

## The Ethical Status of the Consciousness Ascertained in the Philosophy of Śankara and G. W. F. Hegel: A Comparative Analysis

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### Abstract

The problem of consciousness can be analyzed in diverse ways with the different philosophical traditions. **Problem** - this paper comparatively will analyze the ethical views of consciousness in the Indian (Śankara) and Western (G.W.F. Hegel) Philosophy. **Approach** - As ethics of consciousness depend on principles and values to attain universal satisfaction in the form of 'freedom' by externalizing the subjectivity in the form of objectivity that will help in analyzing the status of consciousness. It will comparatively enumerate the arguments in terms of human actions because it supports regulating moral actions to experience freedom as self-knowledge. **Finding** - The notion of freedom as self-knowledge is critically analyzed in both the systems that help in deriving the similarities and differences in the thought process of two historically and culturally different traditions. The paper will also expose the methodology of the Śankara and Hegel by analyzing the phenomenal and empirical aspects of 'Jīva' and 'Being' in respective traditions. **Conclusively**, the paper explores the ethical possibilities of human actions and values in the form of moral laws that helps humans in attaining self-knowledge as freedom.

**Keywords:** Moral laws, Phenomenon, Dharma, Brahman, Freedom, Consciousness.

### 1. Introduction:

In philosophical traditions, the problem of consciousness is at the core of the cognized world in significance with the human actions and values that serves the function of morality. Thus, morality follows moral laws in objectivity to realize freedom as self-knowledge in subjectivity. This generalization of human actions into moral laws makes us realize that freedom is an ethical injunction that regulates human experience to attain *nihśreyasa* (absolute well-being) in Śankara and universal will in Hegel.

As an introduction to Śankara, he was an *Advaita Vedantin* who believes in consciousness as the Ultimate reality in the form of *Brahman*. It leads to the understanding that the rest of all forms of

existence are illusory and unreal. It means the objective experiences seem to be real but as they are transitory and impermanent so did not hold any real identity in consciousness.

On the other end, Hegel's philosophy is known for reconciliation which made him follow Kant and criticize Kant's philosophy by maintaining a relation between ethics and religion. Moreover, Hegel tries to reconcile freedom with causal necessity, which reflects in his acceptance of Kant's assumption to derive ethics with reason. However, at the same time, he understands the fact that reason is a process where the finite self overcomes itself by recognizing or identification of the other. With this, Hegel's moral philosophy shows the influence of Plato and Aristotle by believing in the idea of supreme or ultimate good as an activity of the soul that gets reveals in virtue.<sup>1</sup> It happened because Hegel while attending a seminary at Tubingen along with Holderlin and Schelling read Plato and Aristotle.<sup>2</sup>

Hegel believes in subjective consciousness which realizes objectivity as reality. His main concern is the concept of 'freedom' in terms of morality. He considered consciousness in its interrelated spheres of inward and outward consciousness. The outward manifestation of consciousness in Hegel is called abstract rights and inward consciousness arises to make awareness of the purpose and intentions of human life in self-consciousness. Progressively, Hegel philosophy is bridging the gaps created by Kant's epistemological understanding of moral laws leading to develop the dichotomy of 'is and 'ought'. Here 'Ought' use in terms of freedom of will. Hegel overcomes all these gaps by embodying 'is' and 'ought to take together to enrich by dialectically supplementing each other. Likewise, in Śankara, the value-oriented human actions follow values in two forms phenomenal (*Dharma*) and noumenal i.e., *Brahman*. Whereas Hegel tries to mitigate the rift between reason and morality to evolve in the form of Spirit (*Geist*).

From all the aspects of philosophical understanding comparatively, it can be reasoned the fact that both Śankara and Hegel believes in one reality i.e., *Ātmanor Brahman*, and Spirit (*Geist*) respectively though they belong to different culture and traditions and arise at different times in the historical sequence of philosophical development.

The epistemological validity of consciousness depends on methods and ways to attain universal satisfaction that is freedom, which could only be realized by externalizing the subjectivity in the form of objectivity by enquiring and analyzing the methods and ways of knowing i.e., sense-certainty, perception, and understanding that can reveal the objective world in form of world-spirit. The ways of knowing follow the reason to validate the objective reality in existence that can be realized in the ethics of human actions. On the other hand, Śankara follows the *pramānas* i.e., perception (*pratyaksa*), inference (*anumāna*), verbal testimony (*śabda*), analogy (*upamāna*), presumption (*arthāpatti*), and non-cognition (*anupalabdhi*). The knowledge, which we acquire through these *pramānas* is empirical. According to Śankara, the self can only be known through *Śruti*; so *Śruti* is the source of trans-empirical knowledge. All scriptures of Indian traditions followed two ways of acquiring knowledge i.e., *Śruti* and *Smṛti*. *Śruti* means knowledge by hearing implies direct teaching to disciple

(*aparōksaupadeśa*). *Smṛti* means knowledge by remembering implies indirect teaching (*parōksaupadeśa*). If there is any contradiction arising in terms of knowing between *Śruti* and *Smṛti* then the authority of *Śruti* is preferred because *Śruti* is the name given to Vedas and Upanishads so, treated as an authority. Hence *Advaita Vedānta* gives great importance and honor to *Śruti*. In Śankara's viewpoint, *Śruti* is the only valid means of knowledge. Because he said, 'the scriptures are the only source of the knowledge of the truths regarding the super-sensible'. The greater value accounted to *Śruti* because scriptures are considered to be author-less, as they are divine words and composed of hearing. The words in *Śruti* are the revelations that occurred in the minds of saints, and seers, which are not accidental or contingent but natural eternities. About *pramānas*, Śankara believed in the validity of *Śruti* therefore *Śruti* is considered superior than other *pramānas* i.e., perception and inference. It is superior as it is free from defects. The knowledge through other *pramānas* having validity with the pluralistic existence and knowledge of the empirical world is meaningful until higher knowledge is attained through *Śruti*. However, *Advaita Vedānta* considered more than one *pramānas* but *Śruti* is the only *pramānas* that disseminates the knowledge of *Brahman-Ātman*. *Śruti* is having validity until the knowledge of *Brahman-Ātman* is realized after that *Śruti* as *pramānas* also lost its superiority and validity of it.

The knowledge of the empirical world (*Vyāvahārika*) is appearing to be real due to concealment (*Māyā*) and ignorance (*Avidyā*). It means Śankara accepts other *pramānas* with *Śruti* as long as in a state of bondage though *Śruti* is indispensable for attaining *Parā-vidyā* until truth is known.

The first five *pramānas* deal with empirical or not-self and the verbal testimony (*śabda*) deals with self-i.e., trans-empirical.<sup>3</sup> However, the validation of epistemological knowledge is founded on the experience or actions that follow the ethical or moral standards and principles in practice. But in both the traditions of Hegel and Śankara, the ultimate reality is observed in knowing self as self-knowledge. Self-knowledge is freedom in Hegel's understanding of the idea of Spirit (*Geist*) and knowing the nature of the indestructible self (*Brahman*) in Śankara.

The notion of freedom as self-knowledge is analyzed and generalized by both systems in their respective fashion. Human actions are governed by certain moral laws. These value-oriented human actions are divided into *nihśreyasa* (absolute well-being), and *abhyudaya* (empirical well-being) by Śankara; Hegel also followed two forms of laws-human laws and divine laws. These moral laws are either self-imposed or self-conscious. Śankara follows *Vedic* tradition conceives the meaning of the term value in two forms-one as a phenomenal i.e., *dharma* and the other as a noumenal i.e., *Brahman*. *Brahman* is man's either real or noumenal being that constitutes the highest value to it, due to the attribute of freedom. *Dharma*, on the other hand, is the law of phenomenal actions, and experiences and is revealed as a system of prescriptions and prohibitions. So, *Brahman* has to be known, and *dharma* has to be practiced.

Hence, it can be seen from the viewpoint of both Hegel and Śankara that there is only one reality realized in the form of metaphysical reality, which is real beyond epistemological and ethical actions.

## 2. The ethical aspect of the consciousness in Hegel

Hegel's formulation of moral laws is deep-rooted in the synthesis of gaps led by Kant through reason in morality. Hegel's social ethics is built on defects drawn out of Kant's distinction in the sphere of epistemology and ontology. Kant's distinction between noumenal, thing-in-itself and phenomenon constitutes the basis of the gulf between epistemology and morality that leads to the dichotomy between 'is' and 'ought' in his philosophy. Hegel when emphasizing the unity of moments in opposition was well aware of Kantian defects and try to overcome them in his philosophical system. The gulf between 'is' and 'ought' to remain unbridgeable in German Idealism, until Hegel applied his dialectical insight into the problem to resolve it. Before it, Fichte tries to remove the gulf between 'is' an 'ought' by rejecting Kant's distinction between the transcendental knowing self and the nominal acting self that is the 'will'. According to Fichte, there is only one active and moral striving self for the moral-realization. Hegel tries to resolve the gulf between 'ought' and 'is' based on the dialectical method. In his view, 'what ought to be' having to be applied to the sphere of 'what is' within its possibility. Kant's maxim 'one ought to act.....' is significant, according to Hegel only when the situation is visualized and in demarcating the situations where it can be possibly obeyed. Therefore, according to Hegel in this situation 'ought' and 'is' can go together and enrich each other by dialectically supplementing each other. In this way both 'what ought to be' and 'what is' can maintain their self-identity and it is by their self-identity that they dialectically interact with each other and thereby help towards the growth of each other<sup>4</sup>.

Thus, the formulation of 'ought' is another attempt to apply dialectic in the field of morality. The main concern of Hegel in morality is the concept of 'freedom.'

According to Hegel, "the essence of spirit is freedom"<sup>5</sup>. The *Encyclopedia Philosophy of Spirit* charts the progressively determinate stages of this freedom until spirit fulfills the imperative with which Hegel begins: "*Know thyself*"<sup>6</sup>. 'Freedom of will' is central to Kant's moral laws too. It depicts that Kant uses 'freedom of will' within the limits of 'will' alone, whereas Hegel uses the same term in two mutually interrelated spheres-outward and inward. Outward objectification of freedom is called by Hegel an Abstract Right. In it, freedom embodies a thing- property. Inward freedom is manifested in the interrogation of motive, intention, goodness, wickedness, etc. It is a concern of an individual's inward conscience. The basic difference between Abstract Rights and Morality by Hegel is that the former has its embodiment in the external world, while the latter is an affair of the internal consciousness. But in between Abstract Rights and Morality, there is no such unbridgeable gulf, as we find in Kant between 'what is' and 'what ought to be'. In Hegel 'ought' is the sphere of obligation in morality, which attaches to the inward being of the subject, because "only in the will as subjective can freedom or the implicit principle of the will be actual"<sup>7</sup>. So, Hegel applied his dialectical method even in morality as he used it in the sphere of ontology and epistemology. Freedom consists of the universality of will, posits subjective will, and in an attempt to overcome subjectivity formulates moral laws. Conclusively, it can

be said, the only remarkable thing about Hegel's philosophy is that there is no gulf between knowledge and morality as it is in Kant.

Thus, Hegel was indebted to Kant in the realm of morality as in the field of epistemology. Though Kant and Hegel both agree on the fact that formulation of moral laws presupposes freedom of will and moral laws must be universal and essential. Kantian duty for the sake of duty is nothing but abstract indeterminacy from which no transition is possible to the specification of particular duties. Kant's emphasis on the formalism of moral laws and duty for the sake of duty are certain issues, which are of least importance in Hegel's discussion on morality. Hegel discusses these issues in his book *Philosophy of Right*. This book is divided into three parts-Abstract Rights, Morality and Ethical Life. Abstract rights are objective, morality is discussed with subjectivity and ethical life is discussed in terms of absolute. These three stages are mutually interrelated and interdependent but then also able to retain their self-identity and autonomy.

Through the above discussion, we come to know that the basis of Hegelian social ethics lies in the defects or shortcomings of Kantian ethics. So, Hegel's ethics is a kind of remedy to the defects of Kantian ethics. There are certain gaps in Kant's philosophy that Hegel swiftly bridged by applying his dialectical method. Now I can sum up the fundamental ethical issues involved in Kant and Hegel. Kant's contention, that knowledge and morality are two separate realms, which is unacceptable to Hegel. In Hegel's view knowledge and morality go together to enrich one another and supplement each other, but then also maintain their self-identity. Kant contends that the statements ought not to be formulated based on factual statements, which Hegel rejects in his moral philosophy from the beginning. Given Kant's moral laws are formal and ought to be obeyed for their own sake; for Hegel, it is empty so no concrete duty can be prescribed because categorical imperatives also did not assert any duty. Despite these differences, Hegel and Kant agree on the fact that freedom of will is at the center of moral laws, but for Kant, it is an empty notion, and for Hegel, it is subjective and objective. Subjectively freedom of the will consists of purpose, intention, goodwill, etc. Objectively it is manifested in abstract rights and social ethics. Thus, for Hegel freedom "consists in the appreciation of the necessary law operating in the spheres of abstract rights and the social ethics. Hegel's morality, based on his interpretation of freedom, is thus more advanced than what we have in Kant."<sup>8</sup>

Hegel's views on morality are an attempt to resolve the various dualities involves in Kant's philosophy because it is a jumble of dualities between sensibility and categories, categories and reason, apriori and a-posteriori, the transcendental and the practical. The crux problem is the issue of the relation between Reason and Will. It is a debatable issue because Kant was not able to make clear the connection between Reason and Will. This negligence on the part of Kant led to the formulation of six theories concerning the relationship between Reason and Will. Firstly, there is a theory that propounds the supremacy of Pure Reason that is termed Rationalism; secondly, some commentators maintain the supremacy of Practical Reason which is termed Moralism; thirdly the supremacy of Judgment is examined under Aestheticism; fourthly the parallel relation between Reason and Will is

discussed as Parallelism; fifthly Reason and Will are discussed as the functions of the mind is Functionalism. Lastly, the Bridge theory is examined ultimately as the best of all theories of relations.<sup>9</sup> But Kant's theory of the relation between Reason and Will is a valuable issue not only from a historical perspective but also has a wide impact on future ontology, epistemology, and ethics. His immediate successors like Fichte, William James, and Schopenhauer maintained the supremacy of Will, while Hegel maintains the supremacy of Reason.

Dualism may be resolved only when one element conceives in another to comprehend the dual elements as a whole. Hegel was the foremost in resolving these resolutions successfully. Hegel agrees with Kant on the fact that philosophic theory should be critical; it is the mind that makes nature. The soul is not a substance but it is an element that knows. Despite all these agreements with Kant, Hegel does not move towards agnosticism, but he contradicts the point that all things are knowable because nothing is beyond the reach of the mind. In Hegel's system, there is no distinction between the practical and the transcendental, or between the sensibility and the categories of understanding.

Kant's ethics is considered to be formal because it has form but lacks content. It is reflected when putting reflection on his moral maxims for moral conduct. It is difficult to discern what ought not to be done but not what ought to be done. It can be understood when he said, every act should be done by the motive purely of duty. But he proposes the concept of duty as a universal law and fails to specify the roles and rules for an individual in different situations and conditions. It shows that Kant's formalism is theoretical rather than the practical. On the other hand, Hegel criticizes Kant's formalism by emphasizing the ethical life in terms of abstract laws and divine laws to guide self-conscious substance for leading an ethical life. This Hegel interprets as the ethical consciousness of an individual knows in itself what one has to do and decides naturally to which law he has to belong. The immediate decisions regarding one's deed are something natural not accidental, because it is implicit in the significance of a natural being. One could assess his action of interest based on abstract laws, morality, and nonetheless, the ethical consciousness. It is an argument given by Hegel against Kant's faulty psychology. In Kant's psychology, the action performed following duty has no moral worth if it is vested with the character of generosity or self-interest. With this drawback to his moral philosophy, Kant also makes the concept of good too narrow by restricting it to virtue and happiness, while Hegel reasons to adopt the notion of good to realize the absolute. It is depicted by Hegel, "The good is the idea as the unity of the concept of the will with the particular will... the good is thus freedom realized, the absolute end and aim of the world."<sup>10</sup> For Hegel absolute lies in the realization of subjectivity and social morality. When an individual acts with his self-determining rational will without the help of external agency then it is subjective morality or the 'good' lies in one's consciousness which is autonomous and infinite, while the ethical systems or institutions which are the identity of subjective and objective good. Thus, obeying the laws of institutions is in turn obeying oneself. Freedom is not an autonomous principle of individual freedom. It is a principle of realizing rationality or universality that exists in its immediacy and feeling of love, which passes through the

institution of marriage, family, and civil society, Therefore, it can be deduced that the criticism of Kantian dialectic is the basis of Hegelian dialectic.

According to Hegel, an ethical substance is a form of an existential consciousness, which is realized by all in common. The reflected consciousness in plurality is an underlying thread of self-conscious actuality. The self-conscious actuality of spirit can be called human law or abstract or formal laws. With this, an ethical substance can also reveal itself in another law i.e., divine law. It is a law that expresses ethical substance in an immediate and simple essence that extends down to the inner essence of the individual in opposition to the fully conscious action because an actual universal will work as a force acting in opposition to an individual being-for-self and the ethical power of the state. Hence, the comparison indicates that both systems follow the ethical substance as an existential consciousness in common, which reflects the consciousness in self-conscious actuality as 'will' that makes it an ethical personality. Hegel says, "Everyone has the right to make his will the thing or to make the thing his will or in other words to destroy the thing and transform it into his own, for the thing, as externality has no end in itself, it is not infinite self-relation but something external to itself."<sup>11</sup>

In addition to it, both systems conceive the concept of value, which helps the self to perform actions following his 'will' to achieve the highest value in the form of *Brahman* of Śankara and the divine laws of Hegel.

### 3. The ethical aspect of the consciousness in Śankara

Śankara conceives value in two forms: *Dharma* and *Brahman*. *Dharma* as a value is a phenomenon of empirical life. It helps the Self in upgrading itself by performing moral actions that facilitate the possibility of the self-moving on the path of spiritual experience, which may support attaining the truth or reality. In other words, *Dharma* may not be directly motivating to realize the truth as reality but certainly pave the way for advancing the attitude of contentment, compassion, charity, affection, and developing curiosity to know about the nature of the self. Moreover, *dharma* regulates life to act righteously. In a way, it guides through certain prescriptions and prohibitions to lead a moral life. The moral order of actions strengthens the conduct and preparing to gain knowledge about the nature of an imperishable element, it is the realization after which all things become known. This kind of knowledge based on a twofold understanding of the Vedas. The one understanding is related to empirical actions, which prescribe certain obligations and prohibitions so that man can develop moral habits. The second understanding reveals the ultimate truth through knowledge and spiritual practices like meditation. It should not be mistaken here that *dharma* is an inevitable condition for attaining *Brahman*.

However, Śankara did not agree on the necessity of moral actions or ethical substance, because in his view any kind of action leads to an attachment to the empirical world that in turn obstructs the path of realizing nominal reality i.e., *Brahman*. It is for those who have realized the true nature of *Ātman*. It is

depicted as “For him who has realized the *Ātman*, no further work remains to be done.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the “abandonment of works” is meant only for the ‘*Ātma-vida*,’ i.e., for those who have already realized the end, which is the completion of desire.

“Śankara here distinguishes sharply between the life of spiritual freedom or philosophical wisdom, on the one hand, and the practical life of morality and religion, on the other. ‘The knowledge of *dharma* leads to *abhyudaya* or empirical well-being but it depends on the performance of the duties” (*Brahmsūtrabhāṣya*.1.1.1).<sup>13</sup>

As knowledge of *Brahman* results in *nihśreyasa* or absolute well-being that does not depend on the performance of any actions; the knowledge of *dharma* leads to *abhyudaya* or empirical well-being, but it depends on the performance of the duties. In opposition to it, “*Nihśreyasa* is characterized by freedom from desire and seeking, pleasure and pain. It is beyond the dialectic of action and experience, good and evil. *Abhyudaya*, on the other hand, is of the nature of satisfaction which is necessarily limited in duration, scope, and degree. It belongs to a process of seeking, activity and experiencing. If *nihśreyasa* is autonomy, *abhyudaya* is necessarily heteronymous, a binding and tempting chain. To attain *nihśreyasa* it is necessary to retreat from external activity into self-knowledge. This is the path called *nivṛtti-laksana dharma*. To gain *abhyudaya* it is necessary to follow the path of virtuous action and religious worship. This is the path called *pravṛtti-laksana dharma*.”<sup>14</sup> while Hegel logically believes in the unity of both forms of laws i.e., moral and divine as an ethical substance.

As far as, it conceives the fact that corresponding to the two types of reality i.e. noumenal and phenomenal there are two values i.e. *abhyudaya* and *nihśreyasa*; corresponding to them there are two kinds of *dharma*s, one is guided by the law of activist life (*pravṛtti-laksana dharma*) and other is guided by the law of retreat from activity (*nivṛtti-laksana dharma*), as prescribed by *Vedas*. As stated in *BhagwadGītābhāṣya*, “*dharma* is that which is the cause of the maintenance or stability of the universe and directly instrumental to the relative and absolute good of living beings. It is practiced by the estates (*varnas*), stations (*āśramas*), debts (*ṛinas*), and moral ideals (*pūrusārthas*) in so far as they seek their good.”<sup>15</sup>

*Nihśreyasa* is the Ultimate highest good for the good (*śreyas*) of man as preferable (*preyas*) good. Here *śreyas* and *preyas* are *abhyudaya* and related with *pravṛtti lakshana*. Hence *Nihśreyasa* is the Ultimate highest good. In Śankara, both the pursuit of *abhyudaya* and *nihśreyasa* are contradictory because *dharma* did not beget *Brahman*, and *Brahman* did not beget *dharma*. Only knowledge can liberate to attain *Brahman*. *Brahman* is a matter of knowledge, and *dharma* is a matter of practice. So, the synthesis of both is not feasible. Therefore, according to Śankara one who is seeking *Brahman* must renounce all the works. It construes the understanding that following Śankara neither empirical actions nor scriptural study helps in realizing the highest reality i.e., *Brahman*, only spiritual discipline can resort to illuminating the path of truth or reality. It refers to spiritual discipline as 'Meditation'. It is followed by *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*.III.2.24, *Brahman* is unmanifest and becomes manifest when the



mind dwelled in ignorance finds in perfect meditation. Meditation is a spiritual technique that trains the mind with continuous practice to concentrate or focus on a spiritual symbol as an object and stays with it without flickering as the light of the flame. This constant focus of mind steadily culminates into *Samādhi*. It is a state where the gap between a mediatory and an object of meditation gets over or closes and is united with the Self. Therefore, in meditation, there is a distinction between knower, knowable, and knowledge. The knower is the mediatory, the object of meditation is knowable, and the act of mediation is knowledge. In the state of Samadhi, these distinctions get subsided and fused with integral consciousness. Hence, it is a state where all kinds of existent distinctions get subsumed to merge with the Ultimate reality. So, for Śāṅkara ethical consciousness seems to be the necessity of empirical life, which looks to be real in ignorance but not a necessary condition for attaining spiritual freedom (*Pārmārthik*). Hence Śāṅkara to attain spiritual freedom is the highest aim (*pūrusārthas*). It is an aim that reveals the truth or reality as one imperishable *Ātman* devoid of any condition to subsist.

#### 4. Comparison between Śāṅkara and Hegel's Philosophy concerning the Ethical aspect of the consciousness

In the case of Hegel, rights and duties are matters of persons, as persons are only self-conscious beings who enjoy and perform formal rights and duties. These rights are exercised through an imperative: "Be a person and respect others as a person."<sup>16</sup> It means freedom of one presupposing the freedom of others because violation of one's right leads to infringing the rights of others. In this way, rights comprise freedom in an immediate way as property possession, contract, and doing wrong. Here the freedom is in the form of abstract will and actualizes subjective will either in itself as single or himself as another in a contract. When a particular will is explicitly at variance with the universal and assumes a way of looking at things in volitions that is in opposition to the principle of rightness, termed as "wrong." Thus, subjective will implicitly expresses explicit objective will in the form of rights because rights are comprised of duties in the form of imperatives. Therefore, rights presuppose freedom as universal will. It can be deduced that Hegel's ethical substance realizes its subjective will in the form of an objective will explicitly in the obedience of rights and performance of duties in the form of imperatives as universal will, which is freedom in the moral sense. Freedom as the ethical substance is an actual substance that is realized in the plurality of existent consciousness as an absolute spirit.

However, both systems share an entirely different approach to formulating the moral process of existent consciousness. On the one hand, Śāṅkara's concept of value is constituted of rights and duties (*dharma*) as *abhyudaya* and freedom as *nirśreyasa*; the former is characterized as empirical well-being, and later as absolute well-being. *Abhyudaya* is practiced through well-defined duties and moral ideals as emphasized in the scriptures, which are directly instrumental to the relative and absolute good of living beings. But according to Śāṅkara, real freedom is only realized in absolute well-being by renouncing self from the desire for seeking pleasure or pain. It is the realm of experiencing the

Supreme Being i.e., *Ātman* as *Brahman* which is the highest moral ideal (*moksha*). On the other hand, Hegel tries to realize ethical substance in the form of self-conscious actuality through objective will in terms of rights as absolute Spirit. For Hegel, moral laws are followed by individuals as a universal will, but at the same time, they are enriching and supplementing each other to obey moral laws. This Hegel interprets as the ethical consciousness of an individual knows in itself what one has to do and decides naturally to which law he has to belong. The immediate decisions regarding one's deed are something natural not accidental, because it is implicit in the significance of a natural being. But it leads to a problem that how it could be determined which laws are of our interest. Hegel suggests determining firstly based on abstract rights because it protects individual pursuit of their interest; secondly based on morality, because it allows us to be responsible for our interest; finally based on ethical life (*Sittlichkeit*), because it tells us which interests are rational. Thus, Hegel considered the ethical life as the best alternative to morality, because it is constituted by the mores, customs, and laws of society, which are also the forms of freedom. It means that individuals can liberate themselves from the erroneous pursuit of subjective motivations for action. With this, Hegel emphasizes ethical life as the only alternative to abstract rights and morality that protects the action of interest, and rationality. Hegel rationally tries to prove that an individual can experience freedom in the different forms (mores, customs, and laws) of ethical life. So, ethical pursuits are the means of freedom in rationality that also safeguards the interests of individuals. Therefore, the sense of freedom varies with both systems, as ethical life is an essence of individual interests reflected rationally in Hegel.

In Śankara ethical life has only instrumental significance not necessary for realizing absolute freedom. Ethical actions can only be serving as an instrument to improve or provide a reason for self in achieving a particular mental state that helps in experiencing the highest reality, but it is not essential. Śankara discards the mediacy of the objective world in experiencing subjectivity as freedom. Hegel expressed the meaning of freedom through the mediacy of objective spirit that reflects the pure nature of subjective spirit in rationality. Resultantly, the objective will supersede the pure nature of subjective will that creates hindrances in realizing the true nature of the self. It happens when Hegel considered faith and culture as the negativity due to ignorance and superstition involved in it and alienated as pure insight conceived in enlightenment. Faith is consciousness and enlightenment is self-consciousness. Therefore, when actuality lost its substantiality and nothing is left in it as an intrinsic being; both the realm of faith and the actual world is overthrown. This insight gives rise to absolute freedom. According to Hegel, Spirit knowing itself in all its uses is absolute freedom, which sees nothing sensuous or supersensual beyond itself. But despite these differences, the real essence of ethical life in both systems seems to reach a point from where the self only perceives itself as self-consciousness. Hence, the concept of absolute freedom has a similarity in its essence with the absolute well-being of Śankara in the form of the realization of *Ātman* that is a merger of ethical thread in absolute by canceling the empirical realm.

## 5. Conclusion

Conclusively, Hegel finds consciousness in objectivity with the moral laws as self-imposed laws identified in realizing the principle of 'freedom' by practicing in the civil society as rights and duties. This movement of outward consciousness toward inward consciousness is realized in self-consciousness as freedom. However, Śankara believes only in ultimate reality as the highest and real state of consciousness. The world of action i.e., the empirical world is a result of the superimposition of *Māyāon Brahman* and so an empirically illusory world arises as real. Hence, the moral experience and existence of the empirical world can't be denied as presupposed by the law of karma that regulates human actions to attain the highest state of knowledge as self-knowledge. Therefore, moral laws in objectivity help in upgrading or purifying the self to qualify the merger with the Brahman. This kind of argument that justifies morality as the empirical necessity to realize the pure form of reality is criticized by Śankara because it leads to results in bondage and thereby falls into the false empirical world of fructifications that follows the life-death cycle and resultantly the being never able to realize the ultimate reality construed as *Brahman*. Therefore, to attain the highest state of self-knowledge one needs to perform actions that identified him with *Brahman* as self-knowledge. The actions prescribed are meditation and yoga by which one realizes the highest state of bliss regardless of the ethical realization of self in objectivity.

After critically and comparatively examining the doctrine of consciousness in its interrelated aspects, we can conclude that both systems share an approach to the problem of consciousness in their fashion. Śankara philosophizes this problem by interpreting and examining the Hindu scriptures and proposes his doctrine of *Ātman* as the metaphysical, ontological, psychological, epistemological, and ethical element of consciousness, which helps in realizing the highest i.e., *Brahman*. On the other hand, Hegel establishes the doctrine of Spirit (*Geist*) by giving utmost importance to reason. Hegel builds his philosophy with the criticism of all other philosophies. His works in establishing the doctrine of Spirit are mainly a criticism of Kant's idealism. The questions and gaps that Kant left without resolving it, Hegel bridges all those epistemological and ethical gaps by validating the existence of consciousness as self-consciousness that transcends to acquire self-knowledge.

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