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Note on Asvagosha's The Awakening of Faith
and the doctrine of the Absolute and the Phenomenal

Both Hindu and Buddhist thought is grounded in the intuition of the Act, and not in a duality of essence and existence--though they comprehend both. Essence is the constancy of tendency in act from which we infer what a thing is--what it tends basically to do. Existence empowers the thing to be at all. Uniting these (essence and existence) is Actuality, as such. The view is altogether dynamic.

For instance, when I write these sentences, hand, pen, paper come together to compose one act which is, itself, an act within a more comprehensive act. Ultimately all is act-uality, as such. This is really what "Mind" means. It is an unfortunate term for us since we divide mind and body, conscious and unconscious. On the other hand it is a good term in that its object exists in it, in act, immaterially. Ultimately mind is its own act. Were this not so it could not divide itself against itself without becoming materially separated from itself as a cell divides itself in mitosis.

Activity continuingly processes itself, then, without any diminishment in act. What we call "things" are players in the one Act which plays itself. Free will is the Act's freely embodying its relation to itself as Absolute related to Phenomena and as Phenomena to Absolute. Human free will is a functional microcosm of the same. Even when I act badly, it is still act and the necessary and appropriate consequences for acting badly are sooner or later required by the Play. Acting well entails the same.

Enlightenment is grasping in vision and in practice that while I and all beings are required for the play, I and they are, in principle, endowed with the same freedom with which and in which the Act acts out itself. This is very different from the distinction in Hegel between the Infinite and the finite in which the finite is doomed to "drive beyond itself" to self-destruct since it cannot bear (contain within it) the pressure of the Infinite. In Advaita Vedanta and Buddhism, the Infinite and finite are not in principle, inequitably related. Thus tranquility becomes a moral (conduct) imperative.