

## "The Religion of the Future" and Vedānta:

### The Significance of Referring to Primary Sources

In his work "The Religion of the Future," Unger categorizes various philosophical perspectives under the term "Overcoming the World" (hereafter referred to as OW). However, this approach presents a significant issue, as Unger puts forth several metaphysical and epistemological claims about OW without clearly specifying which of these distinct philosophies align with his arguments. Notably, Unger includes Vedānta under the umbrella of OW without distinguishing between two closely related yet distinct traditions within Vedānta: Advaita and Dvaita Vedāntas.

This lack of differentiation is problematic because Unger predominantly critiques the views of Advaita Vedānta, which, while sharing similarities with Buddhism, are not entirely synonymous. Dvaita Vedānta, on the other hand, holds positions that contradict many of Unger's assumptions about Vedānta. Consequently, Unger's presentation can mislead readers into assuming that Advaita and Dvaita Vedāntas are identical. While this paper will not delve into the motivations behind Unger's approach, it aims to introduce and elucidate some distinctive features within the Dvaita Vedānta tradition. These unique aspects shed light on why Unger's critique of Vedānta, in favor of his vision for a future religion, may be problematic and biased.

The Vedānta tradition's foundational texts include the Upaniṣads, the Vedānta-Sūtras, and the Bhagavad-Gītā. While the Sūtras serve as a concise and highly philosophical summary of the Upaniṣads' teachings, the Bhagavad-Gītā stands out as a

more accessible text, which will be the primary focus of my analysis in this paper. Thus, throughout this paper, the term "Gītā" will signify a Vedāntic interpretation that contradicts Unger's understanding and presentation of Vedānta. Additionally, I will provide endnotes for those interested in specific references to chapters and verses from the Bhagavad-Gītā. In these endnotes, "Bg" will refer to the Bhagavad-Gītā, and "Iu" to the Īśā Upaniṣad. The numerical references will indicate chapters and verses. For instance, "Bg.14.8" corresponds to Bhagavad-Gītā, chapter 14, verse 8.

It is worth noting that various commentators on the Bhagavad-Gītā exist, each with their perspectives and disagreements. In this paper, I will quote from a literal translation of the Gītā authored by Howard Resnick, a scholar with a Ph.D. in Sanskrit and Indian Studies from the Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. I aim to demonstrate how this translation diverges from the teachings of Advaita Vedānta, the Vedāntic tradition that Unger primarily critiques.

As previously highlighted, a vital issue with Unger's characterization of Vedānta lies in his grouping of this tradition with others possessing distinct philosophies. In Unger's own words, he contends that "the Indic Vedānta, the Upaniṣads, early Buddhism, and early Daoism represent the clearest instances of this religious and philosophical path."<sup>1</sup> However, it is essential to clarify that Vedānta and the Upaniṣads do not represent disparate religious and philosophical paths. Instead, Vedānta serves as the scholarly inquiry into the theology and philosophy of the Upaniṣads. In this context,

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<sup>1</sup> Unger, *The Religion of the Future*, 62

the term Vedānta signifies the exploration of the ultimate goal (anta) of the Veda, namely, the Upaniṣads. Vedānta itself has two primary and distinct traditions: Advaita and Dvaita. Advaita delves into the theology and philosophy of the Upaniṣads, positing the Ultimate Reality (referred to as God, although not without its complexities) as impersonal. This particular facet of the Vedānta tradition is the focal point of Unger's criticism. On the other hand, Dvaita within Vedānta examines the theology and philosophy of the Upaniṣads while conceiving the Ultimate Reality as personal. Unfortunately, Unger's work fails to acknowledge or differentiate Dvaita from Advaita within the Vedānta tradition, misrepresenting Vedānta's diversity and nuances in his book.

Moreover, considering Schopenhauer's philosophy as the primary Western expression of Vedānta implies prioritizing secondary sources over primary ones in studying the Vedānta tradition. This is precisely the approach taken by Unger when he states, in his own words, that "the teaching of Schopenhauer is [the] consummate expression [of OW], both as metaphysics and as practical philosophy."<sup>2</sup> In essence, Unger replaces Schopenhauer's secondary-source interpretation of Vedānta with what the primary sources of the Vedānta tradition assert about themselves. It is important to note that Schopenhauer's understanding of Vedānta was shaped by his studies under the guidance of the Indologist Friedrich Majer and the philosopher Karl Friedrich Christian Krause, both of whom possessed knowledge of Sanskrit. Schopenhauer's grasp of Vedānta primarily relied on a Persian version of the Upaniṣads translated into

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<sup>2</sup> Unger, 62

Latin, which was the version Schopenhauer had access to.<sup>3</sup> Notably, Schopenhauer himself did not possess the ability to read Sanskrit. Consequently, Schopenhauer's interpretation of Vedānta is rooted in secondary sources. Therefore, the significance of referring to primary Vedāntic sources in the analyses presented below cannot be overstated.

Unger's discussion of the ontology of time concerning Vedānta introduces misconceptions regarding its metaphysical and epistemological aspects. In his own words, he states that "the decisive common element [of these philosophies] is denial of the ultimate reality of time."<sup>4</sup> However, it is essential to clarify that the Vedāntic teachings presented in the Gītā do not align with this assertion. In the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa, who embodies the Ultimate Reality, affirms, "Of the letters, I am the letter A, and of compounds, I am the pair. I alone am unperishing Time, I the all-facing Creator."<sup>5</sup> This implies that time is real, albeit temporary, and cannot be considered unreal by being unperishing.<sup>i</sup> In other words, time possesses a genuine existence, albeit impermanent. Hence, the Gītā does not deny the ultimate reality of time. Therefore, it is inappropriate to categorize the Gītā alongside philosophies that deny the reality of time without distinguishing its unique metaphysical and epistemological claims from others. This is precisely what Unger has failed to do by not discerning between Advaita and Dvaita Vedāntas, of which the Gītā stands as a primary source.

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<sup>3</sup> Wicks, 9

<sup>4</sup> Unger, 62

<sup>5</sup> Resnick, 186

In addition to failing to distinguish these traditions accurately, Unger asserts further similarities between OW traditions and Western religious mysticism based on their inclination towards an impersonal concept of God. In his own words, he suggests that "the overcoming of the world resonates in the mystical countercurrents of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam."<sup>6</sup> However, it is essential to highlight that the Gītā, in contrast, advocates for the concept of a personal God. In the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa explicitly states, "[those] who know Me as the Ultimate Person, know All, and devote themselves to Me with all their being."<sup>7</sup> Hence, it becomes clear that only the Advaita tradition within Vedānta leans towards the idea of an impersonal God.<sup>ii</sup> This distinction is vital in understanding the nuanced differences between these traditions and should be considered when drawing comparisons to Western religious mysticism.

Moreover, Unger asserts that embracing the idea of an impersonal God can lead to apathy in the face of human suffering and a tendency to negate the self. However, in the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa imparts the wisdom that "one should uplift the self by the self; one should not degrade the self... Self is a friend to that self by whom the self alone is conquered; but that very self can work as an enemy, due to non-self's enmity."<sup>8</sup> In essence, this teaching emphasizes that one should not remain indifferent to one's suffering or the suffering of others. Instead, they should confront and conquer the internal factors contributing to such suffering. Besides, the Gītā does not promote the denial of the self, as Unger suggests is presupposed by the Vedānta tradition. To engage in self-

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<sup>6</sup> Unger, 62

<sup>7</sup> Resnick, 201

<sup>8</sup> Resnick, 172

improvement and self-transformation, there must inherently be a self. Thus, the Gītā's teachings align with constructive self-development rather than self-negation, refuting Unger's claims about the Vedānta tradition.<sup>iii</sup>

Unger's next series of misplaced premises revolves around metaphysical and epistemological claims concerning the nature of time and the differentiation among individual selves. He contends that the objectives of OW traditions are realized "on the basis of a devaluation of the reality of time and of the distinction among beings, including the distinction among selves."<sup>9</sup> However, it is essential to clarify that the Gītā neither diminishes the significance of time nor disregards the distinctions among beings or individual selves. To facilitate a more precise discussion, it is beneficial to introduce Vedāntic definitions from the Gītā, given that Unger does not specify his own. In this context, a "self" signifies a spiritual being,<sup>iv</sup> while a "being" refers to an embodied self.<sup>v</sup> The term "embodied" conveys the idea of a self that has become entangled within a physical body with both gross<sup>vi</sup> (comprising flesh and bones) and subtle<sup>vii</sup> (comprising the faculties of mind, intelligence, and ego) characteristics. Henceforth, when addressing beings and selves below, I will adopt these Vedāntic definitions, as Unger has not provided his own. This clarification sets the stage for a more precise exploration of Unger's claims in the ensuing discussion.

Furthermore, it is crucial to distinguish between Unger's earlier assertion that OW traditions deny the reality of time and his present claim that OW traditions devalue the

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<sup>9</sup> Unger, 63

reality of time. Unger's statements can be perplexing because the traditions he has grouped under OW do not universally make identical claims about the nature of time, as he presupposes. Therefore, it is possible that while one tradition within the OW category might deny the reality of time, another could potentially devalue the reality of time. In the previous discussion, I have cited the Gītā, affirming that it does not deny the reality of time. I argue that it does not devalue the reality of time either. In the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa asserts, "Never did I not exist, nor you... nor indeed shall we ever not be."<sup>10</sup> This statement underscores that different beings exist within the framework of time. It becomes evident that one cannot devalue the reality of time if time's existence is essential for diverse beings to exist. For something to exist, it must exist within the dimension of time; thus, time is necessary. Besides, one cannot undermine the significance of time if beings are to exist because time provides the context for their existence.<sup>viii</sup> Given that beings undeniably exist, one cannot assert that Vedānta denies or devalues the realities of time, beings, and individual selves, as Unger claims. I will delve further into this topic in subsequent discussions.

Next, Unger's flawed premises attempt to elucidate the concept of a universal being that he attributes to OW traditions. Unger posits that "the metaphysical idea informing [OW's] approach to existence is the affirmation of a universal being lying behind the manifest world of time, distinction, and individuality."<sup>11</sup> It is essential to highlight that the various traditions grouped under OW do not share uniform metaphysical ideas,

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<sup>10</sup> Resnick, 156

<sup>11</sup> Unger, 63

thus rendering his assumption of their commonality questionable from the outset. Additionally, Unger's failure to provide clear definitions for the terms he employs in this premise introduces ambiguity, particularly regarding the terms "universal," "being," "world," "time," "distinction," and "individuality."

Now, let us delve into the concept of a universal being. In the *Gītā*, when Kṛṣṇa reveals his universal form to Arjuna, he declares, "Behold now the world entire in one place, in my Body, with the moving and the unmoving and whatever else you wish to behold."<sup>12</sup> This passage challenges Unger's assertion that Vedānta leans toward the idea of an impersonal God. Kṛṣṇa explicitly states that all living and non-living entities emanate from his person. Consequently, it does not logically follow from this verse that a universal being must necessarily be impersonal; a universal being can indeed be personal. Besides, as the *Gītā* unfolds, Kṛṣṇa later affirms that all beings are essentially persons. They possess individuality and personhood. Therefore, Unger should avoid assuming that a being, merely by being universal, loses its nature and must consequently be deemed impersonal. The universality of a being does not negate its potential for personhood. We will explore this theme in greater depth as our discussion progresses.

Another misplaced premise arises as Unger contends that "the philosophy and theology of the overcoming of the world tell us... that time, distinction, and individuality are unreal, or that they are less real than they seem to be."<sup>13</sup> As previously

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<sup>12</sup> Resnick, 187

<sup>13</sup> Unger, 63

discussed, the Gītā neither denies nor diminishes the reality of time. According to the Gītā, time is real but temporary, and its temporariness does not render it unreal. Similarly, the Gītā rejects the notion that the individual soul's identity is unreal or less real than it appears. In the Gītā, it is elucidated that the eternal soul takes on temporary bodies, experiencing the stages of childhood, youth, and old age.<sup>14</sup> Kṛṣṇa reinforces this by asserting that "the soul is never born and never dies, nor having existed will it ever not be."<sup>15</sup> In essence, the Gītā's teachings affirm that the soul's individuality is neither unreal nor less real than it appears. It is the transitory body that undergoes birth, death, aging, and disease, giving the appearance of being less real than it truly is.<sup>ix</sup> As an eternal truth, the soul's individuality persists and is thus undeniably real.<sup>x</sup> In light of these perspectives from the Gītā, Unger's claim that Vedānta suggests that the world, time, and individuality are unreal or less real than they seem does not hold.

One of the consequences of Unger's misplaced premises is that, since the Gītā does not assert the claims attributed to Vedānta traditions as he suggests, it may align with some of the criticisms Unger levels against Advaita Vedānta and Buddhism. For instance, the Gītā concurs with Unger's observation that "our experience is the experience of the reality of time in this one real-world... in which there is an enduring structure of different kinds of things, and the individual mind is embodied in an individual organism."<sup>16</sup> As previously highlighted, the Gītā unequivocally acknowledges the reality of time and, consequently, the world's reality. Furthermore, it

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<sup>14</sup> Resnick, 156

<sup>15</sup> Resnick, 156

<sup>16</sup> Unger, 63

corroborates the notion of the individual mind being encapsulated within a unique physical organism. In light of these aspects found in the Gītā, it becomes apparent that the text does not align with Unger's claims attributed to Advaita Vedānta and Buddhism. Instead, it appears to affirm some of the points raised by Unger, thereby challenging the generalized assertions about Vedānta traditions.

Let us explore how the Gītā elucidates the structure of diverse entities worldwide. In the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa explains, "earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, reason, and egotism: this is My separated eight-fold nature... I am the origin and dissolution of the entire cosmos."<sup>17</sup> In essence, this statement suggests that the enduring diversity and structure of various elements in the world persist because they emanate from the eternal Person through His multifaceted energies. These elements encompass a variety of entities due to their manifestation through the diverse energies inherent in the eternal Person's nature.<sup>xi</sup> Consequently, Unger's perspectives align more closely with those presented in the Gītā than the tenets of Advaita Vedānta. The reason for Unger's decision to conflate Dvaita and Advaita Vedānta, despite many of his views aligning with those of the Gītā against Advaita, falls beyond the scope of this paper.

Now, let us address Unger's misconception regarding the nature and purpose of the Vedas, a critical issue. In Unger's own words, he states that "the radical versions of [OW] (as we have it, for example, in the Vedas or in Schopenhauer) deny time, distinction, and individuality altogether."<sup>18</sup> As previously discussed, considering

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<sup>17</sup> Resnick, 176

<sup>18</sup> Unger, 63

Schopenhauer as the ultimate spokesperson for Vedānta implies relying on secondary source material, even when primary sources may present divergent perspectives. Furthermore, the Gītā does not uphold the denial of time, distinction, and individuality. Here, I aim to shed light on a consequence of Unger's claims that sharply contradict the Gītā's teachings. In the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa proclaims, "From me come memory, knowledge, and forgetting. By all Vedas, I alone am to be known. I made Vedānta, and I alone know the Veda."<sup>19</sup> This statement suggests that from the perspective of the Gītā, which is a primary source of Vedānta, one cannot infer that the Vedas deny the personality and individuality of individuals.<sup>xii</sup> If the Vedas indeed negated the personality and individuality of individuals, Kṛṣṇa could not claim to be what he asserts in the Gītā: the personal source and essence of the Vedas. This insight contradicts Unger's assertion that OW traditions, including Vedānta, wholly reject the notions of time, distinction, and individuality.

Nonetheless, Unger persists in making unwarranted assumptions regarding the Vedas, such as portraying them as a radical embodiment of the metaphysical and epistemological outlooks of the disparate traditions he has grouped under OW. Firstly, it is essential to clarify that the Vedas do not consist of philosophical treatises that articulate metaphysical and epistemological denials of time, distinction, and individuality. Instead, the Vedas are a collection of poetic verses rich in symbolism and imagery.<sup>xiii</sup> The philosophical framework of the Upaniṣads emerges as an attempt to decipher the profound poetry found in the Vedas. This philosophical inquiry is

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<sup>19</sup> Resnick, 201

complemented by non-philosophical texts known as the Brāhmaṇas and the Āraṇyakas, which serve as ancillary works. The philosophy of the Upaniṣads formulates metaphysical and epistemological assertions grounded in the interpretations of those who grappled with the poetic language of the Vedas. Vedānta, as I have previously emphasized, is the systematic exploration of the philosophical principles within the Upaniṣads. Consequently, the Vedas cannot be considered a radical version of OW because they do not represent comprehensive philosophies that systematically establish metaphysical or epistemological claims. Instead, they serve as the poetic foundation upon which the philosophical edifice of Vedānta and other related traditions is constructed.

Next, Unger raises specific questions and concerns that offer an opportunity for more substantial criticism of his assumed understanding of Vedānta. One of his questions is, "Why has unitary and timeless being become manifest in divided and time-bound experience?"<sup>20</sup> Unger contends that we may not have answers to these questions, but several Vedāntin scholars have responded. In essence, this question probes how Kṛṣṇa, as the unitary and timeless being depicted in the Gītā, manifests within the world. In the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa elucidates that he appears in every age to "deliver the righteous, destroy the wicked, and restore dharma."<sup>21</sup> This manifestation occurs to reestablish dharma, the eternal function of souls, which is to recognize and realize their

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<sup>20</sup> Unger, 63

<sup>21</sup> Resnick, 165

true spiritual nature. Unger seems to presuppose that a unitary being might lose unity upon manifesting in the world.

However, as the Īśā Upaniṣad affirms, this eternal and supreme unitary being, being complete in itself, does not lose its completeness even as it manifests all that we perceive and experience. Besides, in the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa declares, "I am the source of all; from Me, all emanates."<sup>22</sup> In other words, the Vedāntic unitary being, from which everything originates, maintains its inherent completeness even after manifesting all that exists.<sup>xiv</sup> Thus, Unger's presupposition that the unitary being loses its completeness upon manifestation does not align with the tenets of Vedānta.

Unger asserts that the next issue he wishes to explore remains unanswered, primarily due to his reliance on Schopenhauer as his source of knowledge about Vedānta. Unger claims, "No philosophical statement of this worldview (not even Schopenhauer's) has ever provided a developed account of why or how underlying being becomes expressed in phenomena that generates such illusions."<sup>23</sup> However, as I have demonstrated, the Gītā offers answers to these questions. Additionally, it is essential to scrutinize the assumption that such an underlying being generates illusions. According to Vedānta, as articulated by Resnick, "illusion occurs when we identify the 'I' with a changing mortal body instead of with our true eternal self."<sup>24</sup> Illusions arise because the soul mistakenly identifies itself with the physical body. This fundamental misidentification, as outlined in the Gītā, serves as the basis for all other illusions that

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<sup>22</sup> Resnick, 184

<sup>23</sup> Unger, 64

<sup>24</sup> Resnick, 10

subsequently manifest. Therefore, all three primary sources of the Vedānta tradition – the Upaniṣads, the Vedānta-Sutras, and the Gītā – offer philosophical explanations for why and how an underlying being becomes expressed in phenomena that lead to these illusions. As previously discussed, I have also elucidated how such an underlying being manifests in the world. Consequently, Unger's claim, which relies on Schopenhauer's interpretation, does not withstand scrutiny when considered in the context of Vedānta's primary sources.

Unger's next issue pertains to questioning Vedānta's ontology of the world. He queries, "Why does there exist not just a world but a world that appears – at least to us – under an aspect contradicting its ultimate reality?"<sup>25</sup> As previously discussed, I have addressed how this world manifests from the underlying being. Now, let us delve into what causes this appearance of contradiction within the world. In the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa explicates that "goodness, passion, darkness – modes born of nature – bind the unchanging embodied in the body."<sup>26</sup> In simpler terms, the modes of nature in which the body operates, as a consequence of being inhabited by an embodied soul, influence our perception of the world and our bodies.<sup>xv</sup> Due to this influence, we tend to perceive the world and physical forms as reflecting our essential nature.

However, this perception is mistaken, as we are fundamentally spiritual beings. Once we recognize our true identity as eternal souls, we realize that the world appears contradictory to its ultimate reality. Much like our physical bodies, which are composed

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<sup>25</sup> Unger, 64

<sup>26</sup> Resnick, 197

of material elements, the world itself is constructed from matter. The apparent contradiction arises because of our misidentification with our physical bodies. The world's contradictory appearance becomes evident when we understand our true nature as souls. These contradictions stem from our misinterpretation of what we are—eternal souls—by mistakenly identifying ourselves with the physical bodies we temporarily inhabit. This misidentification gives rise to the illusions and contradictions we perceive. Therefore, the world appears contradictory due to our erroneous identification, and clarity emerges once we recognize our genuine spiritual nature as souls.

Unger proceeds to present a series of negative statements about OW. First, he asserts that in OW, "we dare not attribute to unified being the intentions of a person."<sup>27</sup> However, as previously highlighted, the Gītā supports attributing intentions to Unger's unified being. Vedāntin scholars have equated this unified being with various divine personas, such as Śiva, Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa, and Kṛṣṇa.<sup>xvi</sup> Next, Unger admonishes that "we are separated from this ultimate reality by the abyss of embodiment and by all the illusions accompanying it." Yet, the Gītā offers a different perspective. Kṛṣṇa advises those who seek to reach Him to "fix your mind in Me alone, invest your reason in Me. You shall henceforth dwell in Me alone, no doubt."<sup>28</sup> This guidance implies that although we are indeed separated by the abyss of being spirit souls confined within material bodies and consequently subject to numerous illusions, the study of Vedānta

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<sup>27</sup> Unger, 64

<sup>28</sup> Resnick, 192

provides a pathway to transcend this cycle. Hence, Unger's negative concept of separation does not necessarily entail a fatal inability to surmount the divide between embodied existence and the ultimate reality.<sup>xvii</sup> The Gītā, in alignment with Vedānta teachings, suggests that such a crossing-over is possible through the correct understanding and spiritual practice.

Furthermore, Unger critiques Vedānta's ontology of consciousness, asserting that in OW, "our most reliable connection with the one being and the one mind is the experience of consciousness, understood to soar above the divisions that are imposed on this ultimate reality by the incarnation of universal mind in individual bodies."<sup>29</sup> This statement rests on several assumptions that merit examination. Firstly, Unger assumes that the one being and the one mind cannot be personal. As previously discussed, I have noted how the Gītā argues in favor of a personal aspect to the one being, countering this assumption. Secondly, Unger does not clearly define what he means by the term "mind" in this context. However, according to Vedānta, the mind is a subtle faculty of the body. Therefore, it cannot be a property of the universal being, as it is material, while the one being is spiritual and beyond matter.

Regarding consciousness soaring above divisions, Resnick explains that "in clear consciousness, we realize that the soul simply witnesses the motions and acts of a material body that covers the soul, much like clothes cover the body."<sup>30</sup> In essence, consciousness is a symptom of the soul's presence within the body.<sup>xviii</sup> Consequently,

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<sup>29</sup> Unger, 64

<sup>30</sup> Resnick, 80

consciousness can transcend divisions that result from misidentifying with the body. Furthermore, Unger makes an error when he suggests the reincarnation of the universal mind in individual bodies. Reincarnation implies that a single being is born again in different bodies, but according to Vedānta, the universal being manifests itself in various bodies. This distinction has been previously established, with the Gītā serving as a testament to this concept.

Another misplaced statement about Vedānta arises when Unger questions, "Nothing in the experience of consciousness explains why universal mind should appear to us thus partitioned in the form of individual minds."<sup>31</sup> As previously discussed, I have clarified that the universal being does not reincarnate but manifests in various forms, maintaining unity throughout this process. Now, let us explore how this unified being enters individual minds, drawing from the teachings of the Gītā. In the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa states, "Of senses, I am mind, and of beings, I am consciousness."<sup>32</sup> This passage suggests that for Unger, the universal mind represented by Kṛṣṇa appears partitioned in the form of individual minds because Unger assumes that Kṛṣṇa loses his completeness when manifesting in individual minds.

However, according to the Gītā, our true nature is that of eternal souls, distinct from the material bodies we temporarily inhabit. Even if we consider Unger's conception of mind as spiritual, as he does not provide a precise definition, the Gītā maintains that this universal mind is the source of all. Therefore, we, as individuals, are integral parts

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<sup>31</sup> Unger, 64

<sup>32</sup> Resnick, 185

of this universal mind. One could argue that this inherent connection is why we can inquire into the nature of this universal mind in the first place. We possess the capacity to explore and understand it because we, as individuals, are inherently connected to and part of this universal mind.<sup>xix</sup> This perspective aligns with the teachings of the Gītā and provides a framework for understanding how the universal mind is present within individual minds without compromising its unity or completeness.

I could continue to address the numerous misleading statements made by Unger, which stem from (1) the mischaracterization of Vedānta, (2) the failure to distinguish between the varying metaphysical and epistemological claims within Advaita and Dvaita Vedānta, and (3) the reliance on Schopenhauer's account as the foundation for his understanding of "Indic Vedānta." It is essential to acknowledge that expecting Professor Unger to master every nuance of these complex philosophies may be unrealistic. However, this should not be an excuse for disseminating misleading information to students through his book.

In this paper, I have endeavored to provide essential explanations that demonstrate how the Dvaita tradition within Vedānta, mainly through the Bhagavad-Gītā, refutes many of Unger's claims concerning Vedānta. Additionally, I have highlighted instances where the Gītā aligns with specific criticisms that Unger directs towards Advaita Vedānta and Buddhism. Throughout this analysis, I have relied on a literal translation of the Bhagavad-Gītā, one of the three primary sources within the Vedānta tradition. It is worth noting that while my interpretations and analyses based on this literal translation may not find unanimous agreement among all Vedāntin scholars, I believe

that a significant portion of them would take issue with Professor Unger's sweeping generalizations of specific Vedāntic claims within the tradition. I have aimed to shed light on these complexities and encourage a more nuanced understanding of Vedānta and its diverse philosophical facets.

Therefore, Professor Unger's overarching conclusions regarding Vedānta lack a solid foundation. Given the unconvincing nature of his findings, his utilization of them to criticize Vedānta and advocate for his vision of a future religion may be perceived as biased. Through this paper, I have endeavored to elucidate certain aspects of Vedānta in order to provide students who engage with his book with a more stable and well-founded understanding of his pivotal concept for a future religion, one that rests on less precarious and more solid Vedāntic grounds.

## Endnotes

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- i Bg.10.33
- ii Bg.15.19
- iii Bg.6.5-6
- iv Bg.2.13
- v Bg.2.22
- vi Bg.3.39
- vii Bg.3.42
- viii Bg.2.12
- ix Bg.2.13
- x Bg.2.20
- xi Bg.7.5-6
- xii Bg.15.15
- xiii Bg.15.1
- xiv Bg.10.8
- xv Bg.14.5
- xvi Bg.11.52
- xvii Bg.12.8
- xviii Bg.13.33
- xix Bg.10.22

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