

On Being and What There Is

Classical Vaiśeṣika and the History of Indian Ontology

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2

The Question of Being in India: General Historical Perspectives

1. There is no equivalent to the Aristotelian project of a "science of being qua being" in the Indian philosophical tradition, nor to the Platonic perplexity about being and nonbeing; nor is there an explicit counterpart to Wolff's conception of "ontology." Yet being is one of the central and pervasive themes of Indian thought. It is the object of intense reflection, discussion, and disagreement, and a catalyst of debate among the competing schools of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Although it is true that there are no systematic monographs on ontology, there is a rich, coherent, and clearly identifiable documentation of thought and debate about being. For identifying Indian ontological literature, our first lead has to come from the thematic use of certain words; that is, the Indian (primarily Sanskrit) synonyms or cognates of the verb *to be* and their various derivatives. Sanskrit is an Indo-European language, and it has several roots etymologically related to the Western ontological vocabulary.

Two verbal roots are usually presented as lexicographic equivalents

of *to be*: *as/asti* (corresponding to Latin *est*, Greek *estí*, English *is*, etc.) and *bhū/bhavati* (which has an intriguing etymological kinship with Greek *phýō/phýsis*). Both *bhū* and *as* have more prominent existential and veridical functions than *to be*; *bhū* has, moreover, dynamic implications. Accordingly, they are commonly treated as verbs expressing a peculiar kind of process or action. Nonetheless, both *bhū* and *as* may also take the function of copula, although the copula is generally quite rare in Sanskrit and particularly uncommon in the nominal style of classical theoretical and philosophical literature. Here as well as in related cases, the differences between Sanskrit and other Indo-European languages are a matter of degree, not of principle.¹

The nominal derivatives of the roots *as* and *bhū*, together with numerous compound word formations, account for the major part of the Indian ontological terminology. For *as*, we have *sat*, *satya*, *sattva*, *sattā*, *astitva*, etc.; for *bhū*, we have *bhāva*, *bhava*, *bhāvin*, *bhavitr*, *bhāvana*, *bhavana*, *bhūta*, *bhūti*, *bhāvatva*, etc.; and as relevant compounds, or words with prefixes, we may mention *svabhāva*, *sadbhāva*, *sanmātra*, *sattāsambandha*, *svarūpasattā*, *svātmasattva*, *sambhava*, *udbhava*. In addition to *as* and *bhū*, there are various other significant roots, such as *vr̥t* (noun: *vr̥tti*, referring to "occurrence" in a temporalized and localized sense) and *vas* (nouns: *vastu*, *vāsana*; referring to "dwelling," that is, a durable presence, and etymologically related to German *gewesen* and *Wesen*, that is, "essence," and the English past tense *was*). Together with various other terms, for instance abstracts from words meaning "this," "that," or "thus" (*idam̐tā*, *tattva*, *tathātva*, *tathatā*), and numerous increasingly complex compounds and abstracts, these terms constitute an ontological vocabulary that is no less extensive, diversified, scholastic, and ambiguous than its Western counterpart.² In dealing with this terminology, we have to be ready to revise and adjust our own terminological premises and expectations.

Within the domain of the philosophical systems, the entire terminology of "genesis," "change," "manifestation," "actuality/potentiality" (i.e., *utpatti*, *pariṇāma*, *vyakti*, *śakti*, etc.) is, of course, related to, and relevant for, the ontological debate.³

2. Other terms and concepts are more or less directly affiliated with, or related to, this primary vocabulary of "being." First of all, we have to refer to the rich and complex terminology of nonbeing and

negation, which is inseparable from that of being and assertion. From an early time, *asat*, *abhāva*, and so forth, as well as *tuchya*, *tuccha*, *alīka*, and so on have played a role comparable and supplementary to that of their positive counterparts; in some respects, it is even more basic.⁴

Another set of relevant ideas may be described as "horizon concepts"; that is, as concepts or mythical projections under which being itself is subsumed or which are said to constitute, include, and transcend both being and nonbeing. As examples from different periods and partly mythical, partly philosophical contexts, we may mention *kāla*, "time," *brahman*, *ātman*, *skambha*, various deities or divine principles, but also "suchness" (*tattva*), the concrete entity (*vastu*), "object of knowledge" (*prameya*), and "object of speech" or "meaning" (*abhidheya*).⁵

It would be very inappropriate to dismiss the various mythological and theological ideas that have been associated with being, nonbeing, and their transcendence as philosophically and "ontologically" irrelevant. They may, indeed, be mythical, culturally bound, untranslatable, and not part of an abstract, universal ontology. But the role of abstractness, universality, translatability is itself a problem for any comparative and transcultural approach to the question of being. Moreover, the separation of mythology, theology, and philosophy is elusive not only in the older Indian texts relating to the question of being, but also in various later traditions. The tension and relationship between "mythological," "culturally bound," "untranslatable" ideas and the "abstract" ontological terms is thus a major historical and philosophical issue. In particular, this is true when we are dealing with such central, fundamental, and "typically Indian" notions as *brahman*, *ātman*, *akṣara* and even *dharma*. The "ontological" significance of these terms is undeniable, although it is obviously different from that of *sat*, *sattā*, and *bhāva*.⁶

The meaning of words like *brahman* and so on is not only of cultural and historical interest, just as the meaning of *sat*, *bhāva*, and so forth, is not of purely philosophical interest. Even in its seemingly abstract notions, Indian ontology, or the Indian approach to the question of being, is a symptom of the Indian tradition.

Whatever its general conceptual significance may be, it is also the reflection of specific cultural and historical realities.

Finally, we have to refer to the extensive literature that exists in non-Indian translations, especially in Buddhism. It may be helpful and sometimes indispensable to consider the terminology in those languages, in particular Chinese and Tibetan, into which ontologically rele-

vant texts were translated. For this, we have also to be aware of the linguistic peculiarities of these languages, their different capabilities for ontological distinctions, and so forth. For instance, Tibetan distinguishes more clearly than Sanskrit between *to be* as copula (*yin*) and *to exist* (*yod*), as well as between their negations (*min*; *med*). This may remind us of the relationship between Greek and Arabic.⁷

3. Relevant texts come from the entire recorded history of Indian thought, beginning with the Veda, and in particular from the classical systems of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Being becomes thematic at various levels and in different contexts, for instance in debates and controversies concerning the status of certain representative entities, such as the soul, God, substances, universals. Does the soul exist, and in what sense? Do wholes exist over and above their parts? What would that mean? What do entities as entities have in common? What does it mean to be an entity? Do things remain identical in time? Is being compatible with change and impermanence? Does it imply change? This question is the topic of vast debates between the Buddhist process philosophers and their Hindu opponents, just like the question of the ontological status of universals and related issues.⁸

Being becomes also thematic in linguistic and grammatical analysis. What do the words *to be*, *being*, *entity*, and so forth imply for those who use them? How do *as* and *bhū* function as verbs? Do they denote acts or activities, just like other verbs? How should it be explained grammatically, semantically, and metaphysically that we posit something, think and speak in terms of *being* even if we think and speak about what *is not*?⁹

What is an acceptable criterion to distinguish being from nonbeing, reality from illusion? How does real existence relate to, or differ from, being thought, meant, or perceived? How does it relate to truth, meaning, and practical efficiency? In the eleventh century, the Buddhist philosopher Ratnakīrti presented a list of attempts to define being (*sattva*): "inherence of (the universal) reality" (*sattāsamavāya*); "being subject to origination, decay and stability" (*utpādayayadhrauvayayogitva*); "being the domain (and condition) of valid cognition" (*pramāṇaviśayatva*), and others. He rejected all of them and advocated instead the Buddhist notion of *arthakriyākāritva*, "effectiveness," "making a difference in practice," "functioning toward an effect or purpose."¹⁰ In his view, this definition

was not just theoretically superior to the other definitions; but it was also the one that all the other schools unknowingly and unwillingly recognized: Whatever somebody may say about the theoretical nature of reality, practical efficiency is the criterion one adopts when it comes to deciding what to accept as real and what not. This implies a far-reaching critique of the ordinary worldly orientation toward reality that stands in the way of final liberation; but it also implies a critique of all attempts to establish entities and their being in a purely theoretical fashion. Theory and conceptualization themselves appear as projections of a primeval desire or thirst (*trṣṇā*), a will to posit and preserve one's self and identity and to find identity and durability in the world. This Buddhist approach, especially in its Mahāyāna versions, has significant parallels in the tradition of Advaita Vedānta.¹¹

At this point, there is no need for an explicit comparison with Heideggerian ideas, in particular with his critique of the role of representational and objectifying thinking; nor do we have to discuss the applicability of his four "limitations" (being and becoming; being and appearance; being and thinking; being and the ought).¹² There is, however, no good reason to adopt Heidegger's own exclusion of his ideas from the interpretation of non-Western traditions.¹³

4. In accordance with the general character of the Indian tradition, there are no such conspicuous and programmatic opening events in Indian ontology as the declarations of Parmenides, Plato, and Aristotle. Indian thought about being, just as Indian philosophy in general, develops gradually out of mythical and anonymous sources. In the oldest extant documents of presystematic and pre-Buddhistic thought in India, that is, in the Vedas and older Upaniṣads,¹⁴ being and nonbeing (*sat* and *asat*) emerge as themes of inquiry and speculation in cosmogonic contexts; that is, in connection with myths and speculations concerning the origin and primeval status of the world in which we live.¹⁵

J. A. B. van Buitenen and others have suggested that the first reference to being (*sat*) in such cosmogonic contexts, that is, the beginning of the so-called *sadvidyā*, constitutes the transition from a "mythological stage to a more or less philosophical one," or simply the beginning of philosophy in India.¹⁶ The sixth chapter of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* contains the most famous and familiar Vedic-Upaniṣadic text

on being. The teacher Uddālaka Āruṇi, instructing his son Svetaketu, declares that nothing could have arisen from what is not and that the world, insofar as it is, must have its origin and its unity in being (*sat*) itself:

In the beginning, my dear, this world was just Being (*sat*), one only, without a second. To be sure, some people say: "In the beginning this world was just Nonbeing (*a-sat*), one only, without a second; from that Nonbeing Being was produced." But verily, my dear, whence could this be? . . . How from Nonbeing could Being be produced? On the contrary, my dear, in the beginning this world was just Being, one only, without a second.¹⁷

The attempt to identify the *sadvidyā* that this text epitomizes as the beginning of Indian philosophy, or even the very idea that there is such an identifiable beginning, must remain questionable. What is beyond question is the fact that this is one of the most seminal texts in the history of Indian thought. Yet it is by no means representative of Vedic thought about being, or even of the Upaniṣadic way of dealing with being. The text itself indicates that it was preceded by earlier discussions and speculations about being, nonbeing, and the origin of "this world". The theory of the origination of being from nonbeing, to which it refers and which it rejects, is, in fact, found in the older Upaniṣads (including the third chapter of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad) as well as the Brāhmaṇas and even in the *R̥gveda*.¹⁸ This theory not only precedes Uddālaka Āruṇi's doctrine, but constitutes its indispensable background and counterpart. Whether we call it *philosophy* or not, this elusive and discarded cosmogony from nonbeing is of great significance for the beginnings of Indian thought about being. In a sense, it is more fundamental than the "theory of being" (*sadvidyā*) that van Buitenen tried to identify as the origin of Indian philosophy.

5. *R̥gveda* X, 72 and a variety of other sources up to and beyond Chāndogya Upaniṣad III, 19 teach that nonbeing, *asat*, "was" in the beginning, and that *sat* arose from nonbeing.¹⁹ What does this mean? In what sense does it differ from Uddālaka's position? It has been emphasized that the origin from *asat* should not be interpreted as a creation from nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) and that *sat* and *asat* should not be taken as "existence" and "nonexistence" in an abstract sense. Various authors (for

instance, H. Oertel) suggest "chaos" as an equivalent for *asat*; that is, an undifferentiated, unstructured substrate out of which the structured and orderly world of *sat*, a cosmos with natural and moral regularities, arose. The contrast between *sat* and *asat* would thus amount to the contrast between the determinate and the indeterminate, the differentiated and the undifferentiated.²⁰ W. N. Brown even suggests that *asat* is the Rgvedic equivalent of "hell"; that is, the chaotic underworld out of which the Gods formed the structured cosmos.²¹

J. A. B. van Buitenen emphasizes that one should not credit the Vedic authors with an abstract notion of existence; in his view, this would be an anachronism. After adopting the view that the "first occurrence of the term *sat* in cosmogonical Veda texts" marks the transition from mythology to philosophy, he states: "On the other hand, the strictly philosophical import of the notion of *sat* should not be exaggerated: It is anachronistic to render it as 'being' in the sense of *esse*. It is a very concrete term . . ." ²² Van Buitenen's statements show that he sees abstraction as the proper and constitutive achievement of philosophy. The Vedic-Upanisadic conception of *sat* appears as a significant, yet incomplete, step toward abstraction; it is philosophical only to the extent that it is abstract.

Is this adequate? Can being as a principle of cosmogony be measured by the standard of abstraction? Cosmogony deals with origins, not with abstractions. It is concerned with the origin of what there is, not with its common denominator. The question is: What was all this in the beginning? Where does it come from? How did it come into existence, or into its present state of being? The answers vary. *Sat* and *asat* appear among many other, more or less "concrete" examples; they are not even the most frequent or conspicuous ones. *Prajāpati*, *ātman*, *brahman*, the "one" (*eka*) and the "mind" (*manas*) are among the alternatives; they all appear as predicate nominatives in the familiar formula "this was in the beginning . . ." (*idam agra āsīt*).²³

What does the expression *in the beginning* mean? How does the concept of *sat* relate to those concepts with which it competes or which it replaces? Is it really a progression in terms of abstractness? What does it mean that this world "was" (*āsīt*) something else in the beginning; that is, something different from what it is now? To what extent was it this world, to what extent was it something else? What kind of transformation has taken place? Is that which "was" in the beginning no longer present in the world as it is now, or does it remain present as its underly-

ing cause and substrate? If this should be the case, the question what this world was in the beginning would amount to the question what it ultimately is; that is, what its irreducible substance or substrate is. It would correspond to the kind of question that was asked by the Pre-Socratics, such as Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes.

6. According to the sixth chapter of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, this is, indeed, the meaning of *agra āsīt*: The beginning is the lasting essence, the root, the basis, the ultimate support (*pratiṣṭhā*, *mūla*, *āyatana*) of what there is. Being itself is the ultimate irreducible substance in which all entities are a priori contained and with which they are ultimately identical. Nothing can ever come into being; in reality, there is no creation. Cosmogony amounts to cosmology of substance. Brahman itself is often presented as the ultimate everlasting "support" (*pratiṣṭhā*).²⁴ There seems to be no room for genuine cosmogony. This is even more obvious in conjunction with the cyclical way of thinking, which came to dominate post-Vedic Indian thought and which regards the cosmos as an infinite sequence of periodic destructions and regenerations.

The so-called *satkāryavāda*, that is, the theory of the preexistence of the effect or product in its cause,²⁵ is the systematic unfolding of Uddālaka Āruṇi's substantialism and eternalism. But even the rejection of such preexistence by the *asatkāryavāda* traditions does not provide a genuine alternative: It recognizes only temporarily "new" configurations of preexistent constituents, such as the atoms. It is just a different type of substantialism and eternalism.²⁶ If we adopt the familiar interpretation of *asat* as primeval chaos, undifferentiated, unstructured substrate, and so on, the more ancient Vedic cosmogonies from "nonbeing" would not provide an alternative either. The position of *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* VI would not really be the rejection of an entirely different cosmogony, that is, of a *creatio ex nihilo*, but it could be reduced to a disagreement concerning the semantics of *sat* and *asat*. The apparent introduction of a new cosmogony would amount to a change in the meaning of *being* and *nonbeing*. The cosmogony of Uddālaka Āruṇi would thus not be incompatible with the kind of cosmogony he rejected.

This is, indeed, the interpretation of Śaṅkara and his followers, as well as of other harmonizers of the Vedic teachings. The apparent contradiction is resolved by assigning the different statements to two different levels of discourse and truth, with a corresponding variation in the

meaning of *sat* and *asat*. *Asat*, "nonbeing", as used in *Chāndogya* III and elsewhere, simply means unevolved, undifferentiated, not particularized into different "names and forms" (*avyākṛtanāmarūpa*, etc.).²⁷ In *Chāndogya* VI, *sat* itself is undifferentiated pure being, "prior" to entering into the process of particularization.²⁸ In both cases, we would deal with an absolute, irreducible foundation.

The apparent absence of a genuine notion of creation, that is, of *creatio ex nihilo*, and of a corresponding notion of the uniqueness and contingency of cosmic and individual existence has led to sweeping statements about the general character of Indian thought, which has been characterized as fundamentally substantialist and cyclical. This has been contrasted with the biblical idea of creation, and with Judaeo-Christian linear notions of time and history. We do not have to discuss the ambiguous and problematic role of "creation from nothing" in Western thought and specifically in the Bible.²⁹ Instead, we have to refer once again to the Vedic fascination with the "beginning" (*agra*) and with cosmogony, and we have to ask whether this can indeed be reduced to an interest in the basic substance and foundation (*pratiṣṭhā*) of the world. In other words, is Vedic cosmogony and cosmology ultimately committed to an "ontology of substance"?³⁰

7. Vedic cosmogony is very complex and elusive, and it would be presumptuous to reduce it to certain "basic outlines." The cosmogonic myths, metaphors, and paradigms may vary and merge with one another even within one single text, such as *Rgveda* X, 129. Here, the cosmogonic process is characterized as birth or germination, but also as transformation and emanation; the author himself indicates his uncertainty and ultimate ignorance.³¹ *Rgveda* X, 129 is a late and retrospective hymn. Numerous other ideas are found in other texts; metaphors of birth and biological formation occur side by side with conceptions that present the world as an artefact.³² There is no need for us to go into further details or to discuss the attempts of modern scholars to identify and clarify the central ideas and underlying premises in the apparent chaos of Vedic cosmogony.³³ Regardless of all complexities, and regardless of the absence of a coherent cosmogonic doctrine, the reader of the older Vedic texts, in particular the *Rgveda* itself, will easily notice certain recurrent themes and perspectives of Vedic cosmogony and of the Vedic sense of reality in general: Creation myths are often presented as separa-

tion myths, as myths about the creation of livable space, the open horizon in which we live.³⁴ This is combined with a sense of amazement and wonder about such openness itself, as well as the things that appear in it, and the precarious nature of their existence. In most cases, Indra is the central figure in the creation myths of this type; he is the one who accomplishes the separation of heaven and earth and creates the indispensable intermediate space, as well as the polarities that go with this primeval cosmic dichotomy.³⁵

We need not, we cannot discuss in detail how significant and original the connection between Indra and the idea of cosmogonic separation is. Varuṇa, too, is at times credited with the separation of heaven and earth.³⁶ Elsewhere, the separation is described as a spontaneous event.³⁷

What is decisive is the opening, the separation as such, a separation that implies not only the creation of free space, but also the establishment of firm boundaries, of distinguishability and bipolarity. Of course, F. B. J. Kuiper observes correctly that Indra's act presupposes the existence of an undifferentiated totality: "Indra does not create anything but acts as a kind of magnetic force . . ." ³⁸ Yet the fascination is not with the amorphous primeval substance or substrate as such, but with the open space that is its negation, as well as the condition of all particularized existence that occurs in it.

8. The old Vedic texts, in particular the *R̥gveda*, leave no doubt as to Vedic man's fascination with openness and unobstructed space. The vocabulary to express such fascination is rich and manifold, and it includes a number of words that in later Sanskrit usage have lost this particular connotation. The word *loka*, commonly translated as "world," would be a conspicuous example. Its Vedic usage can be paraphrased as "room to exist freely and without hindrance and obstruction." In the Vedic texts, it is often accompanied by such adjectives as *uru*, "broad, wide."³⁹ Sanskrit words that appear as lexicographic equivalents for *earth*, such as *pr̥thivī*, *mahī*, *urvī*, and even *bhūmi*, have basic Vedic connotations of "extended," "wide," "great," "open." *Ākāśa*, *vyoman*, and so forth, also exemplify the Vedic sense of the openness of space and what we may call a primeval metaphysical *clearing*. The Vedic word *māyā* itself, which has far-reaching implications in later Indian thought about the ontological status of the spatiotemporal world, is associated with

"measurement," "extension," "projection into space." There is also a sense of wonder and amazement about that which appears in this extended openness, the spatial and temporal things that emerge in it, as visible, extended, measurable, identifiable entities—mountains, rivers, living creatures. They are experienced in the sheer amazing presence and inexplicable contingency of their existence. This seems to be an essential part of the Vedic meaning of *māyā*.⁴⁰

The experience of openness is also an experience of separation and apartness. The open space is an intermediate space (*antariksa*) between the poles of heaven and earth. The upholding of the open space is at the same time an upholding of the polarities to which it owes its existence; it is also an upholding of the polarities and distinctions that exist within this space. It means preventing them from collapsing, merging in an undifferentiated and unidentifiable unity and totality, from becoming *saṃśliṣṭa* and *avyākṛta* again.⁴¹ *Sat* itself, in its distinction from *asat* and as the very realm of distinctions, has to be upheld against such collapse; that is, against the disappearance of openness. The cosmogonic acts or events have to be repeated in the rituals; that is, the acts of *dharma*/*dharmā*. The connection of *dharma* with *dhṛ* (*dhāray*; cf. also *vi-dhṛ*), "to support," "to uphold," is not only an etymological one.⁴²

9. The distinct entities that appear in the Vedic openness cannot be described as mere modifications of a primeval substance or substrate. Rather, their appearance implies the negation of such substantiality. It implies novelty and contingency. The Vedic "creation," the primeval opening may not be a "creation from nothing." Yet it implies a first beginning, an event that remains unique in spite of all the ritual repetitions by which it is followed. The "opening," the cosmogonic separation, presupposes a primeval "something," whatever its nature may be. But at the same time, it is the creation of that very "nothing" in which contingent existence is possible—the amazing appearance of those entities or phenomena which constitute the realm of *māyā*, and the continuity of which is subject to an active upholding through the human enactment of *dharma*.⁴³

This is not the place for a comparison between biblical and Vedic thought. It is, however, important to remember that those broad generalizations which characterize Indian thought as fundamentally "cyclical" and "substantialist" and contrast it with the Judaeo-Christian tradition

are thoroughly inadequate as far as Vedic thought is concerned.⁴⁴ There is, indeed, the search for the ultimate basis and substance of what there is and the identification of being itself with this substance. Being itself is forever present in all entities; that is, its modifications. The instruction of Śvetaketu in the sixth chapter of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* contains the most exemplary presentation of this view: Being is the ultimate cause and substance, and the anticipation of all entities. There is no room for contingency and no need for creation. Yet in numerous older texts, we find a pervasive fascination with the "beginning," the cosmogonic act, the primeval event of separation and opening, with openness itself, and with the appearance of contingent entities in it. In this sense, and without drawing a strict line between "philosophy" and "mythology," we may speak of two different Vedic "ontologies" or, more cautiously, of different, though perhaps supplementary, perspectives on the reality of the world.⁴⁵ Whereas the "ontology of substance" may play a more conspicuous role in later Indian, specifically Hindu, philosophy, the philosophical significance of the mythology and ontology of openness should by no means be underestimated.

10. Uddālaka Āruṇi's "science of being" (*sadvidyā*) does not recognize anything over and above "being" (*sat*). But according to other Vedic-Upaniṣadic texts, "being" and "nonbeing" themselves presuppose a more fundamental ground, or a more comprehensive horizon. They are included in, or subordinated to, such principles as *ātman*, *brahman*, or the mythical "world frame" (*skambha*).⁴⁶ *Rgveda* X, 129 and other, less famous texts invoke the idea of an original state and a primeval "One" (*tad ekam*) beyond being and nonbeing.⁴⁷ The most important Vedic-Upaniṣadic concept associated with such transcendence of being and nonbeing is the concept of *brahman*. In a number of texts, *brahman* is presented as transcending both *sat* and *asat*,⁴⁸ or as including and superseding both that which is (*sat*) and what is beyond (*tyat*).⁴⁹ The distinction between *sat* and *tyat* is sometimes explained as a distinction between the formed and the formless (*mūrta*, *amūrta*), the mortal and the immortal (*martya*, *amṛta*), the speakable and the inexpressible.⁵⁰

It would not be appropriate to describe such transcendence of all polarities as the inclusion and disappearance of all distinctions in an undifferentiated primeval substance. We are dealing here with a transcendence of a higher conceptual order; it includes and supersedes the

polarity between distinction and nondistinction, differentiation and nondifferentiation itself, and provides important suggestions for later conceptual thought and systematic philosophy.⁵¹

Even being or reality itself, that is, *sat* and other derivatives of the root *as*, may be associated with such transcendence. *Being* in this sense transcends itself and its distinction from that which is not. The *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* says that *satya* includes both itself and its opposite, *anṛta*: *satyam ca-anṛtam ca satyam abhavat*.⁵² This implies different levels of meaning for the terminology of *being*, *truth*, and *reality*.

There is no explicit debate on the semantics of *sat* and on the different functions of *to be* (*as*, *bhū*) in the Vedic texts; nor do we find a theory of levels of truth or discourse comparable to the one used by Śaṅkara.⁵³ *Sat* in the sense of "entity" is not systematically and thematically distinguished from *sat* as primeval Being; nor do we find an explicit formulation of the "ontological difference" between *esse* and *ens*, *Sein* and *Seiendes*. However, this can hardly justify T. Vetter's suggestion that Vedic-Upaniṣadic thought was confined to entities and that the "ontological difference" remained entirely unknown in the Indian tradition prior to Maṇḍanamiśra (approximately 700 A.D.).⁵⁴

11. What kind of precedent does the Veda set for later Indian thought about being? What kind of beginning does it provide? It is well known that the relationship between the Veda and Hinduism is ambivalent, even paradoxical, and that it involves complex problems of continuity and change. According to Louis Renou, reverence for the Veda, even in the most orthodox circles of Hinduism, was nothing more than a "tipping of the hat," a ceremonial gesture without genuine affinity or commitment.⁵⁵

Indeed, the Vedic texts do not contain a "Hindu creed," nor do they provide us with a clearly recognizable doctrinal basis for later Hindu thought. "They offer only vague and questionable analogues to those ideas and ways of orientation which have become basic premises of later Hinduism. It may suffice to recall here the cyclical world view, the doctrine of karma and rebirth, the ethical principle of *ahimsā* and the soteriology of final liberation."⁵⁶ Nonetheless, classical Hindu philosophy invokes the Veda as the criterion of "orthodoxy" and tends to find its own teachings anticipated by, or at least fully compatible with, the Veda. Is this essentially a fiction and projection, or is the Veda indeed a

real and significant source of classical Indian philosophy? Renou himself found "real extensions" of the Veda in later Hinduism.⁵⁷ Is Hindu ontology—or more generally, Indian thought about being—among these "extensions"?

Bhartrhari, the great teacher of the "nondualism of the word" (*śabdādvaita*), claims that the various traditions of monistic or dualistic and pluralistic thought have their origin in certain suggestive Vedic and Upaniṣadic statements, which were subject to different interpretations.⁵⁸ Most of the examples which Bhartrhari cites in support of this thesis have to do with the notions of "being" and "nonbeing" and the question of the "origin" (*agra*) of the world.

We cannot accept such claims as historically accurate statements nor can we accept the systematic notions of Advaita Vedānta as philologically adequate exegesis. Yet it would be entirely inappropriate to dismiss the real connections between the Veda and these later developments as irrelevant. Śaṅkara's philosophy of nondualism may not be a historically adequate interpretation of the Upaniṣads. Nonetheless, it is a genuine continuation and transformation. Even if we do not accept van Buitenen's thesis that the Upaniṣadic *sadvidyā* marks the beginning of Indian philosophy, we cannot deny the extraordinary significance of the sixth chapter of the Chāndogya Upaniṣad for the systematic philosophies of Sāṃkhya, Vedānta, and so on.

In a more general and elusive sense, ancient patterns of Vedic mythology, its schemes of immanence-in-transcendence, unity-in-diversity, and identity-in-difference have become basic precedents and presuppositions of later philosophical thinking.⁵⁹ The pervasive fascination with a transcending horizon of being and nonbeing, or a principle in which they are united, the associations of *sat* with permanence, light, awareness, and so forth, or simply certain strong and exemplary usages of *asti*⁶⁰—all this has opened important perspectives. And in spite of all subsequent oblivion and obscurity, the Vedic cosmogonies of separation and opening, as well as the associated idea of an "upholding" (*dhr̥*; *dharma/dharman*) of such openness and the polarities and distinctions that appear in it, have had their echoes and "extensions" in the systematic philosophies of Buddhism as well as Hinduism.⁶¹

12. Indian philosophy is less susceptible of historical demarcations and periodizations than its European counterpart. However, the

following broad division (a modified version of suggestions made by E. Frauwallner⁶²) will provide us with a basic framework for our historical orientation:

1. Presystematic thought, as documented in the Vedas, Upaniṣads, epics, and early texts of the Buddhists;
2. The philosophy of the classical systems of Hinduism (such as Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya) and Buddhism (for instance, Sarvāstivāda and Yogācāra);
3. The philosophies of the theistic groups, in particular of the Vaiṣṇavas and Śaivas, which take a leading role in the second millenium A.D.;
4. Modern Indian philosophy, which responds to the Western challenge (after 1800).

Our following investigations will deal primarily with the philosophy of the systems, which began in the centuries after the death of the Buddha, reached its culmination in the first millenium A.D., and has been continued up to the modern era. Unlike presystematic thought, the philosophy of the systems is committed to formal criteria of coherence, the avoidance of contradictions, methods of proof and argumentation, and so on. Epistemology and dialectics play an increasingly conspicuous role.

The challenge of Buddhism and other non-Vedic or anti-Vedic movements has been of great importance for the development of systematic philosophy; and this has had special implications for the history of ontology in India.

Change and impermanence, and the illusory nature of self and substance, appear as characteristic Buddhist teachings in the earliest canonical documents. Later on, we find more systematic and technical conceptions of "momentariness" (*kṣaṇikatva*) and "voidness" (*śūnyatā*). In the ontological debates of the classical period, that is, the Indian "giants' battle about being," the Buddhists appear generally as advocates of change and becoming, of nonself and nonidentity, and as critics of reification and essentialization, if not of ontological commitment and conceptualization per se.⁶³ The Buddha teaches a "middle way" between "eternalism" (*śāśvatavāda*) and "destructionism" (*ucchedavāda*) or simply between the metaphysical positions of "is" (*asti*) and "is not"

(*nāsti*).⁶⁴ Ontological and metaphysical commitment of this kind appears as a (positive or negative) reflection of that primeval "thirst" (*trṣṇā*) which Buddhism tries to overcome.

However, this does not mean that conceptualizations of being or cosmological speculations play no role in Buddhism. For instance, the Sarvāstivāda tradition has produced extensive speculations on the ontological status of past, present, and future entities and on potentiality and actuality. It has also produced elaborate enumerations and classifications of entities, or types of entities. Debates on the status of the effect before its actual manifestation (i.e., the positions of *satkārya* and *asatkārya*) are also part of the Buddhist tradition.

But even the critics of the Sarvāstivāda are by no means indifferent with regard to ontological questions. Such concepts as *dharmatā* and *tathatā*, or *śūnyatā*, may not be "regular" ontological concepts; yet in their own peculiar way, they have to do with the question of being.⁶⁵

In its own way, the tradition of the Jainas has made very significant contributions to the debate about being. It may suffice to mention the works of Siddhasena Divākara and Mallavādin, which are among the most exemplary documents of Indian ontology.

13. In the Hindu defense against the Buddhist process philosophy and "negative ontology," the schools of Vaiśeṣika, Nyāya, and Pūrva-mīmāṃsā take a leading role. The concept of substance, the doctrine of universals and the assumption of a well-structured universe of durable and identifiable entities, and clearly distinguishable categories of reality, are at the heart of this defense. Within Hinduism, the debate between *satkāryavāda* and *asatkāryavāda*, the competing theories of the preexistence or nonexistence of the effect in its material cause, is of obvious relevance for the history of Indian ontology. The Sāṃkhya, Vaiśeṣika, and other schools participate in the debate. In the context of this debate, as well as in the defense against the Buddhists, the Vaiśeṣika school develops and explicates its conceptualizations of being.

The tradition of Advaita Vedānta affiliates itself with the "revelation" of the Upaniṣads and its teachings concerning *ātman*, *brahman*, *sat*, and *asat*. As we have seen, Śaṅkara tries to reconcile the different cosmogonic and cosmological statements by assuming two levels of truth and discourse in the Upaniṣads. In general, he uses ontological terminology, in particular the idea of a universal "being" or "beingness," with

some caution. Other Vedāntins, for instance Maṇḍana, are less cautious.⁶⁶

The meaning of being is questionable not only in its application to *brahman*, but also with regard to the status of the empirical world of time and space, which is often said to be "inexpressible" (*anirvacanīya*) in terms of being as well as nonbeing (*sadasadbhyām*).⁶⁷ Some of the most extensive debates concerning "being" and "nonbeing" are associated with the concept of *māyā*. The great controversies between the non-dualistic followers of Śaṅkara and the Dvaita Vedānta school of Madhva concerning the status of the world are among the most significant contributions to the ontological debate in the second millenium A.D.⁶⁸ We should also mention the Viśiṣṭādvaita tradition and the Śaivite Pratyabhijñā system of Kashmir, as represented by Abhinavagupta.

Bhartr̥hari, the metaphysician of the Vedic revelation and teacher of the "nondualism of the word" (*śabdādvaita*), is of special importance for the history of Indian ontology. In a unique manner, he combines metaphysics with grammar and linguistic reflection. In particular, he connects the investigations of the grammarians concerning the meaning and function of such verbal roots as *as* and *bhū* with speculations on the nature of universals and the metaphysical structure of the world. His concepts of *mahāsattā*, *upacārasattā*, and so on, illustrate this dual orientation of his thought. In general, the grammatical tradition is among the major sources of Indian ontology.⁶⁹

14. In conclusion, and in an inevitably simplifying classification, we may say that three different, yet interlinked and complementary sources have contributed to the development of ontological thought and debate in India:

1. Cosmogony and cosmological speculation;
2. Grammar and linguistic analysis and reflection;
3. Soteriological ideas concerning the liberation from, and transcendence of, being as well as nonbeing.

Vedic cosmogony and cosmology are very obvious, yet equally ambiguous, roots of Indian ontology. Cosmogony has to be distinguished from cosmology, and both of these have to be distinguished from conceptually explicit ontology. However, in their own way, cos-

mogony and cosmology may be anticipations of an understanding of being that ontology articulates through explicit conceptualizations of being. It seems to be natural for ontology in this specific sense of the word to occur historically later than cosmogony and cosmology; however, this does not eo ipso imply a more advanced understanding or a superior access to being. In a complex metamorphosis, the Vedic speculations on the origin and nature of the world evolve into theories of elements and doctrines of categories, as exemplified by the Vaiśeṣika system. In this process, ontology in the strict sense, as explicit thematization of being, may be affiliated with reflections on the meaning of origination, destruction, and transformation or it may have to do with projects of comprehensive enumeration and classification; that is, with the question *What is there?*⁷⁰

The grammatical and linguistic approach to the question of being, which we find in the tradition of the great grammarians Pāṇini, Patañjali, and so forth, is clearly different from the cosmogonic, cosmological, and "enumerative" approach. It deals not with the world per se, but with our ways of speaking about it. It does not try to determine which entities exist or "what being is," but what such words as *to be* and *to become* (*as*, *bhū*, etc.) mean and how they function in our speech and thought. Yet in spite of this obvious difference, the links between the two approaches have been close and extensive, not only in those traditions of Indian thought that assume an archetypal cosmological role of language and believe in a fundamental correspondence between language and the real world or between linguistic and cosmological categories.⁷¹

The practical, soteriological, and transformational dimensions of Indian thought would not seem to be conducive to, nor even compatible with, ontology as a theoretical, conceptual enterprise. Yet as a matter of fact, some of the more antitheoretical and anticonceptual movements of Indian thought, especially in Buddhism and nondualistic Vedānta, have nevertheless made intense and far-reaching contributions to the "question of being" or to ontology insofar as it is inherently questionable. We may speak here not only of a critique of inadequate conceptualizations of being, of a "negative ontology," or of a desire to transcend the fundamental dichotomy of being and nonbeing and the attachment to objectifiable reality. This is, in a sense, thought about being that is rooted in and motivated by a desire for absolute liberation, a kind of "soteriontology." Even Nāgārjuna's doctrine of voidness (*śūnyavāda*) may be

classified not only as a “negative ontology,” but also as a “soteriontology” of this kind.⁷² Concerning Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, his concept of liberation, that is, of coinciding with the absolute reality and identity of *brahman* (*brahmabhāva*), has an undeniably ontological dimension.⁷³ Familiar distinctions of “philosophical theory” and “soteriological practice” are not well suited to describe Śaṅkara’s peculiar “soteriontology.”⁷⁴

The tradition of thinking about being to which these three sources have contributed is clearly different from that of Western ontology. Yet in its own way, it responds and corresponds to those basic problems and perplexities that we have presented in our general introduction.

Chapter 2: Notes

1. B. Delbrück, *Altindische Syntax*. (Halle, 1888), p. 273, describes the copulative uses of both *as* and *bhū* as later, historically derivative developments; but see also J. Canedo, *Zur Wort- und Satzstellung in der alt- und mittelindischen Prosa* (Göttingen, 1937), pp. 36; 77ff. (examples from Vedic literature). On general problems concerning the concept of copula in linguistics, see H. Gipper, *Bausteine zur Sprachinhaltsforschung*, 2d ed. (Düsseldorf, 1969), pp. 135–214; 502ff. (bibliography). The Tibetan translators, whose language provided them with a choice between the existential *yod* and the more copulative *yin*, would make the different functions of *bhū* and *as* more explicit. However, it would hardly be appropriate to impose a rigorous distinction between the copulative and existential uses of *to be* on the Sanskrit materials; see also the pertinent observations by C. Kahn, “The Greek Verb ‘To Be’ and the Concept of Being,” *Foundations of Language* 2 (1966): 245–266 (especially 247, on the lack of distinction in Greek).

2. Numerous other derivatives of *bhū* (such as *vibhava*, *vibhūti*, *anubhava*, etc.) are not part of the technical ontological vocabulary, but have, nonetheless, potential ontological implications.

3. See later, Chapters 3, 8.

4. See later, Chapter 7; *tuchya* in the sense of utter voidness appears already in *Rgveda* X, 129, 3.

5. See later, section 10; *skambha* is the mythical “world pillar” (cf. *Atharvaveda* X, 7–8). The emergence of such terms as *prameya* and *abhidheya* reflects a growing emphasis on epistemology, logic, and semantic analysis. *Tattva* appears in different roles in Nyāya, Buddhism, Bhartṛhari’s *Śabdādvaita*, etc.

6. On *aksara*, see J. A. B. van Buitenen, "Aksara," *JAOS* 79 (1959): 176–187; on *dharma*, see *India and Europe*, pp. 317ff.

7. See earlier, Chapter 1, section 2 (especially n. 13). Although the translators were fully aware of the different ontological capacities of Sanskrit on the one hand and Chinese or Tibetan on the other, they did not suggest any "linguistic relativity" of ontological concepts and theories. For an early attempt to establish a correspondence between the ontological terminology in Sanskrit and Latin, see Paulinus a S. Bartholomaeo, *Vyacarana* (Rome, 1804), p. 155; *tatvam*, *svabhavam*, etc., appear as equivalents of *essentia*, whereas *satvam*, *sattā*, *stīti* are given for *existentia*.

8. See, for instance, D. N. Shastri, *Critique of Indian Realism* (Agra, 1964); N. V. Joshi, *Indian Philosophy from the Ontological Point of View* (Bombay, 1977; using the term *ontology* in a loose sense).

9. Reflection on these questions can be traced back to our oldest extant sources in grammar and etymology (i.e., Pāṇini and Yāska) and is fully explicit in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya* and Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadiya*.

10. See *Ratnakīrtinibandhāvalī*, ed. A. Thakur (Patna, 1957), p. 62, (*Kṣaṇa-bhaṅgasiddhi*, Introduction): *yadi nāma darśane darśane nānāprakāraṇi sattvalakṣaṇam uktam āste, arthakriyākāritvaṃ sattāsamavāyah, svarūpasattvam, utpādayayadhrauvayayogitvam, pramānavisayatvam, sadupalambhakapramāṇagocaratvaṃ, vyapadeśa-visayatvam ityādi . . .* The second edition (*Ratnakīrtinibandhāvalīḥ*; Patna, 1975, p. 67), introduces some misprints into the text (for instance, *tadupalambhaka*- instead of *sadupalambhaka*-).

11. See later, Chapter 10. The Vedānta commentator Prakāśātman (ca. A.D. 1000) uses the term *arthakriyāsāmarthyasattva* to describe the level of empirical, worldly reality more commonly known as *vyāvahārikasattva*; see *Pāñcapādikāvivarāṇa* (Benares, 1892; Vizianagram Sanskrit Series), p. 31; also K. Cammann, *Das System des Advaita nach der Lehre Prakāśātman's* (Munich, 1965), pp. 46f.

12. See earlier, Chapter 1, section 5 (especially n. 38ff.).

13. See later, Chapter 10; cf. also J. L. Mehta, "Heidegger and the Comparison of Indian and Western Philosophy," *PEW* 20 (1970): 303–317; also in *Philosophy and Religion. Essays in Interpretation* (New Delhi, 1990), pp. 1–19.

14. For a stimulating, though somewhat idiosyncratic and speculative, discussion of some of these developments, see C. A. Scharbau, *Die Idee der Schöpfung in der vedischen Literatur* (Stuttgart, 1932).

15. Cf. J. Gonda, "In the Beginning," *ABORI* 63 (1982): 43–62.

16. See J. A. B. van Buitenen, *Rāmānuja's Vedārthasaṃgraha* (Poona, 1956), p. 3.

17. The translation follows R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, 2d ed. (London, 1931; reprint, 1971), p. 241.

18. See *Chândogya Upaniṣad* III, 19, 1 (*asad eva-idam agra āsit*); *Rgveda* X, 71, 2-3; see also *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* I, 2, 1 (*na-eva-iha kimcana agra āsit*); *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* II, 7; and *Rgveda* X, 129, 4 (*sato bandhum asati niravindan*).

19. Altogether, the word *asat* occurs seven times in the *Rgveda*; five times, we find *āsat* (with accentuated lengthened first vowel). For further references, see H. Oldenberg, *Die Weltanschauung der Brāhmana-Texte* (Göttingen, 1919), pp. 177ff. Oldenberg suspected a confusion between "being" as copula and "being" as existence in these texts.

20. See H. Oertel, "Asat = 'Undifferentiated', 'Formless', 'Incapable of Perception by the Senses' in Vedic Prose," *New Indian Antiquary* 1 (1938-39): 317-321; see also J. Gonda, *Die Religionen Indiens*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1960), p. 181.

21. See W. N. Brown, "The Rigvedic Equivalent for Hell," *JAOS* 61 (1941): 76-80; see also "The Creation Myth of the Rig Veda," *JAOS* 62 (1942): 85-98 (also in *India and Indology, Selected Articles* by W. N. Brown, ed. R. Rocher. Benares, 1978, pp. 20ff.).

22. *Rāmānuja's Vedārthasamgraha* (cited in n. 16), p. 3.

23. Cf. J. Gonda, "In the Beginning" (cited in n. 15).

24. *Chândogya Upaniṣad* VI, 8, 4 describes all creatures as having their root, their abode and their support in pure being (*sanmūla, sadāyatana, satpratisthita*); according to VII, 24, the absolute self or "plenum" (*bhūman*) is established (*pratisthita*) "in its own greatness" (*sve mahimni*). See also J. Gonda, "Pratiṣṭhā," *Selected Studies*, vol. 2 (Leiden, 1975), pp. 338-374; "Āyatana," *ibid.*, pp. 178-256.

25. The *satkāryavāda* is, of course, most commonly associated with the Sāṃkhya and Yoga schools of thought.

26. See later, Chapter 3.

27. See Śaṅkara on *Chândogya Upaniṣad* III, 19, 1: *asad avyākṛtanāmarūpam idam jagad aśeṣam agre prāgavasthāyām utpatter āsīn, na tv asad eva*. For a comprehensive discussion and harmonization of exemplary cosmogonic references to being and nonbeing in the Upaniṣads, see *BSBh* I, 4, 14-15.

28. See *Chândogya Upaniṣad* VI, 3, 2 (*nāmarūpe vyākaraṇāni*); 3 (*nāmarūpe vyākaroṭi*); see also the extensive references to "differentiation" (*vyākṛ*) in *BU* I, 4, 7 (with *BUBh*).

29. Cf. G. Scholem, *Über einige Grundbegriffe des Judentums* (Frankfurt, 1970), pp. 53-89.

30. This has, of course, significant parallels in ancient Greek thought, for instance in the cosmologies of Thales and Anaximander.

31. For other exemplary paradigms and modalities of origination or production, see, for instance, the well-known Rgvedic hymns X, 72; X, 90; and X, 121; see also R. N. Dandekar, *Universe in Hindu Thought* (Bangalore, 1972).

32. See, for instance, *Rgveda* X, 81–82 (Viśvakarman, the divine sculptor or carpenter).

33. Cf. H. von Glasenapp, *Entwicklungsstufen des indischen Denkens* (Halle, 1940), p. 23: "das chaotische Durcheinander der im Veda entwickelten zahllosen Schöpfungslehren." J. Varenne, *Cosmogonies védiques* (Paris, 1982), seems to assume variations of one basic myth; see also F. B. J. Kuiper, *Ancient Indian Cosmogony*, ed. J. Irwin (Delhi, 1983), pp. 9–22 ("The Basic Concept of Vedic Religion").

34. For a comparative survey of separation myths in different ancient traditions, see W. Staudacher, *Die Trennung von Himmel und Erde* (Tübingen, 1942; reprint Darmstadt, 1968); on the "openness" of the world, cf. J. Gonda, *Loka. World and Heaven in the Veda* (Amsterdam, 1966), especially pp. 7ff.; 25ff.

35. See, for instance *Rgveda* X, 89; also II, 12. The act of opening is usually associated with the killing of Vṛtra, the covering, enclosing force.

36. Cf. *Rgveda* V, 85; VII, 86.

37. On the role of various deities in the cosmogonic process, see also R. N. Dandekar, *Universe in Hindu Thought* (Bangalore, 1972), pp. 4ff.; 12ff.; 32ff.

38. *Ancient Indian Cosmogony* (cited in n. 33), 11. Kuiper sees the separation or opening as the "second stage" in the cosmogonic process; cf. also pp. 103ff.

39. Cf. J. Gonda, *Loka* (cited in n. 34), pp. 18ff. Śāyana's commentary uses the terms *avakāśa* (on VIII, 100, 12) and *prakāśa* (on X, 104, 10) to express the sense of open space and light that seems to be at stake in these texts. The concept of *prakāśa*, as used by later thinkers (for instance, Abhinavagupta) associates the sense of primeval openness with ideas about absolute awareness as the condition of the possibility of all manifestation.

40. Cf. B. Hager, *Die Entwicklung des Māyā-Begriffes im Indo-Arischen* (Freiburg, 1983; Diss. Tübingen, 1942), especially pp. 11ff.; J. Gonda, "The 'Original' Sense and the Etymology of Skt. *māyā*," *Four Studies in the Language of the Veda* (The Hague, 1959), pp. 119–193; for later developments, see L. T. O'Neil, *Māyā in Saṅkara* (Delhi, 1980). *Māyā* is the power of ("magical") projection, as well as the projection itself. The derivation of the word from the root *mā*, "to measure" (cf. also *nirmāṇa*) seems basically acceptable and would be compatible with the important connotations of spatial extension and spatial projection.

41. Cf. F. B. J. Kuiper, *Ancient Indian Cosmogony* (cited in n. 33), p. 104.
42. Cf. *India and Europe*, ch. 17 (especially pp. 317ff.).
43. Both *dharman/dharma* and *māyā* suggest a "dynamic universe" whose very existence and continuity depend on acts and powers of upholding and projection; for a challenging, though somewhat speculative, presentation of this "dynamic universe," see L. Silburn, *Instant et cause. Le discontinu dans la pensée philosophique de l'Inde* (Paris, 1955), especially chs. 1-3.
44. On Hegel's claim that Indian thought is fundamentally "substantialist," see *India and Europe*, ch. 6.
45. Once again, this statement involves a certain degree of simplification and questionable generalization.
46. On *skambha*, see *Atharvaveda* X, 7-8. All-inclusiveness and transcendence of all distinctions is ascribed to a variety of divine or sacrificial principles, and it serves often as a device of glorification; see, for instance, *Atharvaveda* XI, 4 (*prāṇa*); XI, 7 (*ucchiṣṭa*).
47. See, for instance, *Atharvaveda* X, 8, 6.
48. Cf. *Mundaka Upaniṣad* II, 2, 1: also *Śvetāśvatara* IV, 18; on *brahman* in general, see J. Gonda, *Notes on brahman* (Utrecht, 1950).
49. Cf. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* II, 6.
50. Cf. *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* II 3, 1ff.
51. Cf. also the concept of the *bhūman* ("plenum"), *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* VII, 24f.
52. *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* II, 6.
53. However, the distinction between "higher" and "lower" knowledge (*parā, aparā vidyā* in *Mundaka Upaniṣad* I, 2, 4f. was available to provide scriptural support for Śaṅkara's distinction between the "absolute" (*pāramārthika*) and conventional (*vyāvahārika*) levels of truth and discourse.
54. See T. Vetter, *Erkenntnisprobleme bei Dharmakīrti* (Vienna, 1964), pp. 89-98; especially p. 98: "Das Merkwürdige an der Entwicklung der indischen Philosophie ist eben, dass erst seit Maṇḍana der Ausdruck 'sat' dazu dient, das Seiende vom einzelnen Seienden so abzuheben, dass es mehr ist als ein nur ontisches Prinzip. Ab diesem Zeitpunkt haben wir in Indien das 'Seiende' in einer ontologischen Bedeutung wie bei einigen europäischen Systemen das 'Sein'." Regardless of all merely terminological questions, this does not seem to do justice to the sense of transcending the entire "ontic" realm, which we find not only in Vedic-Upaniṣadic thought, but also, though in a radically different style, in Buddhism (most notably in Nāgārjuna's *Śūnyavāda*).

55. See L. Renou, *Le destin du Veda dans l'Inde* (Paris, 1960), p. 1: "un simple 'coup de chapeau' donné en passant à une idole . . ."

56. See *Tradition and Reflection*, p. 1.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 2f.

58. See Bhartrhari, *VP* I, 8 (with his own *Vṛtti*).

59. Cf. *Tradition and Reflection*, pp. 39ff.

60. See, for instance, *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* X, 4, 2, 21: *asty etad dhy amṛtaṃ, yad dhy amṛtaṃ, tad dhy asti*; *Rgveda* VIII, 100, 3f. (on Indra): *yadi satyam asti*; *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* VI, 12f.: *asti-iti bruvato 'nyatra katham tad upalabhyate . . . asti-ity eva-upalabdavyah*).

61. Cf. L. Silburn, *Instant et cause* (cited in n. 43); and F. E. Reynolds, "Multiple Cosmogonies and Ethics: The Case of Theravada Buddhism," *Cosmogony and Ethical Order*, ed. R. W. Lovin and F. E. Reynolds (Chicago, 1985), pp. 203–224.

62. See E. Frauwallner, *Gesch. d. ind. Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 28f. Frauwallner has only three basic periods; but it seems advisable to separate presystematic thought from the philosophy of the systems.

63. This tendency has found many different expressions in the history of Buddhist thought, especially in Mahāyāna Buddhism; in a very radical form, it appears in the Prajñāpāramitā literature and in Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka school.

64. See, for instance, *Samyuttanikāya* II, 17 (Kaccāyana/Kātyāyana); this important text on the "extremes" of *atthitā* and *natthitā* (i.e., *astitā* and *nāstitā*) is cited by Nāgārjuna, *MK* XV, 7. Nāgārjuna himself described *nirvāṇa* as the disappearance of, or liberation from, the ideas of being and nonbeing; cf. *Ratnāvalī* I, 42ff.

65. Cf. G. Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra* (Albany, 1991), pp. 155–187: "Ontology in Mahāyāna Buddhism" (especially pp. 155–159, "Buddhism and Ontology").

66. Cf. Maṇḍana, *Brahmasiddhi*, ed. S. Kuppaswami Sastri (Madras, 1937; reprint Delhi, 1984), pp. 37f.; the absolute *ātman* is called *sattālaksana*, and *sattā* itself is referred to as *prakṛtiḥ parā*. Maṇḍana's use of *sattā* seems indebted to Bhartrhari's *Vākyapadīya*. Unlike Śaṅkara, Maṇḍana also tried to establish "reality as such," or "pure being" (*vastumātra*, *sanmātra*), as the datum of pure, pre-predicative perception.

67. On Śaṅkara's use of *anirvacanīya* (in his *BSBh*, it is usually accompanied by *tattvānyatvābhyām*), see P. Hacker, *Kl. Schr.*, pp. 84ff.



68. On the side of Advaita Vedānta, this debate culminated in the *vaitasiddhi* by Madhusūdana Sarasvatī (ca. 1600).

69. See also later, Chapter 9, on being and time according to Bhāṣya and the tradition of grammatical philosophy.

70. See later, Chapter 4.

71. This correspondence is basically taken for granted in the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems.

72. Such terms as *dharmatā*, *tathatā*, and above all, *śūnyatā* express a radical commitment to an identity (*svabhāva*) which is not the identity of particular entities (*bhāvanāṇaṃ svabhāvaḥ*); see, for instance, Nāgārjuna, MK XV (*Svabhāva-parikṣā*) with Candrakīrti's commentary; see also *Tradition and Reflection*, p. 253. Such texts as the *Ratnagotravibhāga* have a more positive view of ultimate being, as coinciding with "Buddha nature" and liberation; cf. E. Frauwallner, *Die Philosophie des Buddhismus* (Berlin, 1956), pp. 256ff.

73. See, for instance, BSBh I, 1, 4 (*Works*, vol. 2, 18): liberation is the nature and being of *brahman*, and not something to be brought about (*brahmabhāvaś ca mokṣaḥ, tasmān na saṃskāryo 'pi mokṣaḥ*).

74. Cf. *India and Europe*, pp. 270ff.; *Tradition and Reflection*, pp. 254ff.

55. See L. Renou, *Le destin du Veda dans l'Inde* (Paris, 1960), p. 1: "un simple 'coup de chapeau' donné en passant à une idole . . ."

56. See *Tradition and Reflection*, p. 1.

57. *Ibid.*, pp. 2f.

58. See Bhartṛhari, *VP* I, 8 (with his own *Vṛtti*).

59. Cf. *Tradition and Reflection*, pp. 39ff.

60. See, for instance, *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* X, 4, 2, 21: *asty etad dhy amṛtaṃ, yad dhy amṛtaṃ, tad dhy asti*; *Rgveda* VIII, 100, 3f. (on Indra): *yadi satyam asti*; *Kāṭha Upaniṣad* VI, 12f.: *asti-iti bruvato 'nyatra kathaṃ tad upalabhyate . . . asti-ity eva-upalabdhavyaḥ*).

61. Cf. L. Silburn, *Instant et cause* (cited in n. 43); and F. E. Reynolds, "Multiple Cosmogonies and Ethics: The Case of Theravada Buddhism," *Cosmogony and Ethical Order*, ed. R. W. Lovin and F. E. Reynolds (Chicago, 1985), pp. 203–224.

62. See E. Frauwallner, *Gesch. d. ind. Phil.*, vol. 1, pp. 28f. Frauwallner has only three basic periods; but it seems advisable to separate presystematic thought from the philosophy of the systems.

63. This tendency has found many different expressions in the history of Buddhist thought, especially in Mahāyāna Buddhism; in a very radical form, it appears in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature and in Nāgārjuna's *Madhyamaka* school.

64. See, for instance, *Samyuttanikāya* II, 17 (Kaccāyana/Kātyāyana); this important text on the "extremes" of *atthitā* and *natthitā* (i.e., *astitā* and *nāstitā*) is cited by Nāgārjuna, *MK* XV, 7. Nāgārjuna himself described *nirvāṇa* as the disappearance of, or liberation from, the ideas of being and nonbeing; cf. *Ratnāvalī* I, 42ff.

65. Cf. G. Nagao, *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra* (Albany, 1991), pp. 155–187: "Ontology in Mahāyāna Buddhism" (especially pp. 155–159, "Buddhism and Ontology").

66. Cf. Maṇḍana, *Brahmasiddhi*, ed. S. Kuppaswami Sastri (Madras, 1937; reprint Delhi, 1984), pp. 37f.; the absolute *ātman* is called *sattālakṣaṇa*, and *sattā* itself is referred to as *prakṛtiḥ parā*. Maṇḍana's use of *sattā* seems indebted to Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya*. Unlike Śaṅkara, Maṇḍana also tried to establish "reality as such," or "pure being" (*vastumātra*, *sanmātra*), as the datum of pure, pre-predicative perception.

67. On Śaṅkara's use of *anirvacanīya* (in his *BSBh*, it is usually accompanied by *tattvānyatavāhyām*), see P. Hacker, *Kl. Schr.*, pp. 84ff.

68. On the side of Advaita Vedānta, this debate culminated in the *Advaitasiddhi* by Madhusūdana Sarasvatī (ca. 1600).

69. See also later, Chapter 9, on being and time according to Bhartṛhari and the tradition of grammatical philosophy.

70. See later, Chapter 4.

71. This correspondence is basically taken for granted in the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems.

72. Such terms as *dharmatā*, *tathatā*, and above all, *sūnyatā* express a radical commitment to an identity (*svabhāva*) which is not the identity of particular entities (*bhāvānāṃ svabhāvaḥ*); see, for instance, Nāgārjuna, MK XV (*Svabhāva-parīkṣā*) with Candrakīrti's commentary; see also *Tradition and Reflection*, p. 253. Such texts as the *Ratnagotravibhāga* have a more positive view of ultimate being, as coinciding with "Buddha nature" and liberation; cf. E. Frauwallner, *Die Philosophie des Buddhismus* (Berlin, 1956), pp. 256ff.

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74. Cf. *India and Europe*, pp. 270ff.; *Tradition and Reflection*, pp. 254ff.