ON DEVENDRA NATH TIWARI'S *NATURE OF PHILOSOPHY, OBJECT AND ITS UTILITY IN DAILY LIFE*—A CRITIQUE

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Abstract: When we ask what disciplines such as science, history, or sociology are, we usually find fairly stable definitions, or at least a broad consensus among thinkers. The situation changes the moment we ask, "What is philosophy?" Here, things become considerably more difficult. The problem is not merely definitional; deep cultural and historical variations shape it and unsettle any easy answer. This is particularly striking in the case of philosophers themselves, who often claim a special capacity to reflect differently on a range of problems, yet remain divided on this most basic question. The present metaphilosophical review takes up this difficulty in a sustained manner. It does so through a close engagement with Nature of Philosophy: Object and Its Utility in Daily Life – A Critique (2024) and Dynamics of Language: the philosophy of the world of the words (2022) by Devendra Nath Tiwari (henceforth), a living Indian philosopher of language. Bhartṛhari's influence on his thinking is so strong that he wrote his popular book titled 'The Central Problems of Bhartṛhari's Philosophy of Language' (2008). I am familiar with his writings, so I will try to offer a precise view of his philosophy of language, with special reference to his Nature of Philosophy (2024). The discussion is deliberately dialogical. It not only offers a detailed reading of Tiwari's works that answers the preceding questions but also brings them into conversation with Immanuel Kant and with insights drawn from Advaita Vedānta and Nāgārjuna's dialectical method. This comparative engagement lets us examine more closely the adequacy of Tiwari's conception of philosophy, which offers a framework that is coherent and, to a considerable extent, sufficient within its own terms.

As our abstract suggests, we explore basic metaphilosophical questions, such as what philosophy is and why it matters in our daily lives. How should we define it? Is it possible to define it? Is it merely a speculative exercise confined to ivory towers, or does it carry the potential to transform our thought, conduct, and society? Can it offer insight into the persistent dilemmas of our age—such as ethical disorientation, epistemic confusion, emotional unrest, familial discord, and even global crises like terrorism and ecological collapse? Does philosophy belong solely to academic discourse, or does it hold within itself the seeds of personal healing, intellectual clarity, and social harmony? These are not rhetorical provocations, but genuine questions that lie at the heart of Tiwari's *Nature of Philosophy: Object and Its Utility in Daily Life – A Critique,* currently under review, which emerges from the conviction that philosophy, rightly understood and rightly practiced, is not an abstract indulgence but a cognitive discipline for philosophical reflection. Philosophy is a cognitive activity par excellence; it is cognitive reflection on problems, and the problems that flash by the intelligible being of language are the object of cognition. For Tiwari, a philosopher is one whose mind confronts problems that make him reflective, to solve them for clarity and determinate cognition of the concepts.

The book (2024) is quite unconventional in that it is bilingual, written in both Hindi and English, making it more appealing and accessible to a wider audience. It is divided into two sections and comprises 29 short chapters, each with a conclusion (pp. xi-xii). An interesting feature of the book is that it can be read either sequentially—

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from the first chapter to the last—or selectively, depending on the questions one brings to it. In this review, however, I approach the text selectively and thematically, offering a narratological account rather than a mechanical or strictly linear one.

To begin with, one of Tiwari's central theses, which becomes clearer by the end of this review article, challenges the widespread assumption in both Western and Indian philosophy that thought and language are separate, with language merely expressing thought. While reality may be independent of thought, a thought, as thought, is intelligibly real that "flashes in consciousness" (p. 40). Thought can relate equally to what exists and what does not exist, and therefore cannot be treated as a mere derivative of sensory input. Against the common view that reality is first perceived, then shaped into thought, and finally expressed through language, Tiwari resists reducing philosophical problems to a linear relation among language, thought, and reality. For him, engaging with multiple conceptions is not a diversion but the very method of philosophy, since understanding and analyzing any concept requires examining its different interpretations in terms of how they flash in the mind and how communication is accomplished. Clarity of concepts is essential to communication, and even ordinary language already conveys intelligible ideas of reality.

For Tiwari, the term "being" stands for what language expresses—ideas that are the intelligible existence of language and meaning as awareness in nature; intelligible beings are flashings of self-consciousness to which knowledge is confined. They are secondary beings, in contrast to primary or external existence, and are the objects of the senses. Intelligible beings flash in the instant present, and the mind can know only the beings' flashes in the present. According to Tiwari, memories and future predictions also flash in the present; thus, we know them only in the present. Thus, language and meaning become objects of cognition and, therefore, proper subjects of philosophical reflections; anything apart from this cannot meaningfully count as an object of philosophical inquiry. Philosophy, therefore, must concern itself with "intelligible beings," namely, the concepts analyzed into language and meaning as they arise non-differently in the flashings of awareness. This flash (*sampratyaya*) is not mediated by propositions or representations but is the object of cognition (p. 52). Language is not confined to a secondary vehicle of sound or script; it is awareness itself, and meaning is not prior to language but is revealed non-differently by the intelligible-being of language. He conclusively is of the view that—

> Unlike philosophers who treat language as a metaphor, we agree with N.S.S. Raman, who observes that language for philosophy is not cloaked by metaphors. A metaphor itself is regarded as in-built into the structure of language," and thus philosophy of language and analysis has direct concern with language as the flash of consciousness that is intelligible-being that expresses its meaning non-differently (p. 96).

On this view, Tiwari intends that meaning does not depend on mere use, convention, or reference to external entities, but on the natural fitness or capability (*śakti*) of language to express its meaning. Universals are not abstractions but intelligible forms flashed directly in cognition. Tiwari thus rejects propositions as an independent ontological category and maintains that all cognition occurs through language, which expresses and infuses meaning. Language, in this sense, is the autonomous ground of cognition, communication, and action. Accordingly, he resists the artificial separation of language, thought, meaning, and reality, given that any such division produces what he calls a "divided epistemology," where sensory cognition is opposed to supersensuous intuition and language is reduced to a merely representational/reference role (p. 24). As a result, metaphysics tends either toward mysticism, skepticism, or silence,

since the notion of a "thing-in-itself" existing beyond language and cognition is philosophically self-contradictory (p. 24). Even deconstructive approaches, such as those of Derrida or Nāgārjuna, though critical of these structures, remain within the same representational framework and fail to establish their own claims (p.34). In this connection, while reflecting on those metaphysicians who introduce a mystical connotation into the notion of being, he writes:

> The way of philosophy is not that of meditation (*sādhanā*). Overlooking philosophy in favor of *sādhanā* is not the way of the wise. A wise person is called so because he has determinate knowledge of the general and the specific problems. He takes the objects of knowledge (including imaginary) not as unreal but as determinate and distinctly intelligible real. Something may be constructive, but the knowledge of that is determinate; otherwise, it will not be distinctly known as constructed even. Constructive means different and not imaginary. Language determines cognition. Language is the determiner of the objects of knowledge in any cognition, because of which distinct knowledge of the objects is accomplished (p. 40).

Accordingly, Tiwari argues that philosophical inquiry has too often been ensnared in rigid metaphysical systems, epistemological presumptions, and linguistic abstractions, losing touch with the lived immediacy of cognition and the practical exigencies of human life. Such theories as are indicated above, as he says, suffer "theory impregnations." He notes that transculturally philosophy has often operated within inherited conceptual frameworks that prioritize system-building over cognitive clarity and allegiance over inquiry. The result is a form of thought that is decorative but removed—more devoted to preserving tradition than to illuminating truth, which is the most immediate task of a philosopher. They remain closed systems rather than emancipatory—an intellectual agony that Tiwari expresses throughout the book. Tiwari's effort is commendable, as he urges us to understand philosophy as a "cognitive reflection par excellence." This, for him, is not merely a definition of philosophy but an articulation of its task—namely, that philosophy is fundamentally a cognitive activity (p. 50). In this regard, his philosophical view implicitly and explicitly challenges several metaphilosophers of our time, such as Timothy Williamson (2021), as he writes—

> There is no philosophy of philosophies. Philosophy has no philosophy of its own because reflections on problems of philosophy and other disciplines are still philosophy. It is needed because that which flashes is the cause of incentive to our duties, dos, and don'ts. If the flashings are imposed on our desires, interests, and intentions, which vary from person to person, then the right cause of incentive for the duties is distorted and make knowledge interested (p. 97).

Accordingly, this book critiques such shallow tendencies. It seeks to restore philosophy to its original vitality—as an autonomous cognitive activity rooted in concentration on flashings of awareness in nature, expressed or revealed through language. Language is not confined to verbal articulations and written marks. In the second section of the monograph (2024), Tiwari brings this reflection into the sphere of lived experience and explores philosophy's therapeutic, methodological, and transformative roles in personal, educational, and social contexts, affirmatively answering practical questions such as: Can philosophy cure our disordered desires and confused thoughts? Can it offer a mode of resistance to aggression, extremism, and irrationality? Can it restore ethical conduct and aesthetic discernment? These urgent questions animate the latter half of the book, which we skip given the nature of our present task. However, we can say this work does not claim to exhaust these practical questions but to open a way of thinking that is at once analytically rigorous and phenomenologically (in our lived experiences) grounded. As we saw, treating language not as a secondary tool but as the

very ground of cognition invites the reader to reorient their engagement with philosophy—from passive reception to active reflection. It is hoped that this bilingual presentation, accessible in both English and Hindi, will serve a wide audience—students, teachers, thinkers, and all those who, amidst the noise of contemporary life, still pause to ask: what does it mean to think, and to live, philosophically? The following remarks of Tiwari encapsulate much of the practical aspect of philosophy:

> A discussion on the utility of philosophy must encompass our aspiration for freeing our thoughts from different physiological, psychological, ontological, religious, and cultural allegiances lying very deep in the structure of our consciousness, and which enforce our thinking and reflection to an extent of misleading and confusing conclusions that cause conflict and chaos in an individual and a society. As a reflective analysis, philosophy helps distinguish the real from the mixture and the imposed esoteric; philosophical reflections redeem our thoughts from the captive of) different interests and allegiances. This is redemption or freedom from ignorance and, positively, a way to wisdom. (p. 65).

The implications of Tiwari's reflective attitude are profound. Instead of searching for meanings given or hidden behind language or pursuing a reality beyond cognition, philosophical analysis must concentrate on cognition as it flashes that is, intelligible being of language through the mediacy of language-garbs, that is, dhvaniyān, lipiyān, signs, symbols, gestures, sense-data, etc., that are only instrumental in manifesting the intelligible being of language; manifested by them, the intelligible being, or thought - language or ideas, flashes To analyze language—its sentences and words—is to analyze thought itself, since the two are inseparably infused in cognition. Tiwari, not only in this work but also in his other works of repute, emphasizes the dynamic aspect of language, particularly the centrality of the verb or action, which propels sentential meaning and serves as the ground of the cause of incentive to duties/action. This dynamic model supports interpretive frameworks across religious, aesthetic, and legal texts, offering a normative basis for correct understanding. He critiques both meaning-centric theories (such as those that confine language to reference, designation, and representation in Indian and Western systems) and logic-driven paradigms that create pseudo-problems—such as the dogma of the analytic-synthetic distinction—by ignoring the actual cognitive ground. While he does not deny the possibility of a metaphysical substratum of ideas such as consciousness or spirit, as we discussed above, he insists that philosophy, properly speaking, must confine itself to *intelligible beings*, i.e., the self-revealing flashes of concepts that are language-infusing meaning/cognition. Philosophy, for Tiwari, is the rigorous analysis of these flashes, free from the captives of metaphysical dogmas, and capable of disclosing the very structure of cognition through language. He reminds us again and again that "we know a reality as the language presents it, and the language presents the reality as an idea/concept and transcending language any reality is a mystery and hence of no philosophical importance" (p. 19).

Tiwari's reflective dispositions in the work, of course, are far from isolated or arbitrary. It culminates Tiwari's decades-long philosophical inquiry into the nature of language, thought, and cognition—an inquiry that has steadily resisted both ornamental system-building and reductive empiricism. The work may rightly be seen as the philosophical offspring of his earlier foundational study, *Dynamics of Language: Philosophy of the World of the Words* (2022), in which he articulates the nuanced theory of "cognitive holism." This thesis proposes that language is not a mere conduit of pre-existing thought, but the very flashings of cognition, or language as intelligible being-

awareness in nature, infusing meaning known only in the instant present because the being flashes only in the present. Tiwari's cognitive holism is based on the non-duality of the intelligible being of language and thought. Language, then, is not subordinate to thought or reality; it is thought and reality in their most intelligible and immediate objects of cognition. This core insight becomes the philosophical hinge from which Tiwari critiques both Western representationalist traditions—from Frege to Wittgenstein—and metaphysically loaded strands of Indian philosophy that posit meaning as a transcendent or empirical referent. To supplement the preceding discussion, note that by drawing on and reinterpreting Bhartṛhari's notion of *sphoṭa*, Tiwari conceptualizes this flash not as a metaphysical essence but as a sequenceless moment of awareness in which language and meaning flash indivisibly. This flash is not a metaphor but the cognitive ground for all genuine philosophical analysis and meaning it flashes. Within this moment—this awareness of language and meaning as it flashes non-differently—philosophy must find its method, scope, and responsibility. Tiwari encapsulates—

> All cognitive activities and, hence, philosophical thinking are possible only through language. Language, for philosophy, is not exactly what the water is for the fish; rather, it is very like the gills of the fish. Language infuses cognition, determines it, and expresses it for understanding and communication purposes. Philosophical reflections are needed to satisfy the rational hunger of the mind in response to the problems it confronts. No problem is a problem for itself. All problems are at the thought level that the mind confronts. That is the reason that the problems concerning any discipline are analysed, clarified, and resolved by philosophical reflections for clarity and wisdom (p.95).

The conceptual depth of the *Nature of Philosophy* is rooted in Tiwari's earlier philosophical engagements, as exemplified in his rigorous study of Daya Krishna's reconception of philosophy (1998), which he elaborated in a well-received contribution to the *Indian Philosophical Quarterly, Pune*. There, Tiwari fully endorsed Daya Krishna's thesis that philosophy is a second-order, self-conscious cognitive activity concerned with resolving theoretical problems that arise from the "conceptuality of concepts" themselves. Philosophy, in this view, is neither a science of the "really real" nor a handmaiden to theology or empirical sciences. Rather, it is a distinct reflection on the beings of cognition, in which reflective analysis clarifies conceptual confusions, and the issue of signifying the "death" of the philosophical problem in question dissolves. Tiwari reaffirms, also in the first part of the present book, that philosophy's uniqueness lies in its subject matter (conceptual problems, confusion, doubt, etc.), its method (argument and counter-argument, agreement and disagreement), its aim (clarity, resolve and satisfaction of the rational hunger), and its domain (all the problems we confront from the theorization and conceptualization of the concepts about any system including logic and empirical observation). In this light, the unique feature of *the Nature of Philosophy* is not a departure but a deepening of Tiwari's intellectual trajectory. It extends and applies the same epistemic rigor Tiwari admired in Daya Krishna, while infusing it with his own emphasis on cognition as shaped by language. It also helps justify the book's overall objective and dual concern.

The first part critically interrogates what philosophy is—whether it is critical thinking, critical philosophy, conceptual analysis, metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics, or linguistic analysis—while the second part turns to its real-world utility. Here, Tiwari affirms that philosophy's practical relevance—its capacity to guide ethical behavior, manage desires, resolve interpersonal and collective conflicts, and even counter aggression and terrorism—is not incidental. It follows directly from its grounding in cognition. Philosophy, he argues, is not merely descriptive, empirical, or theoretical but inherently transformative, precisely because language is not merely a garb or token that serves only to flash language as awareness, and because cognition, as it flashes,

serves as the cause of an incentive to moral action. He, being as contemporary as possible, put forth that—

> Everybody likes to know or even knows what is beneficial to do and what is harmful to avoid. This is a kind of discriminatory reasoning and needs to be resolved in each case. If it is not resolved, one may be passionate about things and mentally confused. Now, with the pace of scientific and technological advancement, the common people are increasingly drawn to it, leading them to live a more deluded life, always getting further away from themselves. Due to technological advancements, they could have saved time for their work and, hence, for their individual and social advancement. They fail to take time to reflect on how effectively these engagements are wasting their time, memory, and critical and constructive skills. This is the need and the perfect time to promote philosophical reflections and understanding that may not only help protect their memory but also help them understand the primacy of thought over esoteric multitasking and resolve their minds for a better guide in their lives and works (p. 62).

Of course, such a position invites critical scrutiny. Some may view Tiwari's confinement of philosophy to intelligible cognition as a form of logocentrism, privileging language at the expense of embodied, affective, or ontological dimensions of human experience. However, Tiwari anticipates this charge by insisting that meaning is not divorced from language, and that cognition is not divorced from action. Through his emphasis on *bhāvanā* (the injunctive force of language), he underscores that the moral and volitional structures of human life are already inscribed in language's dynamic nature. His philosophy thus avoids both metaphysical dogmatism and empirical reductionism, offering instead a dynamic model of philosophical activity grounded in the immediacy of cognitive beings' flashes. Taken together, the Nature of Philosophy (2024) and the Dynamics of Language (2022) are the living expression of Tiwari's lifelong philosophical vision—grounded in the autonomy of language and the non-duality of thought and expression. Language determines the being of cognition. Only language can determine thoughts. By language, Tiwari means the intelligible being of language, manifested in verbal noises and writings, which help manifest its intelligible being. Manifested by garbs, the intelligible being of language first flashes its nature, and from that, its meaning flashes non-differently. The intelligible being of language infuses meaning awareness by nature; hence, the two are non-dual. He redefines philosophy not as an abstract or scholastic enterprise, but as a reflective and therapeutic discipline, capable of transforming both thought and life. Far from being a fragment or speculative detour, this work embodies a rigorous, deeply mature, and conceptually coherent culmination of Tiwari's scholarly journey. It calls on philosophers not to retreat into abstraction, but to illuminate the very act of thinking as it unfolds by language itself. Accordingly, he removes the skepticism from the mind of this perennial discipline—

> Since philosophical problems are the objects of reflection, philosophical reflection aims at conceptual clarity through analysis, interpretation, and wisdom; the question of a risk to philosophy lacks merit. It is only because philosophy fulfills the human truth of reasoning in confronting problems and reflecting on them to remove them, and because our aspirations have a humanistic concern, that the question of the utility of philosophy is interesting and warranted (p. 96).

Nevertheless, as noted, a work as ambitious as *Nature of Philosophy* by Tiwari inevitably invites engagement from multiple philosophical standpoints, especially those

traditions that have most forcefully interrogated the limits of cognition, language, and metaphysics. While Tiwari's project is marked by originality and a commendable attempt to restore philosophy to lived cognition, its central thesis—that language is the autonomous and ubiquitous ground of cognition—requires further articulation when viewed from the critical standpoint of Immanuel Kant, as well as from Advaita Vedānta and the dialectical critique of Nāgārjuna. From a Kantian perspective, the very ambition of grounding philosophy entirely in cognition, that is, as Tiwari observes, the cognition of non-difference (Advaita) of language and its meaning as intelligible beings, risks overlooking the critical limits that structure human knowledge.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1929/2003), Kant's project is not to deny cognition but to delimit its scope: human knowledge is confined to phenomena, structured by the a priori forms of sensibility (space and time) and the categories of understanding. In this framework, language is not constitutive of cognition in the strong sense Tiwari proposes; rather, it expresses judgments already conditioned by these transcendental structures. Tiwari's notion of the "flash" of cognition infused by language appears to bypass this layered architecture, presenting cognition as immediate and self-grounding. A Kantian critique would insist that such immediacy is philosophically suspect: what appears as a unified flash may itself be the result of synthetic activity governed by categories that are not reducible to language. However, Tiwari's position avoids Kantian suspicion, as he accepts knowledge as a synthetic a priori judgment. For Tiwari, no cognitive activity, no judgment, including synthetic activity, is possible independently of language.

More importantly, Kant's distinction between phenomena and noumena places a decisive limit on any claim that cognition—linguistic or otherwise—can exhaust reality. Tiwari, as we saw, explicitly rejects the "thing-in-itself" as a contradictory posit. Yet, for Kant, the noumenon is not an object of knowledge but a necessary limiting concept that prevents reason from overstepping its bounds. By dissolving this distinction, Tiwari risks reintroducing a form of metaphysical absolutism under the guise of cognitive immanence. His critique of representationalism is forceful, but without a Kantian account of the conditions of possibility of experience, his position may appear insufficiently critical. In other words, Tiwari's project would benefit from situating its bold thesis within a transcendental framework that clarifies not only how cognition occurs, but also what it cannot legitimately claim. A further tension arises when we consider Tiwari's elevation of language as the very ground of cognition. Kant's critical philosophy suggests that thought exceeds any particular linguistic articulation, since the categories operate at a pre-linguistic level of synthesis. While language undoubtedly shapes and communicates cognition, it cannot be equated with the transcendental conditions that make cognition possible. Thus, from a Kantian standpoint, Tiwari's cognitive holism may conflate the medium of expression with the deeper structures of intelligibility (Strawson, 2002; Schäfer, 2023).

Turning to the Advaita Vedānta tradition, the critique becomes even more radical. For thinkers like Ādi Śankarāchārya, the ultimate reality (Brahman) is fundamentally beyond language and conceptual thought (*yato vāco nivartante*, Satchidanandendra, 1997). Language operates within the domain of *vyavahāra* (empirical transaction), whereas realizing the ultimate (paramārtha) involves transcending all linguistic and cognitive distinctions. From this standpoint, Tiwari's identification of language with cognition—and his confinement of philosophy to "intelligible beings as the only object of our cognition"—may be seen as restricting philosophy to a cognitive epistemic plane. Even if one grants that cognition is linguistically mediated at the empirical level, Advaita would insist that the highest knowledge is non-dual and non-conceptual, accessible only through a sublation of all linguistic forms. Tiwari's reinterpretation of Bhartṛhari's sphoṭa as a non-metaphysical "flashings of consciousness' is philosophically suggestive. Yet, it appears to stop short of the Advaitic insight that even this flash

must ultimately be negated. From this perspective, the danger is that the linguistic-cognitive unity becomes reified as an ultimate principle, thereby contradicting the very non-dualism that Indian philosophy often seeks to uphold (Sharma, 1996). If language is treated as autonomous and ubiquitous, how does one account for the Advaitic claim that liberation involves silence (mauna) and the dissolution of all conceptual constructs? Tiwari's framework would need to engage more deeply with this tension if it is to claim relevance within the broader Indian philosophical landscape. However, it is not justified to overlook the philosophical merits of Tiwari, who confines philosophy to the world of knowing that is not only based on, but is confined to the intelligible objects our intellect can know. It is obvious from his writings, and even in Nature of Philosophy (2024), that metaphysical entities, whether transcendental or empirical, may be the objects of Sādhanā, religion, and realization, where one is free from the limits of language, thoughts, and things-in-themselves, but our knowledge as philosophers is confined to intelligible beings we know that are intelligible beings of language and thoughts, which he terms the world-of knowing in contrast to the world of things-in-themselves.

The challenge sharpens further when viewed through the lens of Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka philosophy. Nāgārjuna's method is not to propose an alternative metaphysical ground but to demonstrate the emptiness (śūnyatā) of all conceptual positions through a rigorous dialectic of contradictions (Mishra, 2018). Any claim to an ultimate ground—whether substance, consciousness, or, in Tiwari's case, language-garbs—would be subject to reductio arguments that reveal its internal incoherence. Tiwari criticizes Nāgārjuna, suggesting that deconstructive approaches fail to establish their claims. However, in general, this criticism may underestimate the intent of Nāgārjuna's project, which is not to "prove" a thesis but to dissolve all theses. From a Nāgārjunian standpoint, the assertion that language and meaning form an inseparable and autonomous unity could itself be shown to depend on relational distinctions that undermine its claimed self-sufficiency. If language is said to be the ground of cognition, is this ground itself linguistic? If so, it becomes circular; if not, it contradicts the thesis. Nāgārjuna would press precisely such questions to reveal the dependence (pratītyasamutpāda) of all conceptual constructions. In this sense, Tiwari's cognitive-holistic position risks appearing as another "view" (dṛṣṭi); for that reason, it must not be relinquished, but viewed and evaluated with an open mind. Nagarjuna's dialectics apply to the arguments given by metaphysicians and ontologists who construct static arguments for a reality beyond knowledge and thoughts also as constructed (vikalpa), but Tiwari's flashings of consciousness of intelligible beings are not constructions but revealed beings the mind knows; they are not static but flashings of awareness by nature that flash always in the present; each time the cognition is new flashings and hence Nagarjuna's dialectics fail to deconstruct Tiwari's philosophy of cognitive reflections.

His insistence on the immediacy of cognition and on language's primacy over reference theorists' primacy of meaning is both provocative and philosophically valuable, especially in a context where philosophy often becomes detached from lived experience. However, the strength of this thesis also exposes it to foundational challenges. A Kantian framework would demand a clearer account of the limits and conditions of cognition; Advaita Vedānta would question the ultimate status accorded to language; and Nāgārjuna would deconstruct the very claim to autonomy that underpins the project. For Tiwari's conception of philosophy to attain greater robustness, it would need to engage these traditions not merely as positions to be critiqued, but as frameworks that expose the boundaries of its own assumptions. The boldness of identifying language as the ground of cognition must be matched by an equally rigorous account of its limits, its possible transcendence, and its susceptibility to dialectical critique, but

Tiwari left these issues for metaphysicians who build a system leading to Sādhanā.

Having noted these challenges, it would be unfair to assume that Tiwari is unaware of them. At several points, as we sensed from our discussion, he shows a sharp analytical grasp of the nature of philosophy—its objects, its methods, and how it differs from other theoretical enterprises such as metaphysics, theology, or the natural and social sciences, as well as other kinds of subjective and objective thinking. He begins the book with a thesis: "In order to understand 'what philosophy is?', we cannot ignore responding to the questions' what is not philosophy?'" (p. 4). Accordingly, he consistently maintains that philosophers must remain committed to pursuing truth and knowledge through their own distinctive methods and logical discipline. In this respect, much like a typical rooted philosopher of language, he insists that "language should not and must not go on holiday while pursuing truth and knowledge," for only our mind can know concepts/ideas infused by language. For Tiwari, they are the philosophical objects we know and reflect. Metaphysical entities/substance, or things-in-themselves, whether empirical or transcendental, may be the objects of Sādhanā but are beyond the grasp of language and intellect and hence are not objects of philosophical reflection. Our knowledge is confined to the objects we know; they are thought-objects, concepts, or ideas, and are isolated from language; no idea/no concept is possible. From this standpoint, Tiwari tends to view the critiques advanced by Adi Shankaracharya, Nagarjuna, and Immanuel Kant as only partially philosophical. His concern seems to be that, at certain junctures, these traditions move beyond philosophy into other registers—particularly when they invoke notions such as ineffability, unknowability, or mystical experience. For Tiwari, when such appeals are made, philosophical inquiry risks stepping outside its proper bounds, since it relinquishes the proper cognitive ground —objects of knowledge and philosophical reflection—intelligible beings of language and meaning it flashed non-differently—through which clarity, argument, and any cognitive activity are made possible. As he put it—

> Philosophically, the position is different. Whenever we know, think, or reflect on a reality, we never find it naked without language. There is no thought that we have, and we do not know, and that we know is always infused with language. Isolated from language, no thought, no reality is thinkable. The reality we know is confined to thought, and thoughts are not only infused with but are also expressed by language. We know a reality as the language presents it, and the reality transcending language is a mystery and, hence, of no philosophical importance (p.19).

However, a deeper question—one might even call it a metaphilosophical concern—remains: is this conception of philosophy sufficient to capture the full spirit of *darśana*? While the Indian notion of 'darśana' has often included not only these elements but also dimensions of revelation and lived experience (Mohanty, 1992; Gupta, 2009), Tiwari's insightfully reflects philosophical clarity, analysis, and problem resolution confined to the intelligible beings we know. It is particularly important to note that the doctrine of two levels of truth—conventional and ultimate—has been an integral part of many Indian philosophical traditions, most notably in the works of Nagarjuna and the Advaita Vedānta tradition, though with notable exceptions such as the Charvaka (Sprung, 2012; Rajan, 2025). This framework itself suggests that not all aspects of reality are equally available to linguistic or conceptual articulation. This raises the need for a renewed dialogue with traditions that affirm a supersensuous aspect of philosophical insight. As Ādi Śankarāchārya and others suggest through familiar metaphors—such as the idea that only the 'one who tastes sweetness truly knows it'—there are forms of experience that resist full linguistic articulation. In such cases, the experience itself cannot be entirely communicated, even though it remains philosophically significant. Parts of *darśana*, therefore, may exceed the strictly linguistic or analytical

framework. In this sense, *darśana* stretches beyond the technical confines of philosophy and calls for a freer mode of inquiry—one that may even transcend language, without abandoning rigor altogether. A similar point appears in Nagarjuna, who is often accused of nihilism. While he deconstructs all conceptual proliferations (*prapañca*), he does not deny the possibility of experience; rather, he refrains from fixing its nature within conceptual limits (Mishra, 2018).

All these, however, are inquiries meant to deepen the discussion; they do not diminish the value of Tiwari's work, which is already sufficient in its expositions and analysis of cognition confined to cognitive beings. Tiwari's position is right if philosophy is confined to the cognitive beings we know.'' Darśana's root dṛś is to perceive, to observe not the things-in-themselves but the concepts or ideas of them. The objects a philosopher perceives are ideas/thought-objects or concepts (*sampratyaya*). He distinguishes the world of intelligible beings and the empirical world of senses or thing–in–itself. A philosopher's world is confined to what he knows, and he knows only thoughts that flash when language presents them. For him, Brahman, soul, substance, indescribability, contradictions, and negation are also known to us as they flash when language presents them (Dynamics of Language, preface, Vol. I, 2022).

In fact, having reviewed it at length, I can say this remains one of the most valuable contributions for lovers of philosophy and certainly deserves a place on their shelf. With these points in mind, I heartily congratulate Devendra Nath Tiwari for his commendable holistic cognitive philosophy of language and his conception of intelligible beings as the objects of knowledge and philosophical reflection. The purpose of his cognitive reflections in the monograph (2024) and the two-volume set (2022) is clarity, conception, and wisdom.

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