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*ON WISDOM: REVISITING CHANDOGYA
UPANISHAD, CUSANUS' VISIO
INTELLECTUALIS, AND
HEIDEGGER'S ALETHEIA.*

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Abstract. The paper aims to present three waves of philosophical thinking from the East and West and how each concept stakes a claim on wisdom. It proposes that the Chandogya Upanishad, Cusanus's Visio Intellectualis, and Heidegger's Aletheia all involve a kind of seeing that points directly to the heart of wisdom. This research argues that these three traditions are worth revisiting to remind us of the meaning of life and the wisdom that lies in the seeming everyday experience of the world.

It begins with an exposition of the Chandogya Upanishad which involves the attentive sitting-down of the disciple who listens to his teacher's instructions on the highest reality that dispels ignorance. This ceaseless searching for truth is the key to wisdom.

Nicolas Cusanus, speaks of the visio intellectualis as not merely a syllogistic product of pure intellectualization or abstraction but as a direct seeing or intuition that closes the gap between the finite and the infinite. Such is wisdom.

Finally, the paper recalls Martin Heidegger's view of *aletheia* as the unconcealment of truth. Wisdom is beyond the intellectualist principle of non-contradiction, beyond mere rationalization, but one that comes from a deeper existential source and allows one just to see. Ultimately, this paper argues that wisdom is reverence. Such is seen in the Chandogya Upanishad and its seeing that reality is an absolute unity, Cusanus' intellectual vision albeit pointed to an absolute maximum and Heidegger's unconcealment of the clearing of Being.

Keywords: Chandogya Upanishad, *tat tvam asi*, wisdom, intellectual vision, revealing, learned ignorance,

Introduction

Aristotle, in *Metaphysics*, claims that all men by nature desire to know.¹ He then explains that knowledge is initially sought with the aid of the senses. External senses initiate the early steps of knowing until the particular aspects of objects are set aside to finally enter the phase of *abstraction*, the process whereby we separate the essential from the non-essential aspects of a thing and thus arrive at its essence, its *whatness*. Such is the kind of thinking that is prevalent in classical philosophy, ingrained in the *Aristotelico-Thomistic* definition of philosophy as a science of the ultimate causes, reasons, and principles of all things in the light of human reason alone. This line of thinking leads to the traditional divisions of philosophy arrived at through the historical and systematic approaches.

Later, Martin Heidegger examines this task of philosophy. In *Being and Time*, he not only accepts the long lineage of historical thought but also clarifies the purport of the one inquiring, philosophizing, *being*. “Basically, all ontology, no matter how rich and firmly compacted a system of categories it has in its disposal, remains blind and perverted from its ownmost aim, if it has not first adequately clarified the meaning of Being, and conceived this clarification as its fundamental task.”² Thus, a careful and a critical examination of Being takes place, and the question of its meaning is crucially raised again once and for all. This attempt ultimately translates into an analytic of *Dasein*. “Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontically distinguished by the fact that in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it.”³

Heidegger’s question of Being or *Seinsfrage* leads to its unconcealment or, in Greek, *alêtheia*. “The more standard translation of the word is ‘truth’ (*Wahrheit*),” says Wrathall, “but Heidegger elected to go with a literal translation: *a-lêtheia* means literally ‘not concealed’.”⁴ It is by examining the nature of the person that one’s insight into the world is seen as an unconcealment of one’s worldview, a truth that liberates man, the wisdom that can set man free. The thrust of this research is thus to focus and unconceal what is meant by

wisdom by employing three different philosophies, namely, the Chandogya Upanishad of the Vedic period, the renaissance humanist Nicholas of Cusa, and the postmodern philosopher Martin Heidegger. This research holds that wisdom as seen in these three traditions speaks of something that is more than just the automatic ready-fix that seems to permeate our world today. "The modern world crowds our lives with mundane tasks and activities that leave us little time for anything else."⁵ Wisdom is more profound than mere possession of knowledge or a skill that allows for a smooth and complacent engagement with the world. It is prior to and deeper than the sheer understanding of the world at hand. There is something sublime in the ancient conception of wisdom, something that verily albeit innocuously affects our current ways of living, something that may have been somehow forgotten or neglected. We have here a primordial source of deep understanding that ought to be made accessible in the present if one were to live one's life with value and meaning. Wisdom is a *seeing* that ultimately sets man free. Such unconcealment of wisdom is what is inferred through Heidegger's *aletheia* as a method comparative to the unveiling of the truth in the *Chandogya Upanishad* and *Cusanus's visio intellectualis*.

The Chandogya Upanishad

The Upanishads, which belong to the Vedic Period, are considered to be the oldest source of the sacred knowledge of India. There are actually four kinds of Vedas, namely, the *Rg Veda*, the *Sama Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Atharva Veda*. The *Rg Veda* is used for reciting hymns, the *Yajur Veda* for performing sacrifices, the *Sama Veda* for the chanting of songs, and the *Atharva Veda* for magic ritual incantations. Initially the first three Vedas (*Rg*, *Yajur*, and *Sama*) are known as the *TrayiVidya* or the first three. Each Veda is further divided into four different parts, namely, the *Samhitas* which are a collection of hymns and chants addressed to the various gods and goddesses; the *Brahmanas* which serve as a manual for the performance of rituals and a guide for the conduct of one's life each day; the *Aranyakas* which are a collection of rites and treatises particularly to remind man of the true and liberating wisdom; and the *Upanishads* which are the philosophical treatises at the conclusion of the Vedas. Judged by the usual method

of philosophy as a rigid discourse, logical interpretation, and systematic account, the *Upanishads* would seem unphilosophical. “The authors of the *Upanishads* did not look upon themselves as builders of philosophical systems, but as men conveying their own experiences of and insights into reality.”⁶ Thus, the *Aranyakas* serve as the transition from what was purely ceremonial and ritualistic to a more conscious philosophical way of thinking found in the *Upanishads*.

The *Upanishads*, being the concluding portion of the Vedas, is also called Vedanta. “The word *Upanishad* is derived from the root ‘sad’ which means (i) to sit down, (ii) to destroy, (iii) to loosen. ‘Upa’ means ‘near by’ and ‘ni’ means ‘devotedly’.”⁷ Thus, Sharma says, *Upanishad* means “the sitting down of the disciple near his teacher in a devoted manner to receive instruction about the highest Reality which loosens all doubts and destroys all ignorance of the disciple.”⁸ There are believed to be about 108 *Upanishads* whose authors are unknown, about ten of which are considered as the most popular.⁹ Of the ten, we will focus on one particular *Upanishad*: the *Chandogya*.

The *Chandogya* is listed among the oldest *Upanishads*. Belonging to the Tandy School of the Sama Veda, it is a collection of verses compiled without attention to the actual chronology which is a particular characteristic of the *Upanishads*.¹⁰ Since they have no known authors, the *Upanishads* are believed to be handed down over time from ancient Hindu seers and sages.

A prominent entry in the *Chandogya* is about the boy Śvetaketu, son of Uddalaka Āruni. He was given instruction by his father to journey away from their land in order to be properly schooled, according to the tradition of the Brahmin class. And so the story goes that at age twelve Śvetaketu had to flee their land in order to be prepared for greater things. He studied long, well, and hard and finally, at age twenty-four, he was ready to return to his father, equipped with the knowledge that any parent would be proud of.

So, Śvetaketu returned to his father’s place thinking that, with all his supposed learnings, he was a cut above the rest; he became very arrogant. His father, then, could not help but ask

Śvetaketu, here you are, my son, swell-headed, thinking yourself to be learned, and arrogant: so you must have surely asked about that rule of substitution by which one

hears what has not been heard of before, thinks of what has not been thought of before, and perceives what has not been perceived before?"

Hearing this, Śvetaketu was astounded and could not answer. At this point, Uddalaka Aruni took it upon himself to engage his son in a discussion on the truth, something that was not readily accessible through quantitative analysis or steady memorization. It was the kind of inquiry that seeks to know the nature of the Ultimate Reality, something that Indian spirituality and belief is best known for.

Below is the actual exchange between father and son as lifted from the *Chandogya Upanishad* 6:12:1-3:

"Bring a banyan fruit."

"Here it is, sir."

"Cut it up."

"I've cut it up, sir."

"What do you see there?"

"These quite tiny seeds, sir."

"Now, take one of them and cut it up."

"I've cut one up, sir."

"What do you see there?"

"Nothing, sir."

Then he told him: "This finest essence here, son, that you can't ever see—look how on account of that finest essence this huge banyan tree stands here.

Believe, my son: the finest essence here—that constitutes the self of this whole world; that is the truth; that is the self (ātman).

And that's how you are, Śvetaketu."

"Sir, teach me more."

"Very well, son."

And so goes one of the popular exchanges between Uddalaka Āruni and Śvetaketu. The subtle essence that the father was referring to is the same mantle of truth and the thread that composes the self that was Śvetaketu! The famous proclamation of *TAT TVAM ASI* (*That Thou Art, Śvetaketu!*) reaches into our beings as the truth pours out of the wellsprings of Indian soul that there is no separation or dichotomy

between the self and the Ultimate! “Indian sages have held the belief in the intrinsic unity of life, establishing no separating line between the sacred and the profane, human and divine. Spiritual truth is very subtle and cannot be attained through the cruising intellect of an impure mind, for the rational faculty has limitations and cannot go beyond certain distance.”¹²

The narrative of the Chandogya Upanishad reminds us of what the ancient Indian seers have always believed: the oneness of the brahman and ātman. There is no divide, and only a spiritual unity exists. “Man is essentially a soul entrapped in a body, and a soul that is a part of the unity of all the individual souls to the Universal Soul—the *Ātman-Brahman* unity of the Divine Absolute Spirit.”¹³

It is interesting to note that in the Western tradition, Greek philosophy recognizes a duality of body and soul. Ever since the time of Plato and Aristotle, this duality has been present and has served as the grounding theme of any future metaphysics. Such divide, which would often characterize the Greeks as systematic and logical, is the kind of distinction that is diffused in Indian thought. Right from the start, this duality has been unheard of and even frowned upon by the ancient sages of the East.

“To analyze and explore, to test and prove all things in the light of reason, was the ambition of the Greek mind.”¹⁴ This is simply not the case for the East particularly as seen in the *Chandogya Upanishad*. Although, it may be said that this was the path that Śvetaketu was treading when he first embarked on his journey, to be a learned man, he must be so knowledgeable as to be able to answer any possible inquiry addressed to him. When Śvetaketu returned home a bit arrogant and too full of himself, he was slowly riveted back to the way that was originally intended not just for him but for the rest of their class, of their people: to be mindful not of the personal self but of the self in relation to the universal, the ultimate reality. “Spiritual attainment is not the perfection of the intellectual man but an energy pouring into it from beyond it, vivifying it.”¹⁵

Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464)

Nicholas of Cusa was a foremost figure during the pre-modern period in the history of philosophy. Many philosophers and great

thinkers have considered Cusa a force to reckon with. Here are some of the accounts that have often been said about Cusa:

Hans Küng cites the daring character of his thought, while Hans-Georg Gadamer specifically attributes to him a revolutionary challenge to traditional metaphysics and as well the development of a critical new stage in discerning the problem of language and its relationship to epistemology. Martin Buber assigns Cusa a key role in the new, modern 'earnestness' about the human being as human being in which the person could boast that 'he carried all things in himself and thus that he could know all things.' Paul Tillich links him with Meister Eckhart, who inspired Tillich's notion of God beyond God, and credits Cusa's idea of the coincidence of opposites, along with Luther's doctrine of justification of the sinner, for breaking the power of the 'hierarchical principle.'¹⁶

So, we may ask what exactly makes Cusa so important as to make these philosophers look at him with such high regard? Ernst Cassirer calls him "the first modern philosopher," pointing to "a completely new total intellectual orientation," and Karl Jaspers names him "one of the original metaphysicians," an indispensable link in the chain of great metaphysicians, and vitally important to modern thought for his anthropology. "Perhaps no earlier thinker so compellingly placed at the core of things an image of man's greatness and limitations in respect of his creative intellectual powers."¹⁷ In order to expose the weight of their description, allow me to point out what made Cusa indispensable in the pre-modern period.

To begin with, the history of Western Philosophy prior to the advent of Cusa was coming from the Ancient and Medieval appropriations. Ancient Western philosophy was governed by the basic stuff that is present in all things, the reason why the world and everything in it exist! The impetus of reason was here brought to the fore, no matter how crude or naïve their speculations seemed to be. The Pre-Socratics, beginning with Thales and the rest of the Milesians down to the Atomists, presented their respective versions of the basic stuff.¹⁸ They may not have completely agreed with each other and there were many dissenting opinions, but they tried to come up with

the solution using reason and reason alone as to why the world existed.

This was not the case for the Medieval Period. Here, reason had to be set aside and placed at the backseat. "There was a time when medieval philosophy was considered as unworthy of serious study, when it was taken for granted that the philosophy of the Middle Ages was so subservient to theology that it was practically indistinguishable therefrom and that, in so far as it was indistinguishable, it amounted to little more than a barren logic-chopping and word-play."¹⁹ By this time, it was no longer about reason; rather, the focus was hoisted towards the heavens. It was in this period that the dogma of faith and the dictates of the church clouded the hand of reason. In this period, the idea of a Creator became supreme. Several philosophers tried to prove the existence of God, including St. Thomas with his cosmological proof and St. Anselm with his ontological argument. It was also this period when St. Augustine nailed the idea that one's heart is restless until it finds its rest in God. Clearly, this period left little for the explorations of thought towards epistemic and metaphysical certainty independent of the notion of a God whose essence is his very existence.

And then came the time just after the Medieval period when Nicholas of Cusa lived. A transition period when there was just enough clamor for reason to regain its previous position and enough criticism to admit that reason could very well have its own limits. At this point, Cusa tried to go back to the focus of the medieval philosophers on the primacy of God and his existence, God's indubitable truth, at the same time questioning the very ability that supports this claim. Nicholas of Cusa, therefore, wanted to inquire if at all man is equipped to know God. Whether man has the instrument to know this Creator, whether man has in fact the ability to arrive at a certain knowledge of God?

What sets Cusa apart from his Medieval predecessors is that the latter assumed and became complacent in their reliance on the cosmological proof of St. Thomas and even the ontological proof of St. Anselm. The negative way of the Pseudo-Dionysius could have settled the question once and for all, such that we can indeed know God apart from blind faith. As rational animals, we have in fact in us the capacity to know God. Our intellect and reason are equipped and empowered to enter into a dialogue with this supreme and transcendental being.

Arguably, we are able to discern the existence, essence, and presence of God!

It is at this point where Cusa begged to differ. He was not complacently bent simply to follow the way of tradition. He went even beyond the *via negativa* in his approach to God. "Thus, Nicholas can claim that God is encountered beyond the *via positiva* and the *via negativa*, beyond the distinction between 'is an x' and 'is not an x'."²⁰ He was not quick to swim with the rest of the modern philosophers and claim that knowledge is indeed possible with the aid of reason or experience or both. He just did not side with the rationalists and the empiricists. He in fact took to heart the thrust of the Socratic dictum of *knowing thyself!* If we remember, Socrates, the gadfly of Athens, constantly reminded his fellow Athenians to be critical of one's self. To live an unexamined life would be to live a futile life! Remembering the Oracle of Delphi's famous words about Socrates, *I know that I do not know*—points to a wise man who is aware of his limitations—that he could not know. Cusa, for his part, acknowledged that one simply cannot know. It is not about knowing that I do not know, that I know feebly but there are more unknown things; rather, Cusa states plainly: I am *unable* to know. And realizing this incapacity to know I have become wise! "'Learned ignorance' means, primarily, an ignorance which someone has come to learn of and, secondarily, an ignorance which renders its possessor wise."²¹

"He raised questions in ways that have remained fresh, especially in the context of the absolute, the infinite, the uncertain, and the unfathomable."²² This pursuit is seen in Cusa's profound *De Docta Ignorantia* (*On Learned Ignorance*). This opus is divided into three parts: Book 1 talks about the *Maximum Absolutum* which is God, Book 2 about the *Maximum Contractum* which is the universe, and finally Book 3 about the *Maximum Simum Contractum et Absolutum* which is Christ. In the *Maximum Absolutum*, Cusa lifted the idea of ignorance from the individual's inability to know God who is the absolute maximum. "The root of such learned ignorance is the recognition that God cannot be known as He is."²³ According to Cusa, there is no way that the individual can possibly know God through one's reason. We may recall once again St. Thomas and his earnest cosmological proof for God's existence that was dismissed by Cusa, for whom the knowledge of God

is simply an issue to be raised, a question of epistemology asking whether we are actually equipped to know God. Starting with what our senses tell us, with how the universe appears to us, we marvel at the unfolding beauty before us, and from there attribute to it a *First Cause*, even echoing what St. Anselm said about *that than which nothing greater can be thought of*; nonetheless, the knowledge of God remains inaccessible to us. “Though the universe is a reflection of God, it bears no resemblance to God, for between the Infinite and the finite there is no comparative relation.”²⁴ The gap, the separation, the distance between the Infinite and the finite is one great divide and there is no way to bridge, reconcile, or even mediate the two. There simply is no middle ground between man and God. The gap is just too great, too incomprehensible, to mediate; to bridge them would be folly. We may take the syllogism of Aristotle and consider the minor premise, major premise and conclusion; between the two premises there ought to be a middle term that helps lead the argument to a valid conclusion. But such a case is simply not applicable to God. There is no middle term that can be used to connect the finite to the Infinite! Middle terms are possible only when one is dealing with finite objects. Therefore, our logic will never be sufficient, will always be incomplete, if we use it to reach God in any way.

How then are we able to apprehend God, if at all we can? Cusa shows us that the true organ of apprehension is through the *intellectual vision* (*visio intellectualis*). This *intellectual vision* is not the same as our logic, which is always a mediate process. Cusa's *intellectual vision* is an immediate and a direct seeing! There are no steps to be climbed, no handbook or guide to be observed; rather, we have here an instant seeing. This *intellectual vision* is not a product of reason and rationalization, not a syllogistic process, but a seeing that happens instantaneously, at once! To be able to see God is not merely an act of the eye, the sense of sight, but rather it is seeing with the mind! “To this end, the mind must abandon, or transcend, its sensible and intellectual operations; but it must ascend even higher by abandoning, or transcending, its very self.”²⁵ The *intellectual vision*, then, arrives at an anchorage, a steady platform that allows for a vision of God that is not coming from any traditional synthesis, but is in fact a confluence of opposites or what Cusa calls the *coincidentia*

oppositorum! This coincidence is a method used by Cusa as “a way of viewing and of solving problems from the standpoint of infinity.”²⁶

In the *Docta Ignorantia* the coincidence is seen in three different divisions. Of particular interest in this research is the first division which is “used to explain the ideas of the absolute maximum, the absolute infinite line, the Trinity, the maximum triangle, the infinite maximum measure.”²⁷ In other words, it undertakes a close examination of the idea of God. How can this be done coming from a finite mind? This is where Cusa applies his *intellectual vision* and his examination of the Being of God is actually beyond any actual and possible examinations and appropriations. The conclusion of such a work leads to the *coincidentia oppositorum* or the unity of opposites.

In the second division on the *Maximum Contractum*, Cusa tried “to make intelligible the unity and distinction between God as the absolute maximum and the universe as ‘contracted’ maximum.”²⁸ God is seen as the absolute maximum and that, by implication, means that nothing is greater than God nor *can there ever be*. He is the ultimate and absolute, while the contracted maximum is only derived from it! The universe is contracted or limited and not absolute because it comes from the absolute which is God, the absolute maximum. “All things may be said to be differentiated or contracted within the world’s unity, the *universum*, but all exist antecedently as one in God and proceed by contraction to individual and multiple existence, subject to materiality and otherness.”²⁹ The world, in short, is a limited maximum, something created and finite.

The scope of Cusa’s work that is relevant to this research has to do with the *intellectual vision* as the proper means to attain knowledge of the Absolute Maximum from which all things are derived. Let the discussion on Cusa temporarily be suspended here as we proceed to the next philosopher who will illumine our inquiry into wisdom.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

As stated in the Introduction, Martin Heidegger revisited the question of *Being* in his primordial work, *Being and Time*. According to Vladislav Suvak, “Heidegger is seeking after the ‘original essence’ of truth by way of a radical ‘de-construction’ of traditional metaphysical concepts (or theories) and, therefore, he does not want to formulate

any alternative 'new theory' or 'criterion' of truth."³⁰ Heidegger did not intend to draft a new model of truth; instead, he recognized the traditional ontological accounts of the truth and re-examined them. In the process he was able to arrive at a possible way to view the truth using the unconcealment (*aletheia*) of what he calls *Dasein*. Thus, Heidegger introduced the term *Dasein*, referring to Being as *Sein* which could at the same time be the individual human person fully aware of his being in the world. "Being-in-the-world is a fundamental characteristic of *Dasein* and co-original with this openness to its own Being is an openness to other beings as well as the Being of other beings."³¹ The acknowledgment of this first existential notion of *Dasein* as a being that is in the world actually brings us to the explanation of *Da* that is attached to the term *Sein*. "Da-sein is literally 'Da', or place, where 'Sein' is disclosed."³²

Now, to be a *Being* disclosed in the world does not only refer to a mere object or an entity in the world like how a stone is found on the side of the road or a chair is placed among all the other chairs in a classroom for fifty students. To be *Dasein* as a being-in-the-world is to be conscious of my own existence as an unfolding of experiences in the world where I am conscious of my own project. This project is an on-going process that is being carried out by myself as I continue to live my life in the world. At the same time, this *Dasein* as a being-in-the-world is also conscious not just of the self as thrown into the world, but, most importantly, of a being-with others. That I am not an isolated case, that I am not a single entity, that I am an entity amongst all other entities is a fact of *Dasein*. This fact highlights the ontical priority of the question of *Dasein* in the sense that it focuses on *Dasein* as one among other entities in the world.³³ In spite of that, *Dasein* is also ontologically prior because its very Being is an issue for itself. "Insofar as Being constitutes what is asked about, and insofar as Being means the Being of beings, being themselves turn out to be what is *interrogated* in the question of Being."³⁴

Acknowledging that *Dasein* is aware both on the one hand of one's own unfolding and on the other hand of the existence of other entities in the world, and thus to be in constant dynamics with the 'they', allows for a certain consciousness and cautions about the possibility of fallenness (*Verfallen*). This fallenness is due to the constant mingling

and association with idleness that weakens the truth of *Dasein*. This preoccupation with the crowd diminishes the authenticity of *Dasein*. “Inauthenticity does not mean anything like Being-no-longer-in-the-world, but amounts rather to a quite distinctive kind of Being-in-the-world—the kind which is completely fascinated by the ‘world’ and by the *Dasein*-with of Others in the ‘they’.”³⁵ Thus, to be is never to be swallowed and consumed by the crowd or the nameless and faceless majority. To be *Dasein* is to struggle constantly in one’s being thrown in the world, always to seek to participate in authentic discourse and not in the groundlessness of idle talk and gossip, in other words, to take care of one’s *thrownness*. From here, we can assume two things that are essential to the interpretation of *Dasein*: “That the existential-ontological interpretation of the phenomenon of truth is (1) that truth, in the most primordial sense, is *Dasein*’s disclosedness, to which the uncoveredness of entities within-the-world belongs; and (2) that *Dasein* is equiprimordially both in the truth and untruth.”³⁶ Truth in this sense is found in the very nature of *Dasein*’s unconcealedness that allows for the truth to reveal itself and for the possibility of untruth by way of fallenness as a part of one’s *thrownness*.

Here, the concept of truth is the focus of Heidegger. Is it just the same as the *logos* which normally refers to a word or a concept or a thought? Is truth the same as a mere conformity of judgements and conventions to states of affairs as implied in traditional appropriations? For Heidegger, truth is not equal merely to the *logos* as a concept or thought, nor does it simply have to do with judgments, but rather truth has something to do with discourse or meaningful talk. In this light, we consider truth as something related to a self-revelation. “As Heidegger interprets Greek term for truth, *aletheia*, as having the etymological sense of ‘dis-closing’, ‘un-covering’, ‘dis-covering’, ‘revealing’, that is, “making manifest that which in some sense lies hidden” (Heidegger 1927, 56-57; 33), the primordial meaning of *logos* is ‘letting an entity be seen from itself.’”³⁷ Thus, for Heidegger, to consider truth is to broaden the mere intention of *logos* which allows for the possibility of the hiddenness of thought as it gets passed along in the process of everyday exchange and encounter with the world. Instead, Heidegger intends to draw in the more basic possibility and emerging of this truth through a revelation. “Heidegger therefore proposes to broaden the

concept of truth as *logos*, which is the way of comporting oneself to cover things up, to include the primordial uncoveredness, in the sense of *aletheia*.”³⁸

Conclusion

This research does not put forth a life-changing view of wisdom, neither does it intend to provide a new definition of or a fresh framework for wisdom. Rather, it attempts to retrace what these three different traditions in philosophy say about truth, reality, and being. Taken as a whole, wisdom is more than the mere possession of knowledge or the technical capability to turn the world into a ready fix. Wisdom is also not about seeing the world in the light of having a ‘fallback’ figure that can somehow cushion the struggle of the individual and the rest of the world with the different entanglements and states of affairs of being.

Although the dialogue between Śvetaketu and Uddalaka Āruni attempts to attain an ontological and epistemic certainty about the reality of the world and our existence, the *Chandogya Upanishad* concludes not with an objective certainty but with the factual recognition and consciousness of an absolute unity beyond any dichotomy and conceptualization. The proclamation of *Tat Tvam Asi* (That Thou Art!) points to the self as the key that opens up a fountain of insights about what it means to be. In this manner, there is the dissolution of any dichotomy that would clutter the mind and hinder the oneness of reality. This seeing of oneness is the Hindu ideal of wisdom. There are no Brahman and Ātman in isolation from each other; there is only the direct seeing of One identity.

Nicholas of Cusa is perhaps the only one in this study who points at an *Absolute Maximum*. Nonetheless, his view requires an abandonment, a nod on the inaccessibility of whatever shred of knowledge one might think one is in possession of. Such an abandonment amounts to the realization that no knowledge, no method, no grounding will in any way enable man to stand on his own intellect and reason. In other words, Cusa anchors his views on the wisdom of unknowing. One simply cannot know the transcendental divine. Man’s innate capabilities would be all for naught if used as tools to unveil, understand, or prove the existence of the Divine.

Thus, Cusa's *intellectual vision* uses not whatever knowledge is inherent in man but rather voluntarily rejects and replaces this possibility of knowledge with flat ignorance; only then can one be on the way to being learned. This acknowledgement of one's lack of knowledge is seen as wisdom! Indeed, it re-echoes the words of Socrates: to know that I do not know! To know that I am ignorant is the pinnacle of wisdom. To know that I know nothing is wisdom. To accept one's ignorance is to make one undoubtedly wise! Cusa's *intellectual vision*, then, is the heart of wisdom. It points out a seeing that is beyond intellectualization and logic, a kind of seeing that surpasses such methods and instead becomes an attitude of being.

Heidegger's revisiting of the question of *Being* leads to the meaning of truth as *aletheia*, as unveiling or unconcealment; it is also the path that clears the way for wisdom. To be *Dasein* is to be fully aware of the possibilities of being human. To be aware of myself as my own unfinished project and to constantly edge, inch by inch, everyday to the realization of *being-in-the-world*—that is *Dasein*. To work out the possibilities of being human and at the same time to acknowledge that I am always in the company of others, and then, in spite of this *being-with*, to be able to glean my individuality and pursue what it means to be as myself with care and authenticity—such is wisdom!

Thus, wisdom is not about the possession of knowledge, not even the ability to use this knowledge in a responsibly practical manner. Wisdom is not the reliance on a higher power or a transcendent being; it is more than the mere divide that separates the mundane from the divine. This paper wishes to conclude that wisdom is about the virtue of reverence. "Reverence does not stop at any of the boundaries that human beings make among themselves; reverence overlooks differences of culture, social class, age, and even gender."³⁹ This seeming forgotten virtue of reverence that is sometimes clouded by the things that are present at hand should be revived and reinvigorated. Reverence should be meaningfully reflected when we look at reality as a whole, in moments when we are caught in awe convinced of the presence of an Absolute Maximum, and in times when, aware of everything that we are, we commune in the revelation of the clearing of our Being. That is wisdom!

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ENDNOTES

¹ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1, 1, 980a.

² Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarie and E. Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 31.

³ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁴ Mark Wrathall, *Heidegger and Concealment. Truth, Language, and History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1.

⁵ Manuel Velasquez, *Philosophy: A Text with Readings* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997), 31.

⁶ Ramakrishna Puligandla, *Fundamentals of Indian Philosophy* (New Delhi: D.K. Printworld Ltd., 1994), 217.

⁷ Chandradhar Sharma, *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy* (Delhi: MotilalBanarsidass Publishers, 1987), 17.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ The ten popular Upanishads are, *Isa*, *Kena*, *Katha*, *Praśna*, *Mundaka*, *Māndūkya*, *Chāndogya*, *Bṛhadāranyaka*, *Aitereya*, and *Taittirīya*.

¹⁰ Patrick Olivelle, *The Early Upanishads* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 166-169.

¹¹ *Upaniṣads*, trans. Patrick Olivelle, (Oxford University Press, 1996), 148.

¹² Alfredo P. Co, *Across the Ancient Philosophical World Essays in Comparative Philosophy* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2015), 9.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (London: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁶ H. Lawrence Bond, "Introduction," in *Nicholas of Cusa Selected Writings*, trans. H. Lawrence Bond (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 17.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ "The splendid achievement of Greek thought was cradled in Ionia; and if Ionia was the cradle of Greek cosmology, Miletus was the cradle of Greek philosophy." Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy Greece & Rome: from the Pre-Socratics to Plotinus* Vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1962), 17. Thales, the first of the Ionians and considered the first Western philosopher, says that the *Urstoff* or basic stuff of the universe is water; Anaximander says it is the *Apeiron*; and Anaxagoras claims it to be air. The idea behind the basic stuff is that in spite of the plurality of the things in the world, there is that one substance that has caused everything in the world to exist. "Consequently we might perhaps call the Ionian cosmologies instances of *abstract materialism*: we can already discern in them the notion of unity in difference and of difference as entering into a unity: and this is a philosophic notion." *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁹ Frederick C. Copleston, *A History of Philosophy from Augustine to Duns Scotus*, Vol. 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1962), 2.

²⁰ Jasper Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Materialism: Text, Translation and Interpretative Study of De Visio Dei* (Minneapolis, Banning Press, 1996), 21.

²¹ Jasper Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa On Learned Ignorance: A Translation and an Appraisal of De Docta Ignorantia* (Banning Press, 1985), 173.

²² H. Lawrence Bond, "Introduction," in *Nicholas of Cusa Selected Writings*, 18.

²³ Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa On Learned Ignorance*, 173.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

²⁵ Hopkins, *Nicholas of Cusa's Dialectical Materialism*, 8.

²⁶ H. Lawrence Bond, "Introduction," in *Nicholas of Cusa Selected Writings*, 22.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 23.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Vladislav Suvak, "The Essence of Truth (aletheia) and the Western Tradition in the Thought of Heidegger and Patocka," In *Thinking Fundamentals*, IWM Junior Visiting Fellows Conferences, Vol. 9: Vienna 2000.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ "An inquiry about what it means to be is called ontological, whereas an inquiry about an entity is called ontic." Michael Gelven, *A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time* (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1989), 25.

³⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 26.

³⁵ Ibid., 220.

³⁶ Janis Koskela, "Truth as Unconcealment in Heidegger's *Being and Time*," *Minerva An International Journal of Philosophy* 16 (2012): 121.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 123.

³⁹ Paul Woodruff, *Reverence: Renewing a Forgotten Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 84.