, Bhattacharyya meant transcendental psychology to be a theoretic description of the different modalities of subject-object relations interpreted as functions or movement of the subject towards the object. This outline was then to be deployed as a symbolic map and used during the spiritual discipline of ‘cognitive inwardising’ which, strictly speaking, lay beyond the limits of transcendental psychology. This meant acknowledging that as philosophy of self-knowledge, transcendental psychology was propaedeutic to self-knowledge but not its fulfillment.

As to the subjective attitude displayed in transcendental psychology, Bhattacharyya explained that it entailed an utter reversion of the inadequate objective attitude in that it believed in the total freedom or disentanglement of the subject from the object and in that it interpreted their relation as a subjective function through and through rather than a property of the object. Thus, while in the objective attitude the object was taken for granted in a realist fashion (as transcendent to cognition) and the function of subject-object relation interpreted as depending upon it, in the subjective attitude it was

³² ‘The subject which is also believed is formulated as *I* which is, however, understood as unamenable though not as a mere word like *abracadabra*. The understanding here is not a mystic intuition though it may point to its possibility, nor the intuition of a meaning that can be a term of a judgment, nor yet the thought of a meaning that is not known because not intuited or that is known without being intuited. It is somewhere midway between mystic intuition and the consciousness of a meaning, being the believing awareness of a speakable content, the negation of which is unmeaning and which, therefore, is not a meaning. What is claimed to be mystically intuited is speakable only in metaphor which presents a contradiction in meaning and what is affirmed or denied in metaphysics is meanable. The subject as *I* is neither contradictory nor meanable and the exposition of it accordingly is intermediate between mysticism and metaphysic.’ (SF.11) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, pp. 386–387)

reinterpreted as an entirely subjective function in which subjectivity negates and alienates itself.³³ In this way, the awareness-independent status of the object was jeopardized and subsumed under the range of subjective functions.³⁴ Moreover, Bhattacharyya endorsed the belief that those same subjective functions were given to awareness in a less evident manner than the subject itself.

In this scheme of things, Krishnachandra presented transcendental psychology as a new and special philosophic study occupied with interpreting the fact of subjective function in relation to the subject as such. It was concerned with the systematic outline of the modalities of objectification or entanglement in which the subject gets associated/identified with the object/content of consciousness and thereby disclosed as what it is not. As Bhattacharyya wrote: 'The facthood of the knowing function and subjective function in general is believed though not known and is elaborated into a system of symbolism in a new philosophical study which may be called Spiritual or Transcendental psychology.' (SF.16) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 390) Furthermore, though outlining those believed modalities of association—also addressed in SF in terms of positive freedom—was an entirely theoretical issue, Bhattacharyya believed that thematizing them at the level of philosophic theory allowed also for interpreting them in opposite terms as modalities of dissociation—also called negative freedom—and subsequently enacting them in a spiritual discipline of 'cognitive inwardising' or introspection in which the subject was to be gradually dissociated from objectivity and in the long run *known* as freedom.³⁵

As he wrote:

This cult of the subject, as it might be called, takes various forms but they all involve feeling of dissociation of the subject from the object, an awareness of the subject as what the object is not. The specific activity demanded is primarily in

³³ 'In the objective attitude, the knownness or feltness of the object appears positive and knowing or feeling appears as its problematic negation. In the subjective attitude, the case is reversed: freedom is positively believed and the relatedness of the object to the subject—its objectivity—appears as constructed, as not belonging to the object in the sense change belongs to it and is thus understood as the self-negation or alienated show of subject. In the objective attitude again, *this* or object appears to exist beyond its *this-ness* or relatedness to the subject, while in the subjective attitude not only is the transcendent *this* rejected as meaningless, *this-ness* meaning the so-called psychological entities, knownness or feltness—appears also as not to be given as distinct to introspection but to exist only as distinguished or constructed, this distinguishing or constructing being felt as less certain than the self-evident subject behind it.' (SF.19) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, pp. 391–392)

³⁴ That Bhattacharyya was arguing in SF against realism and hinting at a sort of idealism is out of question. Two excerpts must suffice to underpin the point: 'Realism should, therefore, be held as suspect though idealism is only a faith and not knowledge. But the faith has to be cherished and there should be a subjective discipline to get rid of the persisting realistic belief.' (SF.21) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 393); and 'Spiritual psychology [...] Its business is in the first place to interpret empirical psychology in terms of the positively felt and believed freedom of the subject from objectivity; and next to elaborate modes of freedom that have no reference to object at all, to conceive the possible illusoriness of all objects and thus to assign an intelligible place to what is ordinarily scouted as spiritual mysticism.' (SF.19) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 391)

³⁵ 'The modes of relating are at the same time the modes of freeing from objectivity, the forms of the spiritual discipline by which, it may be conceived, the out-going reference to the object is turned backwards and the immediate knowledge of the *I* as content is realized in an ecstatic intuition' (SF.22) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 394); and 'The elaboration of these stages of freedom in spiritual psychology would suggest the possibility of a consecutive method of realizing the subject as absolute freedom, of retracting the felt positive freedom towards the object into pure intuition of the self.' (SF.24) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 395)

the inwardizing direction and secondarily, if at all, in the direction of creating objective or social values. One demand among others—all being absolute demands—is that the subjective function being essentially the knowing of the object as distinct from it, this knowing which is only believed and not known as fact *has* to be known as fact, as the self-evidencing reality of the subject itself. This would be the cult of the subject *par excellence*, a spiritual discipline of the theoretic reason, a method of cognitive inwardizing, the possibility of which, as indeed of any method of realization, is not ordinarily recognized. (SF.23) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, pp. 394)³⁶

Bhattacharyya devoted then more than half of his SF to a detailed, highly syncretic, and difficult-to-crack description of those steps or grades of subjective freedom from the object. Those broad grades of subjectivity are bodily subjectivity (SF.57–79), psychic subjectivity (SF.80–100), and spiritual subjectivity (SF.101–126). That is, the subject as entangled and confused with the body, the psychic fact, and the spiritual. Furthermore, each of those grades contains three subdivisions. Thus, bodily subjectivity or the awareness of the subject in relation to the body is subdivided into (1) the body as externally perceived or observed, (2) the body as internally perceived or felt, (3) and the knowledge of absence as a present fact. The psychic subjectivity or the awareness of the self in relation to the psychic facts entails (4) the image as not dissociated from the idea, (5) the idea as dissociated from the image, and (6) the non-pictorial thought. Finally, the spiritual subjectivity or the awareness of the subject without any reference to the object is subdivided into the levels of self-awareness in which the subjective is disclosed as (7) feeling, (8) introspection, and (9) beyond introspection. This progressive and introspective itinerary culminates in a sort of implosion where the subjective is disclosed as such; that is, as absolute freedom in the sense of being entirely disassociated or disentangled from the objective. This was what Bhattacharyya meant to be in SF the realization of the self as (negative) freedom, the final fulfillment of self-knowledge.

Self-knowledge and Confrontation in the Perspective of Cross-cultural Philosophy

I will bring my point home now by stressing the ‘confrontative’ aspects of this plot and the deployment of Advaita that K. C. Bhattacharyya made in SF in order to make his case. I will conclude then by putting his ‘confrontative’ philosophy into the perspective of cross-cultural philosophy.

In first place, as I have already mentioned, Bhattacharyya presented his idea of transcendental psychology as a philosophy of self-knowledge in sheer contrast to Kantian skepticism on the same and the shortcomings of (Western) metaphysics and

³⁶ Also ‘The possibility of such a method [of cognitive “inwardizing”] has to be exhibited in Spiritual psychology. A method implies a series of consecutive steps for the realization of an end. The steps in this case should correspond to a gradation of subjective functions, of modes of freedom from the object.’ (SF.24) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 394)

empiric psychology. More so, transcendental psychology was to succeed precisely where those Western disciplines failed. In other words, Bhattacharyya carefully selected the topic of self-knowledge as the *tertium comparationis* of his comparative exercise, and made it the main point of contention and contrast between Indian and modern Western philosophy. Hence, I think it is fair to say that, as a modern Indian philosopher writing in English during the colonial period, K. C. Bhattacharyya appropriated classical Advaita—which he regarded to be the cult of self-knowledge par excellence³⁷—and used it skillfully as a resource to confronting the Western other (Kantian transcendental idealism) and its putative inadequate attitude towards self-knowledge.³⁸ Despite being original and insightful, Bhattacharyya's commitment was, as Raghuramaraju has convincingly argued, problematic in more than one way. It is not only that Bhattacharyya did regard *tout court* the West to be the source of (philosophic) problems and India to be the source of solutions—inverting in this way the logic of the colonial discourse; more troublesome than this was his very binary way of thinking about East and West,³⁹ to which I have alluded here in my own terms as his hermeneutics of radical difference. To be sure, this principle of interpretation informs largely many of K. C. Bhattacharyya's writing, including his SF and 'The Concept of Philosophy' (CPh). I contend that from within his colonial lifeworld, Bhattacharyya simply thought that the meeting of East and West could only take place in terms of contrast and differentiation.

Second, as I have stressed, in SF Krishnachandra aimed to outline a method for attaining a full-blown cognitive realization of the self as freedom. Such a method, he believed, was explicitly denied by Kantian transcendental idealism and was entirely unavailable in modern Western philosophy.⁴⁰ It was, however, available and known in classical *Indian* Advaita as *sādhana*. Hence, I contend that Bhattacharyya took it as constituting what is 'distinctively Indian' (SV) and assessed 'in a distinctive Indian style' (SI) Western philosophy from this *Indian* vantage point. In addition to that, he redefined the very concept of philosophy from the standpoint of Indian Advaita. That is, he redefined philosophy on the

³⁷ 'All religion makes for the realization of the self as sacred [...] the religion of Advaita is the specific cult of such realization understood explicitly as self-knowledge, as sacred knowledge, and as nothing but knowledge' (ASS.14) (Bhattacharyya 2008b, p. 118); and 'The merit of Advaitavāda lies in having explicitly recognized that spiritual work is this "inwardizing," the deepening of faith into subjective realization, the striving after self-knowledge' (ASS.20) (Bhattacharyya 2008b, p. 121).

³⁸ For further readings in this direction, see Raghuramaraju (2013) and Garfield (2017).

³⁹ 'The two important aspects of Bhattacharyya's engagement with Kant are – his critique of Kant and his Advaitic solution to the Kantian problem. While holding Bhattacharyya's critique of Kant in high regard, let me however add a caveat, namely, that there is a problem associated with Bhattacharyya, particularly in his attempt at fashioning a mode, or participating in an already existing fashion, in which Indian solutions are offered for Western problems. This, wittingly or unwittingly, makes the West a reservoir of problems and, correspondingly, the East, or India, a reservoir of solutions. More specifically, this merely inverts the view, which at the structural level was authored by the colonial discourse, in which India is the reservoir of problem and the West, that of solutions. What I find problematic is not so much the question of who is the reservoir of what but the very binary that underlies this formulation.' (Raghuramaraju 2013, p. 8)

⁴⁰ 'The persisting objective attitude of Kant in his first critique explains not only his admission of the thing-in-itself and his denial of self-knowledge but also his disbelief in the possibility of a spiritual discipline of the theoretic reason through which self-knowledge may be attainable.' (SF.21) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 393); and 'The Indian conception of a specific activity of realization on the part of the individual spirit is alien to modern philosophy generally and specially to Hegelian philosophy.' (SF.54) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 410). See also SF.23–24 (Bhattacharyya 2008c, pp. 394–395).

analogy with *manana*, as propaedeutic to self-knowledge,⁴¹ and talked often about a method of ‘cognitive inwardising’ which I am inclined to think was his silent and free translation of *nididhyāsana*. Undoubtedly, philosophy was for Bhattacharyya a means conducting to self-knowledge that was to be attained in a modality of knowledge without thinking.⁴² Hence, in order to appreciate the full import of his ‘confrontative’ philosophy, we must acknowledge that it was not only the case that Bhattacharyya conceptualized Advaita through the Western categories of understanding—which he most definitely did when, for example, he presented Vedānta as a religion and as a philosophy (ASS.14) (Bhattacharyya 2008b, pp. 118–119). It is also that he redefined some of those crucial and heavily-loaded terms—most notoriously the concept of philosophy—from the standpoint of Indian Advaita. This was, indeed, the main issue at stake both in SF and CPh.

Third, since Bhattacharyya believed that the knowledge of the self was not fully achieved in the domain of philosophy (viz., transcendental psychology)—which he took to be discursive and building on the disclosure of the subject through the first-person pronoun ‘I’—but that it was reached through a spiritual method of ‘cognitive inwardising’ leading to a modality of knowing without thinking, he was explicitly challenging the epistemology of conflating knowing with thinking. As I have already stressed, Bhattacharyya defended the idea that philosophic thinking was propaedeutic to self-knowledge—not its final fulfillment—in that it provided a detailed theoretical or symbolic description of the stages through which the subject could be apprehended as freedom during a spiritual introspective discipline which was not theoretical and discursive any longer. Bhattacharyya believed, however, that Kant submitted to such a troublesome conflation of knowing with thinking,⁴³ and that defending the idea of self-knowledge—the specialty of classical Advaita—required avoiding the commitment to such a reductive epistemology. As more forcefully and systematically argued in CPh (1936), Bhattacharyya believed that the contents of philosophy (the subject being one of such contents) are not known but believed and that believing them poses a demand for actually coming to know them in a modality of knowledge without thinking.⁴⁴ By confronting Kant on this close link between knowing and thinking, Bhattacharyya wished to stress the epistemic superiority of intuition over discursive thinking. Furthermore, I think that it is fair to surmise that the endorsement of intuition over thinking in epistemology with regard to self-knowledge was not altogether alien in

⁴¹ To my knowledge, the clearest passage suggesting that Bhattacharyya regarded and translated *manana* as philosophy occurs in ‘The Advaita and Its Spiritual Significance’ (ASS.14) (Bhattacharyya 2008b, p. 119), where I take to be undeniable that he was paraphrasing the root passage occurring at Brh.Up.2.4.5 for the later standard Advaitic discussions on *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*.

⁴² In SF, this modality of knowing without thinking was addressed and alluded to with several locutions, such as ‘ecstatic intuition’ (SF.22), ‘immediate knowledge’ (SF.22), ‘mystic intuition’ (SF.11), ‘pure intuition of the self’ (SF.24), and so on.

⁴³ In Raghuramaraju’s words, ‘Bhattacharyya claims that making “thinking” as equivalent to “knowing” in Kant is responsible for the agnosticism. He alleges that it is this equating of “thinking” and “knowing” which underlines the Kantian Problematic.’ (Raghuramaraju 2013, p. 3)

⁴⁴ As he defended in CPh, ‘Philosophy deals with contents that are not literally thinkable and are not actually known, but are believed as demanding to be known without being thought. Such contents are understood as self-subsistent object, real subject, and transcendental truth. We have accordingly three grades of philosophy which may be roughly called philosophy of the object, philosophy of the subject and philosophy of truth.’ (CPh.18) (Bhattacharyya 2008d, p. 469).

his thought to the endorsement of superiority of classical Indian philosophy over the Western. I venture that it was yet another way to provincializing Europe by confronting what was perceived (and certainly advertised by the colonizers) to be its fundamental concern with rationality, discourse, and theory.

Lastly, we should pay attention to the fact that the project of self-knowledge as outlined in SF was also a project having to do with liberation. Advaita's commitment to *mokṣa* through *ātmajñāna*—that is, liberation through self-knowledge—was masterfully reinterpreted by K. C. Bhattacharyya as the dissociation of the subject from the object. In the technical terms of SF, it was a project in negative freedom (SF.16) (Bhattacharyya 2008c, p. 390). To the extent that Krishnachandra believed that modern Western philosophy lacked a concrete method through which the self could be known (and even denied its very possibility) and to the extent that classical Indian philosophy which he epitomized with Advaita Vedānta (ASS.22) was defined by upholding precisely such a method (ASS.14; ASS.20), he was also arguing that classical Indian philosophy is fundamentally different from Western in that Indian philosophy is, on the whole, concerned with *mokṣa* or liberation whereas Western philosophy is not. This very contention was, indeed, one of the central elements in the colonial narrative—voiced by Indians and Westerners alike, albeit for different reasons—on the quintessential difference between Indian and Western philosophy.⁴⁵ As I see it, Bhattacharyya's transcendental psychology enacted this narrative in a highly sophisticated manner from the standpoint of an Indian colonized intellectual. However, I believe that his portrayal of Western philosophy as unconcerned with any *modus vivendi* and Indian philosophy as essentially concerned with it, would not stand the test of the scholarship of the like of Pierre Hadot on classical Western philosophy as a 'way of life' (Hadot 1995, 2002). Moreover, some of the great Indian philosophers writing from the vantage point of the postcolonial India such as Bimal Krishna Matilal or Daya Krishna did not continue to claim that the specificity of Indian philosophy lay in its uncompromised concern with soteriology. On the contrary, both moved away from such a portrayal,⁴⁶ which casts a doubt on whether such an outlook was not deeply 'confrontative' and extremely meaningful within the limits of the colonial India—but not outside of it, or at least not to the same degree.

I have argued in this paper that K. C. Bhattacharyya's original philosophy of self-knowledge as exposed in SF is a close enactment of his broader project in 'confrontative' philosophy that he prescribed for the entire generation of modern Indian philosophers writing during the terminal phase of the colonial period. As a whole, K. C. Bhattacharyya's philosophy may be portrayed as a two-tiered narrative on one unique theme. Krishnachandra seemed to be articulating a voice of resistance against objectification, one on the level of the abstract or transcendental subjectivity and another on the level of the flesh-and-blood Indian colonized subjectivity. As I have stressed, the rationale for his 'confrontative' philosophic program was deeply embedded in the colonial predicament and its evil political and cultural asymmetries. From my

⁴⁵ For an insightful reflection on this theme, see Halbfass (1991, pp. 243–244).

⁴⁶ In the case of Matilal, see for instance his *The Logical Illumination of Indian Mysticism* (Matilal 1977) and in the case of Daya Krishna, his 'Three Myths About Indian Philosophy' (Daya Krishna 1966) and 'Three Conceptions of Indian Philosophy' (Daya Krishna 1965) where he explicitly problematized Bhattacharyya's understanding of Indian philosophy. Their retrieval of classical Indian philosophy is not, however, without its own shortcomings.

analysis, I am willing to conclude that K. C. Bhattacharyya's 'confrontative' philosophy was a brilliant performance in intellectual decolonization via an interpretative, imaginative, and sympathetic engagement with classical Indian Advaita aimed at confronting what Bhattacharyya took to be the *status quo* of modern Western philosophy with regard to self-knowledge. From this angle, I think it is right to conclude that K. C. Bhattacharyya's comparative philosophy was thoughtfully subversive.

However, I also think that to the extent that his 'confrontative' engagement was eminently a pioneer variety of (Indian) comparative or cross-cultural philosophy conceived under the strains of British colonialism, it entailed certain shortcomings that the contemporary and postcolonial practice of cross-cultural philosophy—be it Indian, Western, or otherwise—may want to dispense with. As they stand, I see the projects in imperative philosophy and diatopical hermeneutics (Panikkar 1988), re:emergent philosophy (Ganeri 2016), and borderless or fusion philosophy (Chakrabarti and Weber 2016) among others to be further and finer theoretical developments in the field of cross-cultural philosophy, exemplifying an explicit effort to overcome some of the theoretical and methodologic shortcomings that are to be found in the 'confrontative' philosophy as practiced and prescribed by K. C. Bhattacharyya. Though it is beyond the scope of this paper to address them here, I believe that putting K. C. Bhattacharyya's philosophy into the perspective of these and other recent developments in cross-cultural philosophy will allow us to better understand the place and significance that his 'confrontative' philosophy has in the historical development of cross-cultural philosophy as a discipline to practice in the postcolonial and cosmopolitan world we want to live in.

Abbreviations ASS, 'The Advaita and Its Spiritual Significance'; CPh, 'The Concept of Philosophy'; SF, *The subject as freedom*; SI, 'Svaraj in Ideas'; SV, *Studies in Vedāntism*

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