Philosophy and Theology

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CHAPTER 24

The Classical Worldview

Early Foundations of Hindu Philosophy

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In the c. fifth century BCE *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, the brahmin Śaunaka asks "What is it, my lord, by knowing which a man comes to know this whole world?." His question captures Ancient India's intellectual hunger for world-explaining ideas. Śaunaka's interlocutor, Aṅgiras, gives an answer said to have been passed down directly from the creator deity Brahma, and promised to be "of all knowledge the root." It speaks of *brahman* – an idea variously identified as the foundation, root, hub, loom, thread, life, or substance of the universe – as the best kind of thing to be known (Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad (MU) 1.1.2–3):

> Two types of knowledge a man should learn – those who know *brahman* tell us – the higher and the lower. The lower of the two consists of the Ṛgveda, the Yajurveda, the Sāmaveda, the Atharvaveda, phonetics, the ritual science, grammar, etymology, metrics, and astronomy; whereas the higher is that by which one grasps the imperishable. (MU 1.1.4–5)[1]

This passage evokes the rich intellectual culture that had emerged out of Vedic ritual by the middle of the first millennium BCE. Continuing, it also captures the beginnings of India's search for a *metaphysical* understanding, that is, an idea of that which pervades all that we see, yet goes beyond our empirical perception of the finite, changeable world:

> What cannot be seen, what cannot be grasped…
> what is eternal and all-pervading,
> extremely fine, present everywhere –
> that is the immutable, which the wise fully perceive. (MU 1.1.6)[2]

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Many of the Vedic texts evince an interest in cosmology – the nature and source of the universe – that would gradually grow into a prolific philosophical tradition recorded in the Upanisads, Sūtras and Kārikās. Many of the ideas established at that time were the basis for later doctrines concerning creation (*sarga*, *sṛṣṭi*) and causation (*karaṇa*), visible identities (*nāma-rūpa*) and transformation (*pariṇāma*, *vyakti*), consciousness (*citta*, *buddhi*) and knowledge (*jñāna*), the self (*ātman*, *jīva*) and the unifying foundation of reality (*sat*, *pradhāna*, *prakṛti*, *avasthā*, *āśraya*, *brahman*, *adhiṣṭḥāna*, etc.). They shaped the theistic-Vedāntic worldview of the epic *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* in which we see "the popular equivalent of the ferment of ideas recorded in the Upaniṣads" (Brockington 2003, 125). These ideas also laid the theological foundation for the devotional worship of the *Purāṇas*, the esoteric cosmologies of the *Tantras*, and the complex dialectic of medieval scholastic debate. Indeed, one might say that these notions guided the unfolding of philosophy in India, much as Zeno's paradoxes, Plato's forms, and Aristotle's categories determined the path of European thought. Many would have a global impact, eventually inspiring thinkers in Chinese, Islamic, and European traditions. These classical worldviews still underlie much of Hindu belief and worship today, providing an implicit metaphysics of the soul and its place in reality.

One of the motivations for the development of philosophy was the belief that it brought power and immortality: instead of the litany of cows, sons, rain, and heroes for which the earlier Ṛg Vedic hymns plead, philosophical knowledge offered access to the world and that on which it all is founded (Aitareya Upaniṣad (AU) 3.3). Where before gifts had come from the gods, now knowledge was the source of new boons such as immortality (AU 3.4), freedom of movement in all the worlds (Chāndogya Upaniṣad (CU) 7.25.2), daily access to heaven (CU 8.3.3), and capturing – or even *becoming* – the world itself (Taittirīya Upaniṣad (TU) 1.6.2, CU 3.14.4, Praśna Upaniṣad (PU) 4.9–11).

Yet philosophy was not only instrumental to practical concerns. The demands for knowledge we see from the time of the earliest hymns suggests that classical Indian philosophy also grew from a gradual appreciation of understanding as a thing of value in its own right. In a culture increasingly concerned to avoid transitory pleasures, the treasures of knowledge were precious because they were indestructible and could themselves lead to immortality, the soul's indestructible state (Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad (BU) 4.3.23).[3] Knowledge also became one of classical India's most effective tools for transforming the self, a link that was grounded in the assumed connection between comprehension and the ability to determine a specific path of action, or a general practice of life. In this sense, the Hindu metaphysical traditions can be seen as a response to the existential cry of one late Vedic hymn:

> What thing I am, I know not clearly; mysterious, bound, I wander in the mind. (Atharva Veda (AV) 9.10.15)[4]

Thus, metaphysical knowledge and the change it works in us served as an Indian *Bildungskultur* – a spiritual-intellectual culture of self-cultivation that used philosophy to map out human possibilities for achieving higher states of being.

From Cosmology to Philosophy: The Historical Development of Metaphysics

Various cosmological beliefs about the structure of the universe circulated in first millennium BCE India, and they are mixed throughout the Vedic hymns, Brāhmanas, Araṇyakas,

and Upaniṣads, the discourses of the epics, the Sūtras and Kārikās, and many of the Sāstras.[5] Hints of cosmological speculation exist in the Ṛg Vedic and Atharva Vedic hymns, influencing the thematic collections of poetry, narrative and pre-science we see in the Upaniṣads, and even in the short aphoristic treatises captured in the Sūtras and Kārikās. The Ṛg Vedic hymns speak of three spheres of earth, air, and heavens (e.g. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 1.2.5), and the Upaniṣads and Brāhmaṇas contain varied mappings of the cosmos as sky, air, earth, underlying waters and sometimes the celestial lights (AU 1.1, 3.3). In time, texts began to depict the multi-level cosmos as a setting in which humans are reborn in the worlds of the ancestors then slip away through the sun into a higher realm, or – later – would circulate after death in the moon or some other intermediary region, until they either escape upward through a gate at the zenith of the sky into the deathless realm of the deities, or pass down through rain into the earth again, ready to be consumed and processed into semen, only to be born anew (e.g. "Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad (KṣU) 1.2–3).

One of the most important innovations to this worldview was the "samsaric" cosmology found in the latest strata of Vedic texts such as the Upaniṣads. In this cosmology the core self (the *ātman*, *jīva*, or *puruṣa*) stood center-stage, able to control its own thoughts and actions through knowledge (*jñāna*) and meditation (*yoga*), and thereby shape itself and, to some extent, the world around it. This freedom of will gave it the chance to work with or against the natural order of nature, society, and ethics that is known as *dharma*, although it was constrained by *karma*, the results of past actions. Most of the classical traditions believed that living beings undergo *samsara* - the natural process of being reborn repeatedly until we are able to break the chain of karma and liberate ourselves. In the Vedāntic tradition, this self was linked to the deeper unitive reality of *brahman* underlying the cosmos. Through gnosis it could realize that connection more fully – although the different Hindu schools of thought differed on their interpretations of whether the connection consists in a full or partial identity between the self and *brahman*, a relation of dependence, or a personal relationship. Almost all schools agreed that the self undergoes repeated rebirth until it can achieve some form of liberation (*mokṣa*) from the cycle of worldly lives – often with the help of transformative knowledge about the nature of reality, supported by meditative and ascetic practices. This focus on the self's meticulous shaping of its own mind, body and actions became a distinguishing mark of Hindu thought, mirrored in the practices of meditation and self-transformation also found in Indian Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, and other Indian religious traditions.

These cosmologies were often based on observations of the visible world – the milky way, for instance, was taken as a sign of a distant heavenly realm where the gods abide. A kind of proto-science emerged in the analysis of nature into the five vital elements of earth, fire, air, water and ether or space, and of living beings into creatures born from eggs (birds, etc.), wombs (mammals, etc.), sprouts (plants), and sweat (possibly microbial life) (e.g. AU 3.3), or herbs and minerals into colors that exemplify their particular character. The *Atharva Veda* contains a wealth of early alchemical ideas and sympathetic magic based on the qualities observed throughout nature. Thus, the Vedic authors combined images of the cosmos that were purely speculative, with interpretations of the direct empirical evidence seen around them in nature.

But doctrines such as these depended on an underlying *metaphysical* worldview dealing with identity and the constitution of the world, causality and agency, consciousness and the nature of ideas. "Large combination" ideas (*mahā-saṃdhā*; TU 1.2) synthesized knowledge about the component aspects of the natural and mental realms into theories about reality

as a whole. The debates reported in the Upaniṣads and epics vigorously seek concepts able to explain all the natural causes that control us. These included, as the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* puts it, time, elements, chance, necessity, and the intrinsic nature of things, the wheel on which they are located, and the river from which they derive.[6]

Out of this quest for wide-reaching knowledge a longstanding historical culture of speculation emerged. The implicit cosmology of the Vedic hymns was reworked through successive textual genres of Upaniṣads, Epics, the first treatise-like Kārikās and Sūtras, and the later scholastic genres of Bhāṣya and Vivaraṇa commentary, compendious Saṃgrāha summaries, and the pedagogic Upadeśa "instruction" texts yielding detailed philosophical positions. Across early Hindu schools of thought, the range of theories was diverse: Vedānta held that the universe is grounded in the single unifying medium of *Brahman*. Vaiśeṣika argued that atoms of different kinds aggregated into composite entities constitute the world. Vyākaraṇa thought in terms of semantic structures, and Sāṃkhya explained reality in terms of two eternal substances of procreative material (*prakṛti*) and pure awareness (*puruṣa*).[7] Each theory developed over generations of scholastic debate: Vedānta would divide into at least four major schools of thought about the relation of the divine *Brahman* to the world and the self: nondual "Advaita," complex-monist "Bhedābheda," theistic "Qualified," dual "Viśiṣṭādvaita," and dualistic "Dvaita." This complex scholastic movement flourished through the medieval period and up to the eve of colonialism in the 1600s, continuing through to modernity in pockets of traditional intellectual culture in centers such as Varanasi, Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, Bengal, and courts across India. Many of the theological sects or *saṃpradāyas* have preserved their theological traditions of study to some extent, often following the direction set by classical thinkers, much as Pre-Socratic thinkers in ancient Greece established long-lived debates on time, change, universals, and paradox.[8] From early "mythic" styles of writing, texts became more distinctly philosophical in approach insofar as they came to:

1. question existing narratives about the cosmos, demanding well-grounded reasoning and coherent explanations,
2. use inference – *generalization from* and *analysis of* experience – to generate wider knowledge from local observations,
3. identify the most basic constituent(s) of reality, and the unchanging core of the human self – often through reductive analysis of what is universal or fundamental in experience,
4. consistently apply extended analogies as metaphysical models of reality that could be passed on and questioned in a systematic way,
5. value the positive transformative effect of understanding, laying the ground for philosophy as a "way of life" and a religious practice of self-transformation.

The themes and ontologies that grew out of classical sources benefitted from a culture of open debate, and were combined *ad hoc* to create complex layered worldviews. Often the different approaches below were blended or nested within one another so that the procedure of philosophizing was less a matter of competing claims, than of parallel models. One of the challenges of studying classical Indian thought has been approaching these complex multivocal redacted texts in such a way that we can see the discrete philosophical insights they contain.

The Social Development of Philosophy in India

Key social changes facilitated the development of a philosophical tradition in India. One was a new cosmopolitanism, born of trade in agrarian and artisanal goods that knit the settlements more closely into shared intellectual conversations. In the Indus Valley civilization there had been a geographically widespread culture reaching from modern Pakistan through to Gujarat in the south and Uttar Pradesh in the east, and migration had long linked ancient Persia to northern India (as evidenced in the Mittani texts). By the turn of the second into the first millennium BCE, the northern Indian regions of the Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar were populated by numerous tribes that were coalescing into chieftain-led clans, and eventually regional polities governed by inherited leadership – that is, the first "kingdoms."[9] These allowed for greater exchange of ideas, and the growth of a public sphere. Kingdoms also meant courts, centers of debate supported by patronage and touched by the growing prestige of intellectual life. One of the most culturally influential of these was *Bharata*, the Kuru kingdom of King Parīkṣit that served as the central setting for the great Hindu epic narrative, the *Mahābhārata*. From the textual record it seems that priests, nobles and other classes of India's increasingly cosmopolitan society such as renouncers participated in these shared debates – whether in the courts, or in the homes of brahmins and the public spaces of village and forest settlement. The wealth of artisanal metaphors in the later Vedic sources implies that some of India's communities were beginning to pass beyond a preponderant concern with basic sustenance toward new levels of expertise and wealth, and the Upaniṣads paint a picture of kingdoms full of debate about the self, the cosmos, and soteriology (Olivelle 1996, xxix).

The emerging ideologies of kingship and brahminical learning were also important. The larger kingdoms that developed on the Gangetic plain such as Kuru-Pañcāla and Kosala-Videha were spread too wide for direct military or administrative control from the center of government; they required an ideological basis in order to sustain their sovereignty. Kings cultivated the legitimation of the Sanskritic culture of dharmic order and sacrificial sanctity, of which the endogamous caste of *brahmins* were the gateholders (Heesterman 1985). Meanwhile, the priests courted royal patronage by promoting their own learning and honing their own expertise (Black 2007). *Within* Brahminic communities the development of specialist ritual expertise that distinguished each *śākhā* endogamous tradition, was now complemented by an esoteric knowledge couched in secrecy. While there is evidence of inter-*śākhā* competition in the Upaniṣadic narratives, nevertheless *vāda* or theoretical debate was an invaluable way of building new, wider knowledge (see Frazier 2019a), and this appears to have created a sense of *communitas* binding the philosophical "collective" (Cohen 2018). Some brahmins also seem to promoted a new ideal of virtue: the good brahmin was no longer merely the keeper of ritual order, but now sought to circulate philosophical truths within pastoral communities or *āśramas* of "exceptional brahmins who dedicated their lives in an extraordinary manner to religious exercise (*śrama*)" (see Olivelle 1993). These drives toward patronage, ideological sovereignty, increased expertise, and religious excellence all advanced the development of a thriving intellectual culture in classical India.

The brahmin priests furnished Sanskrit as the lingua franca of the new intelligentsia. It connected the private, ritualized pedagogical world of the brahmins with the open forum of the new royal courts, and the wider communities of oral "epic" narrative. They thus unified the social strata of the time with voices from different regions, leading new

generations to become linked into a continuous tradition of scholarly composition that built ever more sophisticated versions of each doctrine over time. These centers of intellectual exchange generated a core "public sphere" much like the Greek agora where theoretical understanding gained its own cultural caché. Different Vedic specialisms approached philosophical questions in different ways, each influenced by the analogies they drew from their concrete ritual expertise. Chanters of the hymns often thought about reality in terms of language as we can see in the *Chāndogya* and *Taittirīya Upaniṣads*, while those who had to dissect animal sacrifices were intensely aware of the structural unity of functionally arranged parts, as can be seen in speculations surrounding the Āśvamedha horse sacrifice in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. Specialists in the Agniṣṭoma soma-pressing ritual used their observation that things have a condensed "essence" hidden within as a metaphor for the essence of reality, and also for philosophy's ability to extract the essence of things perceived in our everyday life. Metaphysics thus grew partly out of "embodied understanding and imagination" (Lakoff and Johnson 1999, 6) of familiar experiences that were applied to cosmological questions.

The *Ṛg* and *Atharva Vedas* contain hymns that propose cosmogonic models for the creation of the universe. As these accounts grew and evolved over approximately a millennium from c.1400–300 BCE, new explanations were added, initially relying upon symbolic explanations and homologies. But in the Upaniṣads, which were the final stratum to be added to the Vedic corpus between approximately 800 and 200 BCE, earlier material was incorporated into a more coherent body of theory surrounding shared themes of self and cosmos, change and complexity, language and reality, death and immortality. These texts are rarely systematically coherent or mutually exclusive in their philosophies, from the earliest Vedic hymns and the ragbag of contemporary wisdom in the Atharva, to the thematic collections of poetry, narrative and pre-science we see in the Upaniṣads, and even in the short aphoristic treatises captured in the Sūtras and Kārikās. Different metaphysical views are often combined in a single text, apparently conflicting, or perhaps nesting within each other (Frazier 2014) in illuminating ways. The allusive, commentarial re-use of texts from generation to generation can sometimes make reading texts such as the Upaniṣads "like overhearing incomplete conversations in which people relate what they have said to others before, or what others have said to them" (Killingley 2019, 125). In many ways, the Vedic literature is an echo chamber for ideas that circulated and developed within a single community across the centuries.

Other strands of Indian culture existed alongside the Brahminic tradition, and *vrātyas*, *muṇis*, *śramanas*, *saṃnyāsis*, *yogis*, and other figures seem to represent a turn toward ascetic styles of life. New soteriologies were concerned more with self-transformation than pleasurable rewards – a contrast endorsed by the character of death in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* when he applauds the protagonist's concern with immortality rather than wealth. The spells and blessings recorded in the *Atharva Veda* also hint at a proto-science of biological, chemical, and physical forces, while other sciences of health (*āyurveda*), grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), and ethics (*dharma*) also blossomed. The resulting range of speculations are not dissimilar to the philosophical material that was being produced in the same period by the Pre-Socratics and the schools that formed around Plato and Aristotle. Metaphysical knowledge secured prestige in society; but it also became an expression of awe at the power behind creation, and a soteriological tool for re-making the self in a new immortal form, freed from the vicissitudes of the natural world.

Radical Questioning and the Problem of Being: The Beginnings of Indian Philosophy

The hymns of the *Ṛg* and *Atharva Vedas* ask "What was the foundation and the support" of the cosmos? What was the forest from which the world's "wood" was taken, and was the flesh of which the Creator was made? Such questions were one root of "philosophy" in India. They seek origins, materials and grounds for the cosmos, while maintaining early skepticism about any too-easy mythic explanation of things. Numerous Vedic tales of creation incorporate an interrogatory string of questions, generally demanding an account that explains what came before, lay beneath, or served as a necessary precondition of reality's first origin. These questions usually concern either the *ontological* ground of the universe, or the *epistemological* ground for any claim to knowledge about it. Thus hymn 10.81 asks about the creation of the universe:

> What was the foundation and the support? How was it [done], such that the generating all-maker, the all-seer, disclosed heaven by his might? (Ṛg Veda (ṚV) 10.81.2)[10]

Another asks not about the ground but the material of the universe:

> …What was the forest, what was that wood from which heaven and earth were formed? Let the wise seek with their intelligence that place in which all beings are carried. (ṚV 10.82.4)[11]

With curt stylistic irony it also highlights the paradoxical nature of the question: what forest could form the material for the heavens and the earth (that very earth on which the forest would itself need to stand)? Numerous other hymns ask what is beyond that which is furthest (AV 5.11.5–6), what gives rise to the deities who pervade the world (AV 8.9), what is the earth's vital essence, blood and spirit (AV 9.9.4), on what do the regions and years of the cosmos rest (AV 10.7), what are "the rule, the order and the model" by which the ritual gives humanity power over the cosmos (RV 10.130). From what was the flesh of *puruṣa* the primeval deity made – and why did he bring suffering along with the rest of the universe (AV 10.2.1 and 10, 11.8)?

Ṛg Veda 10.81 answers its own question by positing an "all-maker" (*Viśvakarman*), but the most celebrated example of this "direct questioning" device, *Ṛg Veda* 10.129, *rejects* any recourse to a creator deity as an answer to cosmogonic questions. Often called the *Nāsadīya Sūkta*, this hymn asks what primeval state could possibly have pre-existed the creation of existence itself:

> Neither the non-existent nor the existent was then, neither was there world nor sky nor what is beyond. What was the covering, belonging to what? Was there cosmic water, unfathomable depths? (ṚV 10.129.1)[12]

Here the authors reason that the beginning of the universe must have taken place in some encompassing space, and they acknowledge the existence of a theory (also seen in Ancient Near Eastern thought) that the creation of the cosmos took place in a chaos of unfathomable dark waters. But they do not settle with this explanation. The final verses return to the interrogatory device, querying whether the god who is "the eye of all in highest heaven" could

have the answer, since it must be part of, and thus *later than* the act of creation. In its last line, this ancient hymn shows itself ready to reject any answer that fails the test of critical reasoning (see Brereton 1999).

Perhaps the most comprehensive use of this stylistic device is in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* where it is used to showcase the diverse theories present in the c. 500 BCE society of the time. The passage centers around the search for *brahman*, here possibly used to signify the world's essence, material or foundation:

People who make inquiries about *brahman* say:

> What is the cause of *brahman*? Why were we born? By what do we live? On what are we established? Governed by whom, O you who know brahman, do we live…?
>
> Should we regard it as time, as inherent nature, as necessity, as chance, as the elements, as the source of birth, or as the Person? Or is it a combination of these? But that can't be, because there is the self (*atman*). Even the self is not in control, because it is itself subject to pleasure and pain… (ŚU 1.1–2)[13]

This passage is a snapshot of the social milieu from which the text comes, full of ideas about the foundations of the everyday phenomena we normally take for granted. The answers span a striking range of possible solutions, from the blind forces of nature, necessity or chance, time and the elements, to the more theistic notion of a "person." They also resist simple dogmatism by leaving open the possibility that there is not one solution, but a combination.

In the genre of Vedic hymns, these questions are often set within the tale of a student's humble approach to a wise seer or sage (*ṛṣi*, *kavi*) who possesses the ability to bring forth new ideas. Admitting that he does not know the warp and weft on which light and dark are woven, the Vedic poet asks "what shall I speak, what here shall I imagine?" But in the Upaniṣads the bearer of this knowlege shifts from poetic seers to the interrogatory "knowers" (*vidvas*) of the time: teachers, brahmins, kings (and sometimes gods) who adduce their own empirical observations in order to build philosophical theories.[14] One of the most vivid examples of this is when the primal being Prajāpati leads the deity Indra to successively reason past the more transient layers of the self and realize the core that lies beyond the body and mind (CU 8.7–12). In just this way, brahmins are depicted as sitting together to "discuss" their philosophies (CU 1.8.1–2), and kings hold philosophical tournaments for competitors to outtalk each other (*ati-vād-*; BU 3.9.19; CU 7.15.4; 7.16.1; MU 3.1.4) by proposing the most all-encompassing theory of reality. The questioning tone and title of the *Kena* ("by what") *Upaniṣad* enact this kind of discourse directly without attributing the conversation to others. During the handful of centuries between the late Vedic hymns and the early Upaniṣads, questioning as a textual device proceeded from being merely a rhetorical device or an expression of skepticism, to a systematic method of philosophical analysis and abduction used to produce ever-improving models of the world.

The kind of questioning begun in *the Nāsadīya Sukta* and continued in subsequent texts encouraged its audience to think in a preconditional way about what deeper hidden foundations are required for the world to be as it is. In this sense, the "question" hymns raise what Martin Heidegger called the question of Being, that is, the question of what are the universal qualities and enabling conditions of reality *per se* (rather than particular objects). What kind of causality could set the whole world of causes in motion? What kind of "material" could

make up the newly produced cosmos? What kind of prior foundation could account for the arising of existence itself? What material, cause, or ground could support existence as a whole, and is such an idea even coherent or necessary?

The phrase "in the beginning there was…" (*agre… asīt*) appears repeatedly in the Upaniṣads, forming a kind of leitmotif for cosmogonic speculation.[15] Indeed, the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* implies that there was an ontological debate raging behind the scenes of early classical metaphysics: did the origin of the universe lie in *asat*, some initial state of non-being, or in *sat*, a prior, eternally self-existent Being, an "irreducible stuff of which everything is made"?[16] The framework for the universe was variously seen as the "warp" of a loom (see BU 3.6.1) or the "string" that provides the essential support for things (BU 3.7.2), or just "Being" in its raw state (CU 6.2.1). *Sat* and *asat* became a stock Vedic phrase and remained present throughout the Upaniṣads, aiding their authors to argue for a single self-existent source of all things.[17]

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* attempted to give a definitive answer in its teaching on the beginning of the universe:

> In the beginning, son, this world was simply what is existent – one only without a second. Now on this point some do say: "in the beginning this world was simply what is non-existent – one only, without a second. And from what is non-existent was born what is existent."
>
> "But, son, how can that possibly be?" he continued. "How can what is existent be born from what is non-existent? On the contrary, son, in the beginning this world was simply what is existent – one only without a second."
>
> And it thought to itself: "Let me be many. Let me propagate myself." (CU 6.2.1–3)[18]

This passage, much cited by Vedāntic theologians over the next two millennia, sought to adjudicate between competing accounts by leading the audience through a process of reasoning *ad absurdam* (on the basis that an absence can be neither the sole efficient nor material cause) to the necessity of some primeval self-existent universal source. This cosmological argument for an eternally existent source of everything seems to fit well with the overall teaching of this chapter that the world consists of a single material that can be abductively posited to explain the continuity of existence that we empirically observe in the world.[19]

The opposite argument also features in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*: chapter three recounts the theory that "in the beginning this world was simply what is non-existing; and what is existing was that" (CU 3.19.1), and the *Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* also makes repeated reference to versions of this idea, envisioning the primeval state as waters (BU 5.5.1), or a kind of vacuum characterized by "hunger." The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* recommends that one prefer the "existence" doctrine over the "non-existence" one, for:

> If a man thinks "Brahman is the non-existent,"
> he becomes himself non-existent!
> If a man thinks "*Brahman* is the existent,"
> People then know him to be existent
> (TU 2.6.1)[20]

Eventually, many thinkers seem to have combined the ideas of *brahman* and *sat*, so that together they offered an answer to these cosmogonic question. Self-existent, omnipresent, contrary to the emptiness and "hunger" of non-existence, *brahman* answered the problem of Being and also established the basis for a new ideal of the divine – not as a source of practical blessings, but as a metaphysical source, ground, and explanation of the world.

But the theory of *brahman* was not alone in being positioned as an answer to such questions. The Sāṃkhya school favored the similar notion of *prakṛti* as a way of explaining all phenomena except consciousness itself, and the Vaiśeṣika school suggested a pluralistic atomism as a basic substrate, positioning itself as an alternative to the Vedāntic tradition's metaphysical monism. Meanwhile the Vyākaraṇa tradition spoke of a *śabda-brahman* or "word-foundation" of all reality. But while these schools differed, they nevertheless shared the classical Vedic desire to comprehend the most basic forms of existence, and their relation to the changing forms that we see in the world around us. A number of "ontological" concepts developed that tried to give a name to the idea of a basic reality underlying *everything* (from material to mental things, visible and invisible, objects and properties, changing and unchanging phenomena). They came to unite thinkers in debate about material causation (*upādāna kāraṇa*), the basic procreative material of the universe (*pradhāna*, *prakṛti*) its locus (*adhiṣṭhāna*), foundation or ground (*avasthā*, *ādhāra*, *āśraya*), substance (*dravya*, *vastu*), identity (*ātman*, *tathatā*, *dharma*), and essential real-ness (*svabhāva*, *satya*).

The Creation and Growth of the Cosmos

The Vedas' cosmogonic queries about the basis of reality were solved at least provisionally by the notion of *brahman*. But important questions remained regarding (1) how individual beings are generated from the source, and (2) in what sense it continues to link them in a constitutive unity. For these questions, too, the ancient Vedic myths provided a series of guiding images. Some believed the universe to have solidified out of a vast chaos of waters (*āpāḥ*; ṚV 10.129.3, 10.82.1, 10.121). Others proposed that it had evolved from a primeval egg, embryo, or seed (*garbha prathama*; 10.82.5–6), or been constructed out of the dismembered body of a vast cosmic person (*puruṣa*, *prajāpati*; 10.90). The goal of such texts was to explain creation as the teleological emergence of a complex cosmos out of the intrinsic qualities of the ground of reality – rather than as the creation of matter *ex nihilo*. One of the distinctive features of Hindu approaches is that, although most believed in a single divine source and creator of all reality, past, present, and future, they nevertheless located the explanation of its creative activity in some innate disposition of its own nature, rather than in a spontaneous and contingent act of will.[21] Even in later theistic theologies, this pattern remained as creation was attributed to the natural capacity for enjoyment (*hlādinī śakti*), or play (*krīḍā*, *līlā*) at the heart of the divine nature.

Concerned as they were with the universal unity of all things, classical Hindu literatures were also cognizant of the multifarious beings of different types, all in movement, that fill the universe. The universe was seen as a rich sphere of food, horses, bodies, words and sentences, juices, diamonds, air and pure-qualitative substances, waters flowing, dividing, and identified with nutritious butter and the energizing *soma* drink (RV 10.30) – images that may reflect the increased trade and travel of the time. Waxing poetic, the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*

described the universe as a combination of fire, sun, wind, moon, women and men, boys and girls, young and old who are all simply manifestations of that one underlying source:

> As an old man, you totter along with a walking stick. As you are born, you turn your face in every direction. You are the dark blue bird, the green one with red eyes, the rain-cloud, the seasons, and the oceans. You live as one without a beginning because of your pervasiveness, you, from whom all beings have been born. (Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (ŚU) 4.3-)[22]

This rich, almost poetic wonder at the myriad forms that make up the environment went along with a sense of their paradoxical unity in "the world." As the Greek Eleatic school's puzzles about change inspired both Plato and Aristotle and the traditions that flowed from them, so Vedic cosmogony from One source into the multitude of empirical forms and changes also inspired sophisticated metaphysical reflection on the philosophical problems of modal change, mereological constitution, and eidetic identity.

Evolving Substances and Emergent Modes

One important paradigm for thinking about the growth of the material world was offered by things that naturally evolve into new forms. Seeds becoming trees, embryos growing into humans, milk condensing into curds, and food being transformed into energy, all offered examples of this natural process. They also suggested that things can innately encompass more than one possible mode of being grounded in a pervasive substance, root, or level that has the potential to manifest new forms. This approach to identity tried to address the problem of sameness-in-change by including difference and development within the definition of a thing. But it also raised a number of philosophical problems; what defines a thing *essentially* across changes? what is the *efficient cause* that triggers each change of state, and the *teleological cause* that orders them into a linear development? What happens when different things combine and produce *new identities?* What of the whole of reality as it evolves over time: can *all* possible entities be modes of a single basic reality of existence?

The natural elements, plants, and animals of the organic world provided a useful model for the way things change and develop new forms. Perhaps the first such ideas in Sanskrit literature are found in the Vedic image of a seed, egg, or embryo floating in the "dark waters" before creation: in some accounts this contained all the deities and all beings in a latent state (see *hiraṇyagarbha* in RV 10.82.5–6, 10.121.7, AV 10.7.28, CU 3.19). Another model of evolution was inspired by the many substances that are naturally able to develop into new states. Vital principles of nature like water, light, breath, wind, and even speech were seen as *devatās*, active spirits with the power to become something new, rather than inert phenomena. Sesame seeds can be crushed to generate oil, butter becomes curds, riverbeds mysteriously emit water (ŚU 15–16),[23] fire-wood emits flame (Kaṭha Upaniṣad (KṭU) 4.3–9), and the energy fed into a man's body is transferred into semen and eventually takes the forms of the child that is born, thereby continuing the father (AU 2–3). These many examples suggested that the whole universe is like a honey that can be "heated" (*tapta*) so that its fluid essence (*rasa*) springs out and creates new realities (CU 3).

Heat (*tapas*) exemplified the catalysis of development since it could regularly be seen "incubating" things ready for new birth,[24] and transforming foodstuffs, medicines and metals in

everyday life. In this sense, it lay at the heart of a distinctive Hindu conception of "transubstantiation" (Malamoud 1998) that remains influential on ritual practices of burnt offering and ascetic self-"heating" (see Kaelber 1989). A terminology of "development" and new manifestation became current in Sanskrit, often constructed around an augmented verb of being, or making; things can create (*sṛj-*), "supercreate" (*atisṛj-*), generate forth (*praja-*), undergo a contingent alteration of state (*vikāra*), or develop (*vyabhu-*) into the many things that make up the world.

"Food" – *qua* fuel or energy (*anna*) – was one of the most obvious examples of a transforming – and transformative – reality. It was seen as an almost alchemical substance, a base material that we regularly transubstantiate through cooking, and which constantly becomes things and re-assimilates them:

> From food beings come into being;
> By food, once born, they grow.
> "It is eaten and it eats beings."
> Therefore it is called "food." (TU 2.2)[25]

The chain of eating was a major theme in the early Upaniṣads (e.g. CU 5.12.2, BU 1.2.5, 1.5.1–2), and some theorizing about the problem of a world origin seems motivated by the desire to raise one's place in the chain so that one "becomes the eater of this whole world, and the whole world here becomes his food" (BU 2.2.4).[26] This image of "eating," when used metaphorically, signifies consumption, assimilation and new generation; as an animal eats food, so fire "eats" wood. This role is not unlike being a "gatherer" of others (*saṃvarga*; CU 4.3), spanning change and diversity and assimilating temporary states so that they are thus carried "beyond the reach of death" (BU 1.3.16). Whatever is the inexhaustible source of food that continues to nourish all beings although the food is eaten everyday – that is what one must discover (BU 1.5.1). Applied at the microcosmic level of human life, one of the early Upaniṣadic conceptions of liberation seems to have entailed rising above one's limitations until one can "sink one's teeth into the whole world and become an eater of food" (CU 4.3.8).

This idea was also applied to the *rebirth* of the self, which seems, plant-like, to sprout repeatedly from its unseen root into new embodied births. The analogy prompts the text to ask: "A tree when it's cut down, grows anew from its root; from what root does a mortal man grow, when he is cut down by death?" (BU 3.9.28). The invisible essence inside a banyan seed gives rise to the whole many-limbed tree, just as the unseen life-essence inside a human allows them to return from the brink of death (CU 6.12). Experimentation could be used to prove the theory that there is an evolutionary substrate: a man may fast until his energy diminishes – but he is naturally able to regain it again, showing that humans have a root from which we can regain our powers repeatedly (CU 6.7). This ontology of ever re-evolving roots gave an ontological underpinning to the emerging soteriological doctrine of rebirth.

At the level of metaphysical ideas, the theory that change is really the inherence of successive contingent forms in an underlying substratum came to be known as *pariṇāma-vāda*, the doctrine of transformation.[27] *Pariṇāma* theories emerged in a range of traditions. Its earliest development as an ontological theory may be found in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* chapter six's contrast between the "name-and-form" (*nāma-rūpa*) into which a thing's changing states

are individuated by the "word-handle" (*vac-arambhana*) we give them, and the wider reality underlying it (CU 6.1.6). This "*sad-vidya*" treatise influenced Vedānta's first scholastic text, the *Brahma Sūtras*, and the early Bhedābheda school of Vedānta which argued that *brahman* becomes the world through *pariṇāma* transformation.

The metaphysical doctrine of creation-by-evolution was most strongly associated with classical Sāṃkhya philosophy. The *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* (verse 10) argued that there must be a pre-existing "unmanifest" level (*avyakta*) underlying the visible "caused, perishable, not all-pervading, active, plural, dependent, mergent, composite, and not self- governed" forms that we see in the world; furthermore, each form that it takes must pre-exist in a potential state within that unmanifest substrate. This view that latent potential forms lie within everything was termed *satkārya-vāda*, literally, the "real-effects-doctrine."[28] The theories of *satkārya* potentiality and *pariṇāma* transformation were complimentary; if changes in one thing are not caused by another, then they must be intrinsic to the nature of that thing and so contained in it. Thus curds lie in wait as a potential form within milk, fire within wood, and trees within seeds: what we see at any single moment is merely one fragment of the latent character of a thing. But whereas in the early *pariṇāma* doctrine of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* the many forms of a thing inhere in evolutionary succession, the *satkāryavāda* of the *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* takes them to exist simultaneously as a "legato" movement of appearances smoothly transitioning from one to another. This model was opposed to the Buddhist view that the appearances simply replace each other without intrinsic relation in a "staccato" series.[29]

Vedānta's application of *pariṇāma* and *satkāryavāda* views to *brahman* was hugely influential on subsequent Hindu conceptions of the divine as rich in potentiality, and active in the world of our daily experience Frazier forthcoming. It contributed to the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta school's Tantra-influenced theory that the source of the cosmos is a single divine being with many modes of acting (*prakāra'*, from the Sanskrit verb *pra-kṛ-*, "doing forth").[30] A similarly "cosmic, immanental" conception of the divine was put to similar use in later Bhedābheda Vedānta schools, using analogies designed to emphasize the continuity of the divine nature with the individuals that it generates. Like the sun in its emission of infinite rays and reflections, or fire in its constant generation of new flames and sparks, or drama in its ability to inspire emotions, so reality's "undifferentiated plenitude of being" (Larson 1969, 167) continues unfolding in fresh manifestations. Across these different scholastic developments, the "modal" model of an evolving basic root endured. Transubstantiation rituals helped humans to catalyze change in the mutable cosmos. This became important for both yogic practice, and tantric mastery of special powers. Places could be divinized to become *tīrthas* or crossings into the divine realm, objects and persons could undergo initiation (*dīkṣa*) to become vessels of the divine, and sacred speech in the form of *mantras* could be deployed as "the highest aspect, the essence of deities" captured within empirical form as an "individualized power" that is "directly effective" as a tool for transforming the world around us (Padoux 2011, 6).

Aggregated Parts and Unifying Orders

Another influential way of thinking saw the creation and constitution of reality in terms of parts that can be arranged into a single ordered structure, an "aggregate" with a new identity

and new emergent functions. This approach was *mereological* rather than modal, seeing things in terms of parts and wholes. It was exemplified in the atomist Vaiśeṣika school's view that each entity is really an aggregate of substance, property, action, difference, generality, and inherence atoms. An analogous approach is found in Abhidharma Buddhism's belief that all identities are merely a composite cluster of insubstantial momentary *dharmas*. These two important classical Indian metaphysical systems are divided partly by their differing judgment on whether a composite entity is ultimately "real" or merely a conventional way of thinking about the underlying arrangement of parts: this issue would remain central to Buddhist and Hindu debates about realism, wholes, and essences.

One can see precursors of the idea in early Vedāntic attempts to define *brahman* as a unifying order; later it would play a role in Hindu theistic accounts of the divine as a "controller" of the world's complex pattern. In early cosmogonic hymns, the deities often show a genius for giving order to the complex system of nature, and the highest god is that which gives names to things and establishes *ṛta* or order by which we live (e.g. AV 2.1). One hymn celebrates the gods' miraculous gathering and disposition of the bones, head, and body-parts of humanity (AV 10.2); this betrays a wider pattern of amazement at the world's building blocks and the mysterious order in which they are arranged. Lists in the Brāhmanas, Upaniṣads, and epics include the elements (earth, air, fire, water, ether) and aspects of the cosmos (moon, sun, sky, wind) as well as factors that shape life (time, fate, chance) within the taxonomy of fundamental elements of the universe. Some focus on the ingredients of the mental world which, properly arranged result in a sentient being; the personalities we know are made of self-reflexivity, awareness, mental reflection, knowledge, senses, speech.[31] A particularly comprehensive account analyzes the organs of thought into heart, mind, awareness, perception, discernment, cognition, wisdom, insight, focus, thought, reflection, drive, memory, intention, purpose, will, pleasure, and desire (AU 3.1–2). Such "ingredients lists" of the world served the basic cognitive purpose of "classifying" the complex universe in accordance with a "metaphysics of resemblance" in order to make it comprehensible (see Smith 1994). Further, it is implied that knowing the elements (which are often identified as spirits or deities (*devatā*) in their own right), will give one control of them (see Werner 1978). Many were located as much *within* the human self as outside of it, suggesting that we have the power to harness powerful vital forces of the cosmos throughout our own minds and bodies.

But the real challenge was to explain how the different parts fit together to make a coherent whole, i.e. an emergent entity with a new identity and function. The Vedic cosmological ideal was for humans to help sustain *ṛta*, the great order of the universe through which "the world in all its complexity revolved like a smoothly turning cosmic wheel" (Mahony 1997, 104). Perhaps the first and most vivid description of this order is found in Upaniṣadic account of the *Áśvamedha*, the horse sacrifice in which a stallion is homologized with the king, and ultimately given as a ritual offering. The sacrificer's art of cutting up of the horse was no mean feat for men with basic implements and little anatomical knowledge, and it required some understanding of the way the horse's body creates a functional whole from which the vital force of life emerges. Indeed, the idea of things having "limbs" and subsidiary parts that contribute to the whole was applied to many things, including the ancillary sciences of ritual (the "limbs of the veda" or *veda-aṅga*). Language was another example of a medium that, when properly structured into a functional whole, generates a new emergent phenomenon: meaning. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* explains how sounds make the complex phonetic whole of words, and how different things in turn can make up complex "combination" (*saṃhita*) meanings (see TU

1.2–3). In later theories of language and aesthetics. Indian aesthetic theorists continued to reflect on the way that complex aggregations could unite in a particular structure such that a new phenomenon emerges – of meaning, aesthetic evocation, or emotion.

But what was the "unifying whole" (*eka-bhūya*; KṣU 3.2) that united the constitutive elements of a thing, and guided them in an order that made them more than the sum of their parts? The Upaniṣads are full of "aggregative" terms of uniting (*ekadhā bhu-*), grasping (*grah-*), obtaining (*ap-*), making use of (*bhuj-*), and the creation of large-scale combination ideas that integrate all subsidiary parts (*mahāsaṃhitā*). They celebrate that which has the power of sovereignty, superiority and lordship over subsidiary parts (*svarājya*, *śreṣṭhya*, *patya*; KṣU 4.20). Their unifying force was likened to the hub of a wheel (e.g. AV 9.9.11, BU 2.5.15, CU 7.15.1, KṣU 3.8, ŚU 1.4–6, 6.1, PU 2.6, 6.6,) or a uniting chieftain (KṣU 4.20), or even a queen bee who lends will and direction to the whole swarm that follows her (PU 2.4).[32] So too, it is possible to release (*visṛj-*), divide and deploy the parts of a composite unity (e.g. KṣU 3.3–4), and this serves as one way of comprehending the nature of creation and action.

As Vedāntic ideas developed, the idea of a central organizing force was one of the meanings attributed to both *ātman* and *brahman*. Yet Buddhism questioned the integrity of functional emergent wholes, and was skeptical of just this kind of realism toward complex aggregates. Its no-self doctrine of *anatman* denied that composite identities are real. A cart, or even a mind might appear to function as a unity, but Abhidharma thinkers like Vasubandhu held anything that could be divided lacks real identity (much as impassibility and thus simplicity were valued as ontological virtues in Western Scholastic thought). The eleventh-century Buddhist philosopher Ratnakīrti called for an end to "identity-seeing" or *ātma-dṛṣṭi* in complex entities, using philosophy as a tool for analyzing them away so as not to disturb the equanimity of the mind. By contrast to Buddhism, the Vaiśeṣika school of thought was devoted to analyzing aggregates in terms of categories and clusters, and it argued that their "realness" was proved by their distinct causal power: the "cohering causality" of a body (which is able to think, play the sitar, create societies) is quite different from the individual powers of each of its subsidiary atoms. For them each identity was defined by its aggregative power and function, not unlike Aristotle's notion of a formal cause. The Nyāya school of thought (closely allied with Vaiśeṣika) used this idea to argue that there must be a unifying deity that keeps the universe as a whole in order – a rare case of a design argument for God in Hindu thought (see Collins 2003; Patil 2009, 58).

As brahminical literature expanded in a theistic direction, the divine was increasingly treated as an unifying and directing "inner controller" of the complex world, directly analogous to the human controller of the body and mind. One of the cosmogonic stories common in Vedic thought told of a vast "person" (*puruṣa*) or, "progenitor" (*prajāpati*) who becomes the universe and continues to pervade it. The *Puruṣa Sūkta* (*Ṛg Veda* 10.90) describes it as a thousand-headed being that was sacrificed and divided (like the horse in the Aśvamedha sacrifice) into the parts of the cosmos, and of society. The order of the four *varṇas* arises from this division, and its priestly, governing, mercantile, and peasant "castes" are portrayed as a functional whole paralleling the workings of Puruṣa's body, from which they derived. The idea of cohering causality thus lent an implicit ontology to brahminical social thought. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* established an important template for thinking about the divine as a pervasive creator and controller of the world; the thousand-headed, many-limbed deity conveyed the abiding omnipresence of the world's source, still immanent in the world's apparent forms, "knowing what there is to know" and upholding the order that governs nature and

society (see ŚU 3.3 and 14–19). The reference to a being who "knows" may have been a riposte to the earlier skepticism of the *Nāsadiya Sūkta* toward naïve theistic cosmogonies; this text seeks to define the "first person" in such a way that it could serve as the ground of the cosmos itself. The Bhagavad Gītā drew on the Upaniṣads in describing Kṛṣṇa as a universal deity that is both creator and "inner controller." In the twelfth century this idea provided a powerful metaphor for the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta school of theology for which the divine, theistically construed, expresses its agency through the many beings of the world, each of which is thus grasped as an aspect (*aṃśa*) of the one divine "body" (*śarīra*) or "instrument" (*prakāra*).

If modal conceptions of reality encouraged human agents to evolve and catalyze evolution in the world around them, then the aggregative conception encouraged careful analysis of reality's parts, and careful control of its structures. Indeed, it seems that "without an insight into the structure of the cosmos it was felt impossible to determine the place occupied by man and successfully to contrive methods of integrating oneself into the All" (Gonda 1966, 57). But where the Buddhist goal (and that of certain ascetic Hindu cultures), was ultimately to disrupt our vision of mereological unities and liberate us from the anxieties they can create, by contrast Vedic Hinduism attributed real identity to complex entities, and under the heading of *dharma* urged a general collaborative support for order in oneself, one's society, and the cosmos. While the volatile world could be creatively reordered, the usual need was to support the universe understood as:

> ...a vast cosmic ecosystem, an intricate network of symbiotic relations among interdependent parts, in which each part has a specific function to perform that contributes to the whole system... in its normative dimension, *dharma*, the cosmic ordering principle, finds expression on the human plane. (Holdrege 2004, 214)

This understanding of dharma continues to shape a wide range of Hindu practice. From the natural elements, to the body, to the social-political order and one's ethical powers, in this Hindu approach to structuring, part-whole mereology serves not as a critique of identities but rather as a showcase for the importance of design, control, and order.

Divided Continuums and Qualified Cognition

A less common, but equally influential metaphysical model explained creation as the division and qualification of an otherwise formless continuum, like lines dividing up a place, pots dividing up a space, or words separating out ideas. This model is interesting in that it avoided substantialist ways of thinking about things; objects were not constituted as physical transformations of a material, nor as the building up of parts into a whole. Indeed, recalling Plato's concern for ideas rather than substance, it disregarded the medium and focused on the abstract forms that can be established through distinction, relation, and cognitive analysis. While this "cognitivist" model was less pronounced in the earliest stages of Hindu thought than the "modal" or "mereological" ways of looking at the world, nevertheless, in the hands of early thinkers like Gauḍapāda and Bhartṛhari, it would acquire enormous influence on the unfolding of Hinduism's medieval scholastic traditions.

One of the forms of creation that was familiar to the Vedic authors was an activity directly associated with ritual: the measuring out of the sacrificial arena. During the Vedic period the ritual was a movable event and could be set up in any space, as long as the concise rules of geometry and measurement were observed. The sacred space was carefully calculated, drawn out on the terrain with pegged strings, and elevated into sacrificial use with spoken mantras. Just as the Agniṣṭoma ritual's pressing of the Soma stalks into a fermenting juice provided an image of transformed substances, and the dissection of the horse in the Aśvamedha sacrifice embodied the idea of ordered parts, so the drawing out of the ritual arena exemplified creation by artful measurement, distinction, and division.

It is to this that the *Nāsadīya Sukta* probably alludes in describing the "cord" stretched by sages across the void during the universe's creation.[33] Creation by division is also found in the popular early Vedic story of Viṣṇu's creation of the three regions of heaven, sky, and earth by measuring them out and propping them apart (*vimā-*, *skabh-*; see e.g. AV 7.26.1, 4.1).[34] The most purely *imaginative* creation of new forms is through measurement and linguistic composition: numerous Vedic hymns celebrated the multiform power of speech (*vāk*) which can take different shapes. A kind of awe was accorded to the Vedic seer (*ṛṣi*, *vipaścita*) or poet (*kavi*) who possesses the skill – seen as almost supernatural – of imaginatively creating beautiful or meaningful words. These knowers and poets are able to "see" the flying bird with the creative magic (*māyā*) of speech in the depth of the oceans, expressing "light-made thought."[35] The early Upaniṣads contain the beginnings of philosophical reflection on speech as a creative process: "namegiving" and the bestowing of name and appearance (*nāmadhā*, *nāmadheya*, *nāma-rūpa*) became a common account of cosmogenesis. Where the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad's* influential "sad-vidya" teaching encouraged its audience to look beyond name and form at the continuous *sat* or reality underlying it, a parallel account of creation in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* emphasized not the continuities but the divisions between things.

> At that time this world was undivided (*avyākṛta*); it was distinguished simply in terms of name and appearance—[i.e.] "He is so and so by name and has this sort of an appearance." So even today this world is distinguished (*vyākriyate*) simply in terms of name and appearance, as when we say, "He is so and so by name and has this sort of an appearance". (BU 1.4.7)[36]

Name-and-form identities could create "word-handles" (*vāc-arambhana*) imposed on the continuous, amorphous reality in which they inhere. The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* treated creation as an intentional process of qualitative attribution: creation is through *guṇa-anvita or* "property-attachment" (ŚU 6.4) to the base reality that itself lacks distinguishing marks (*aliṅga*, *akala*). This account takes the divine as "the basis and cause of the joining" of qualities to individual things,[37] but it also treats creativity as a kind of "self-veiling" of the partless, unblemished reality so that the unlimited ground appears limited.[38]

By implication, the necessary precondition of identity by distinction was an indiscriminate continuum of some kind, able to support the identities projected on to it. This motif is repeated throughout the historical unfolding of classical Hindu philosophies. *Brahman* was often portrayed as a reality with "no limit or boundary…a single mass of perception" (BU 2.4.14), "without a before and an after, without an inner and an outer" (BU 2.5.19). The one who understands this enters the state of undifferentiated consciousness in which "there

isn't a second reality here that he could see as something other and dually-divided (*anya-dvi-bhakta*) from himself," so that "He becomes the one ocean, he becomes the sole seer" (BU 4.3.23, 32). Yet we can discover the unfixed (*amūrta*) *brahman* that is indistinct, unmanifest, unperceived and unstructured (*anirukta*, *anilanana*, *avijñāna*, *anṛta*; TU 2.6[39]) by bracketing all specific designations using "the rule of substitution: "not—, not—," for there is nothing beyond this "not" (BU 2.3.1–2, 6).

One of the most influential developments in the history of Vedānta was the application of a cognitive interpretation to the "divisions and distinctions" approach so that the world is attributed to the distinctions of the mind alone. If it is the perceiver who forms words or imagines divisions, then the real locus of creative distinction is within our consciousness. Hints of a yoga-influenced emphasis on readjusting the distinctions within our consciousness can be seen in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad's* attempt to relativize our perception of diversity (KṭU 4.10) and realize that in truth reality is like "water poured into water" "without any marks" (*aliṅga*; KṭU 6–8). As one can reverse the distinctions in reality, one can also return the mind to its undivided state (KṭU 6.10–11). But the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, possibly postdating Buddhism, gives the most radical version of the idea that the world is constituted through epistemic distinctions. This text applied the model of fourfold speech to understanding consciousness in terms of four aspects.[40] Waking and dreaming divide the imagination, and also maintain a distinction between self and world. But deep sleep restores the original unity of consciousness into "a single mass of perception," and in the mysterious fourth state all remaining distinctions are dissolved into a consciousness understood "neither as perceiving nor as not perceiving; as unseen; as beyond the reach of ordinary transaction; as ungraspable; as without distinguishing marks, inconceivable" (Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad (MāU) 7).[41]

Language was another example of complexity and identity by distinction in the *śabdādvaita* or "language-monism" of Bhartṛhari, the fifth-century thinker of Vyakāraṇa grammatical philosophy. In his influential account of meaning, the raw foundation (*aśraya*) of language comes to appear divided (*bhinna*) so that it acquires perceived "partness" (*pṛthaktva*) even though it is not really composite in this way (*Vākyapadīya* 1–3). This linguistic matrix, in turn, was applied by language-users to parse existence itself into a "world of multiplicity and separation" (Halbfass 1991, 38). Such linguistic constructivist accounts of the world became popular with later Advaita and Pratyabhijñā thinkers who took reality to be undifferentiated consciousness, measured out by thought (*cinmātra*) expressed in language.

Treating the distinctions and qualities of reality as the results of cognitive activity raised questions about the ontological "depth" of the perceived world. If measuring, imagining and namegiving are mental processes, are the forms they create really "real"? The idea that the quotidian realm of objects and ideas might be attributed more to the epistemic distinctions that we impose on it, rather than to its own intrinsic structure, re-occurs throughout the history of Indian thought, uniting Hindu, Buddhist and Jain philosophies in a shared concern. A sophisticated cognitive model of our normal perception of reality was given in the c. sixth-century *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā* (MK) commentary attributed to Gauḍapāda. It was from this that the Advaita Non-Dualist school of Vedānta took its inspiration. This text begins with a close exegesis of the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, emphasizing its delineation of different realms of consciousness within the experiencer, each of which shapes reality in a different way.[42] The major innovation was to relate these gradations to the division (*dvaita*, *dvaya*, *bheda*, *pṛthak*, *vikara*, *pāda*) of consciousness, judging that the mental creations they contain (referencing those described in BU 4.3.10) are not ultimately real because they exist only temporarily and

within the imagination of consciousness. This text introduces the much-cited analogies of a rope misimagined to be a snake, a fairy city thought to be real, and the space inside a pot misconceived as separate from the space around it.[43] On this account, the temporary appearances are not seen as separate formations (*vikara-avayava*) with any real *vastu* or substance, but are merely *ābhāsa* – "appearances".[44]

The goal of realizing this and thereby "reversing" the process of cognitive creation would form the basis of numerous Advaitic soteriologies in the millennium to come. In Hindu as in Buddhist schools of thought there was a strong interest in techniques for systematically deconstructing the categories of cognition, and thereby freeing the mind from all conceptual bounds. They developed the notions of delimitation (*upādhi*), superimposition (*adhyāsa*), ignorance (*āvidya*) and appearance (*ābhāsa*), and these terms became the basis for ongoing Indian debates about the role of cognition in ontologically "carving up" abstract reality into a world of individuals.

The Self as Self-Creator: Transformation through Knowledge

These metaphysical insights into the source and substratum of the world were fairly consistently applied to humanity providing the instruments of an "art of the self" aimed at building a new and better self – whether through evolution, restructuring of our basic constituent elements, or reconceptualization of the body and mind. While almost every Indian school of thought had some vision of liberation from the everyday embodied limitations of life, there was no single consensus on the goal. Some traditions sought an almost phenomenological expansion of the limited human experience (see Frazier 2019b), or a route of escape from mortal life, a purer form of devotion to some object of value (a possible precursor to devotional traditions), or supernatural powers new powers within the world sphere. As Killingley puts it, what the Vedas, Upaniṣadic, Sūtras, and Epics have in common is a search for methods of achieving both "freedom from the world and freedom in the worlds" (Killingley 2019, 140; see also Raveh 2008; Frazier 2017).

As ideas of evolving substances, unified aggregates, and divided fields developed, so explanations developed that treated the self as a root evolving into different forms, or physical and mental elements being aggregated in different ways, or a field of consciousness divided into complex formations. These views of reality defined an invisible cage of "forces beyond our control" within which humans were constrained, but the metaphysical schematization of them into categories, dynamics, causal chains and levels provided "a conceptual scheme or map in which we can find a route to complete freedom" from those very uncontrolled forces (Potter 1991, 93). This freedom depended partly on locating the causal "dependence relations" mapped within a given worldview, and using our agency to escape them. Vedānta, Sāṃkhya, and Vaiśeṣika all acknowledged that the self is capable of a natural "higher agency" over its own thoughts, so that it is able to "mount" (*samāruh-*, *prajñayā*; KṢU 3.6) the human senses and capacities by means of intelligence, and knit together the self in a new way. This guiding, reconstructive agency was the self's own "inner controller" (*antaryāmin*), paralleling the creator deity's power over the "lower" forms that it creates from its own being. In a sense, the human person was a microcosm of the same forces that shape the universe; the *Śaṭapatha Brāhmana* even describes a form of liberation in which the possessor of knowledge about the cosmos can pass into and become any element of speech, sun, moon, space or

wind that he chooses (Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 10.3.3.8), and the liberated figure of Śuka in the *Mahābhārata* flies through the regions of the universe Bodhisattva-like, before departing to a higher state. In these classical accounts of liberation human agency introduces a distinctive leverage into the otherwise-blind movement of reality:

> Man, in the Vedic understanding, is a complex being. His personality is a structural unity of dynamic forces or elements which are themselves impersonal and universal by nature. But they are no blind mechanical or physical forces, rather they possess an inherent intelligence of different grades which leads them to the formation of functional units with inner hierarchical structures, on both cosmic and individual levels. Thus cosmos emerges out of chaos and individual beings out of the interplay of cosmic forces. (Werner 1978, 276)

The *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, probably composed during the rise of Buddhistic and Yogic ideas, emphasized the cultivation of a stoic self able to escape desire and take the reins of the self:

> Know the self as a rider in a chariot, and the body, as simply the chariot. Know the intellect as the charioteer, and the mind, as simply the reins. The senses, they say, are the horses, and sense objects are the paths around them; He who is linked to the body *ātman*), senses, and mind, the wise proclaim as the one who enjoys. (KṭU 3.3–4)[45]

This image, so similar to Plato's (broadly contemporary) depiction of the self in the *Phaedrus*, emphasizes that the multi-part self exists in a tension between the controller and the subsidiary pull of the senses. Yet it differs from Plato, for here the mind is not the controller, but merely a tool of control for the higher level of the self that "enjoys" (*bhoktṛ*). The Bhagavad Gītā, influenced by the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, would later place great emphasis on the importance of reflective action that escapes the determining influences of the *guṇas* or Sāṃkhya elements of reality. A discriminating person, it advises, can clothe himself in new bodies as in garments (Bhagavad Gītā 2.22), and the development of an ideal yogic equanimity and discriminating decision-making aids in this. Dreams were often positioned as a setting in which to practice one's agency outside the inhibitions of the waking world (e.g. BU 4.3.7–20; PU 4.1–5; MaU 4): within the mental realm one can take materials from the entire world, take them apart on one's own, then put them back together (BU 4.3.9). Traditional views of Hinduism take liberation and dharmic ethics to be its two main goals, but these texts promise a much wider range of creative possibilities to the ubiquitous "one who knows" (see Frazier 2017; Killingley 2019 on the Upaniṣads' promise of creative freedom through knowledge).

Knowledge is central to this agency, for this enjoyer acquires its control over the subsidiary faculties of body, mind and senses through understanding (*vijñānavānt*; KṭU 3.5–6). Indeed, there is a discourse of "becoming" by knowing in Upaniṣadic texts, which suggests it was widely believed that the process of understanding "in-forms" what is known onto the mind. Metaphysical knowledge allowed the mind to acquire vast reality-pervading ideas, much as Greek philosophers saw philosophy as a way to "accede to the universality of reason within the confines of space and time" (Hadot 1995, 211). The power of knowledge was seen as causally effective on the mind almost in the way that physical principles affect the natural world: knowledge (*vidya*) has power (*vīrya*; CU 1.1.10). The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* promises that "Whatever world a man, whose being is purified, ponders with his mind, and whatever desires he covets; that very world, those very desires, he wins" (MU 3.2.10). In knowing what

is greatest, excellent, or the "firm base," a man becomes what is best and greatest, excellent, and firmly grounded (TU 6.1.1–3), and in knowing the divine breath of the world, we become ourselves like a divine breath pervading all things (BU 1.5.18). Knowing is likened to winning, entering and becoming: by knowing that the High Chant in the ritual is really like eternal, limitless, extensive (*parovarīya*) space, one wins the most extensive worlds for oneself and one's descendants, and also comes to have an extensive life (CU 1.9). The same rationale is applied to the knowledge of the ultimate, in which by knowing brahman as far-flung worlds, one wins far-flung worlds (CU 4.5.3, 4.6–8). We are also ominously told that one can become non-existent or existent by making suppositions about existence and non-existence (TU 2.6).[46]

Acquisition through metaphysical knowledge was thus a method of *transformation* in accordance with broader metaphysical truths. One "becomes the world" by "knowing the whole world," and with metaphysics one "has entered the whole world indeed" (PU 4.9–11). Furthermore, abstract knowledge could also lead to sovereign control of what is known, and even of what is entailed within that knowledge. In the *Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, the brahmin Yājñavalkya explains that when one knows one thing that explains others, one also becomes the things thereby implicitly known.

At least three forms of knowledge emerged as particularly important to the human attempt to take control of its quotidian condition. One was metaphysical categorization of reality, allowing us to objectively encompass the world-mechanism within our minds, comprehending and ultimately manipulating it. As we have seen, lists and classifications of the constituents of reality filled classical philosophy (see Frazier 2014). The organization of these building blocks of the world and the mind into hierarchical "causal chains" was meant to allow to allow the discriminating knower to work upward toward increasing control (Potter 1991, 102–106); in Nyāya, for instance, a meticulous epistemological methodology helped the knower to rise through the stages of wrong knowledge, defect, activity, birth, and pain – finally reaching the liberated state beyond suffering. Metaphysics was thus a map or manual for the unique causal power possessed by sentient beings.

A second philosophical tool for self-transformation was inductive inference, or *generalization* from the evidence of the senses toward wider truths. Special teaching of a "rule of substitution" seems originally to have signified ritual symbols used in the Vedic sacrifice, but in the course of the Upaniṣads this came to mean the hidden "true" identity of a thing. This idea was given philosophical form in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*'s new kind of teaching or formula (*adeśa*) "by which one hears what has not been heard before, thinks of what has not been thought of before, and perceives what has not been perceived before" (CU 6.1.3). As Acharya (2016, 837) puts it, "the discourse of Āruṇi and Śvetaketu is a dramatic presentation of an archaic and primitive procedure of inference based on empirical generalization." Identifying the way a "name-and-form" (*nāma-rūpa*) or "word-handle" (*vac-ārambhana*) shapes the underlying reality (*satya*) dramatically expands our awareness from a given particular to the universal, revealing that truth which is "farther than the farthest, yet it is here at hand; It is right here within those who see, hidden within the cave of their heart" (MuU 3.1.6–7).[47]

The *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* used a basic form of inductive inference (through generalization (*sāmānyata*) from observed signs to correlated phenomena) to argue that a single unperceived "subtle" (*sukṣma*) substratum must underlie the diverse and changing forms of the phenomenal world (*liṅga-liṅgi-pūrvaka*; SK 6– 8). The inferential method given here is conceptually similar to that in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad's adeśa*. By contrast, the *Nyāya Sūtras* put

inference to use primarily as a "procedural structure" for checking that that the debates of the time were achieving a correct understanding of things,[48] in the Buddhism-like belief that the elimination of misapprehension consequently eliminates pain (NS 1.2). But in its abductive applications to building metaphysical maps of the world and our possible actions within it, inference was central both in mapping the unseen deeper substrates to which we have recourse when circumventing nature's forces, and also in allowing us to reorient ourselves to those broader truths, achieving what Hadot called a "dilation" of the self (Hadot 2002).

A third type of self-transformative knowledge was found in phenomenological forms of proto-yogic attention to our own consciousness. While the word can be used in a range of ways, a phenomenological method in philosophy is taken here to mean the direct empirical observation of one's own consciousness, and any discoveries or changes that flow from that process. Perhaps the first and most striking instance of this is found in a tale in which Indra, king of the gods, seeks knowledge of the self and finally finds it by paring away all transient and non-essential aspects of the self until he reaches the core (CU 8.7–12). The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* contains a number of passages supporting this idea. In some cases, it seems to imply that one can only infer an underlying self, and not perceive it directly:

> You can't see the seer who does the seeing; you can't hear the hearer who does the hearing; you can't think of the thinker who does the thinking; and you can't perceive the perceiver who does the perceiving. (BU 4.4)[49]

The opening passages and title of the *Kena Upaniṣad* similarly engage us in the problem of how to discover the sight behind sight, the thought behind thought which impels the perceived forms of experience but lies invisible behind them. But other sources acknowledge that we can "get hold" of consciousness itself through attentive self-reflection on the qualitative character of our experience. Attention is one of the key instruments of this phenomenological type of knowledge (see Ganeri 2007, 2017): it operates as a selector of influences, thereby determining what enters the mind. One passage in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* notes the way that we may fail to notice, or attend to a tap on the back all according to whether the mind is "elsewhere" or turns its attention accordingly; intentional states such as desire, decision, doubt, faith and fear are all associated with this state of attention (BU 1.5.3). The implication is that perceptions and states of mind may be variegated, but they all take place *in* and *as* the medium of consciousness, which can shift its attention to select between them.

The growth of yogic meditative practice was central to this move toward a direct focus on consciousness itself – seeing the mind with the mind. It separates itself from the philosophical form of reflection about the *idea* of the mind as inferred through its signs, by emphasizing that the self can be perceived in a direct empirical way by attending to what is "right here within those who see, hidden within the cave of their heart" (MU 3.2.7). As such, yoga offered what philosophers call a "phenomenological" method of analyzing experience directly. Those Upaniṣads that are most influenced by the emergence of yoga draw heavily on these insights: meditation makes the self appear to itself, drawing it out of the body as a fire drill draws fire out of the wood (ŚU 1.14–16). The *Mundaka Upanisad* speaks of a self that "cannot be grasped, by teachings or by intelligence, or even by great learning," sought by ascetics

"purified by the discipline of renunciation," to become "fully liberated" and "freed from name and appearance" (3.2.3, 6– 7). It focuses on knowledge of the self as a reality that is:

> …large, heavenly, of inconceivable form; yet it appears more minute than the minute. It is farther than the farthest, yet it is here at hand; right here within those who see, hidden within the cave of their heart.
>
> Not by sight, not by speech, nor by any other sense; nor by austerities or rites is he grasped. Rather the partless one is seen by a man, as he meditates, when his being has become pure, through the lucidity of knowledge.[50]

These yogic texts offered a phenomenological version of this self-creation in which we are able to sculpt consciousness directly. In Vedāntic applications this allows one to merge into the highest consciousness of brahman "as the rivers flow on and enter into the ocean giving up their names and appearances" (MU 3.2.6). Applied to consciousness, this leads to a state devoid of the names and forms of worldly appearance:

> There isn't a second reality here that he could perceive as something distinct and separate from himself… He becomes the one ocean, he becomes the sole seer! (BU 4.3.21)[51]

Focusing the mind on consciousness itself could thus be used to dissolve distinctions and achieve 'ocean-like' awareness. Applied to other realities, however, focusing the mind could lead to an immersion in them – an idea that would later be applied to the Hindu devotional tradition of bhakti. Immersion was a way of participating in the divine at the mental level, while maintaining an embodied life as an individual.

The Classical Hindu Arts of Freedom as a Way of Life

In these many schools of thought, spiritual and philosophical knowledge had become intertwined, both taking place in the "cave of the heart" and allowing us to see what is invisible and subtle, yet immanent and far-reaching. Their goals could be both deconstructive and creative, aimed at agency within the world, or alternatively at transcending it for a state of what Eliade called "immortality and freedom" (2009). In some respects, there is a striking correspondence between classical Indian and Greek forms of philosophical-spiritual practice. We see that in both "the goal is to transform ourselves" in such a way as to gain an "inner freedom," and potentially to achieve a form of "cosmic consciousness" through the philosophically-informed "dilation of self" (Hadot 1995, 265–256, 286). Yet one of the distinctive features of India's use of philosophy as "a way of life" was its assumption of an essential continuity between self and world, applying to spiritual essence, the mind and the "open body". Thus the freedom and transformation achieved were almost never conceived as merely "inner" – rather, they were expressions of a Vedic "artful universe" (Mahony 1997) with many patterns and causal forces to fulfill or rearrange, but no predetermined divine plan.

In many respects this idea of "becoming" or "acquiring" through understanding was "humanistic" insofar as it gave power directly to the knower – although in practice the knowledge was often meted out according to social situation by an *ācārya* or *guru* teacher, or

a sectarian *saṃpradāya*. Dharma also sustained an important moderating influence on any more novel or world-transcending use of knowledge and yoga; characters like Arjuna, the *Bhagavad Gītā's* general who chooses duty over individualism. Were perhaps more representative of social life than characters like the liberated sage *Śuka*, who uses his liberated powers to fly through different regions of the universe in the *Mokṣadharma* philosophical dialogues of the *Mahābhārata*. Once knowledge was no longer taught from father to son, but became linked to empirical and inductive reasoning, philosophy may have undergone a degree of democratization, as reported (and apparently endorsed) in the story of Satyakāma Jābāla, the fatherless boy who qualifies as a brahmin through knowledge alone (CU 4.4).

At the level of public and political life, India's ideal of a philosopher king developed in this period, embodied both in literary characters like Yudhiṣṭhira, Arjuna, Rāma and Janaka, and also in historical monarchs such as the Buddhist emperor Aśoka (see Samuel 2008, 69 and Black and Chakravarthi 2019 on the development of a Wisdom King model in India). In many respects, it was on this model of the responsible, self-controlled social agent – trained in ascetic disciplines and *satyagraha* or "holding to truth" – that Gandhi drew in trying to build a spiritual approach to principled politics. At the level of the individual inner life, this cultivated an autonomous agency that offers "a kind of liberation which is not freedom from embodiment or from worlds, but freedom from the constraints which our bodies and this world impose on us," so that we gain "freedom to roam at will in all worlds" (CU 7.25.2; Killingley 2019, 143). Here we see philosophical arts of the self that seek not only stoic calm, nor merely the dilation of the self, but a whole range of metaphysics, psychological sciences, and epistemological techniques for transforming oneself beyond quotidian existence. This culture of philosophically-informed work on the self is central to India's Bildung-like arts of self-cultivation, and its traditions of transformative spirituality. Where the ancient Greek and European arts of the self aimed at goals like the avoidance of suffering, alignment with "the totality of the world," or the personality's harmonization with beauty,[52] classical India opened up a plethora of possible paths that included sovereignty over nature, control of self, the gnostic purification of consciousness, and various techniques of transition to an immortal state of being.

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Notes

1 *dve vidye veditavye iti ha sma yad brahmavido vadanti parā caivāparā ca | | tatrāparā ṛgvedo yajurvedaḥ sāmavedo "atharvavedaḥ śikṣā kalpo vyākaraṇaṃ niruktaṃ chando jyotiṣam" iti | atha parā yayā tad akṣaram adhigamyate | |* (MU 1.1.4–5).

2 *yat tad adreśyam agrāhyam agotram avarṇam acakṣuḥśrotraṃ tad apāṇipādam | nityaṃ vibhuḥ sarvagataṃ susūkṣmaṃ tad avyayaṃ yad bhūtayoniṃ paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ | |* (MU 1.1.6).

3 See Frazier 2017, 101–105.

4 *na vi jānāmi yad ivedam asmi niṇyaḥ saṃnaddho manasā carāmi |* (AV 9.10.15).

5 Studies of Vedic cosmologies can be found in Gonda 1966; Bodewitz 1986; Smith 1994; Mahony 1997.

6 This account is given in ŚU 1.1–5; see Frazier 2019a on the early Upaniṣadic "plurilogical" strategy of assimilating existing theories into over-arching ones.

7 The Upaniṣads frequently combined different ways of seeing the world, the self and *brahman* within a single text, chapter, or sometimes a single passage, and even the Sūtras, which claim to capture a single perspective, often weave together ideas that we may see separately elsewhere.

8 In contrast to the parallel discipline of the history of Greek classical philosophy, relatively little has been written to capture the classical roots of the Hindu philosophical tradition. Keith (1925) and Edgerton (1965) gives a broad view of the development of philosophy out of Vedic material. Mahony (1997) evokes an overall cosmological world-picture of the Vedic and Upaniṣadic periods, Halbfass charted the development of Vedic ideology, and Witzel the effect of ritual and magical thinking (1979), while Bronkhorst (2011) tries to identify a central debate, and Gonda illuminated key themes such as *brahman* (1950), *lokas* or worlds (1966), the notion of a cosmic beginning (1982), and Prajāpati (1986). Curiously, since the somewhat simplifying approach taken by Paul Deussen in his *The Philosophy of the Upaniṣads* (1906), there has been relatively little scholarly reflection specifically on the philosophical content of the Upaniṣads, or the Sūtras as a genre. Exceptions include Cohen 2019. Bronkhorst 2007 offers a fascinating if controversial speculation on the relationship of Sanskritic thinkers with other cultures of the Gangetic plain.

9 See Witzel 1987, 1997.

10 *kiṃ svid āsīd adhiṣṭhānam ārambhaṇaṃ katamat svit kathāsīt | yato bhūmiṃ janayan viśvakarmā vi dyāmaurṇonmahinā viśvacakṣāḥ | |* (ṚV *Veda* 10.81.2).

11 *kiṃ svid vanaṃ ka u sa vṛkṣa āsa yato dvāvāpṛthivī niṣṭatakṣuḥ | manīṣino manasā pṛcchatedu tad yad adhyatiṣṭhad bhuvanāni dhārayan | |* (ṚV 10.82.4).

12 *nāsad āsīn no sad asīt tadānīṃ nāsīd rajo no vyomā paro yat | kim āvarīvaḥ kuha kasya śarmann ambhaḥ kim āsīd gahanaṃ gabhīram | |* (ṚV 10.129.1).

13 *brahma-vādino vadanti | kiṃ kāraṇaṃ brahma kutaḥ sma jātā jīvāma kena kya ca saṃpratiṣṭhaḥ | adhiṣṭḥatāḥ kena sukhetareṣu vartāmahe brahmavido vyavasthām | | kālaḥ svabhāvo niyatir yadṛcchā bhūtāni yoniḥ puruṣeti cintyam | saṃyoga eṣāṃ na tu ātmabhāvād ātmāpy anīśāḥ sukhaduḥkhahetoḥ | |* (*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 1.1–2).

14 E.g. Yājnavālkya in BU 2.4 and 3–4, Ajātaśatru in BU2.1, Prajāpati in CU 5.1, Aśvapati Kaikeyi in CU 5.11–24, Uddālaka Āruṇi in CU 6 etc., Sanatkumāra in CU 7, Prajāpati in CU 8, Citra Gāṇgāyani in KṣU 1, Ajātaśatru in KṣU 4, Brahman and Umā in KenaU 3–4, Death in the KṭU, Aṇgiras in the MuU, and Pippalāda in the PU. In many cases these explanations are interwoven with explanations about the symbolic equivalents of the sacrifice, showing a continuity between the two kinds of symbolic and philosophical reasoning in this period.

15 See BU 1.2.1; 1.4.1; 1.4.10; 1.4.11; 1.4.11; 5.5.1; CU 3.19.1; 6.2.1–2; AU 1.1.1.

16 Acharya argues that *sat* and *asat* should not be read as "existent" and "non-existent"; certainly in some texts *asat* seems to refer to a primeval state "lacking in all phenomenal forms"(Acharya 2016), rather than a strict non-existence of anything (an idea that Oertel (1938, 320) and following him Acharya (2016) argued to be foreign to the whole Vedic way of thinking about Being).

17 e.g. AV 10.7.10, RV 10.129, JB 3.36.61, ŚB 6.1.1.1, TB 2.2.9.1, SU 4.18. Interestingly, the *Kauṣitakī Upaniṣad* appears in places to comment on ideas in the *Bṛhad Āraṇyaka* and *Chāndogya Upaniṣads* and the person after whom the Upaniṣad is named, Kauṣitakī is also mentioned in CU 1.5.2, supporting the idea that these sources emerge from out of an associated group of thinkers. The *Īṣa Upaniṣad* also alludes to this language but seems more concerned with transience, as being and non-being are rephrased as becoming and non-becoming (IU 12–14).

18 *sad eva somyedam agre āsīd ekam evādvitīyam | taddhaika āhur asad evedam agre āsīd ekam evādvitīyam | tasmād asataḥ saj jāyata | | kutas tu khalu somyaivaṃ syād iti hovāca | katham asataḥ saj jāyeteti | sattveva somyedam agre asīd ekam evādvitīyam | | tad aikṣata bahu syāṃ prajāyeyeti |* CU 6.2.2–3.

19 Indeed, Paul Thieme (1968, 722–723) argued for the conceptual coherence of this chapter's arguments – the initial theory of a reality underlying the transforming (*vikara*) word-handle (*vāc-ārambhaṇa*) of names and forms (*nāma-rūpa*) fits well with the origin story of a first "one" that multiplies itself outward, the account of evolving elements, and the various analogies and examples from empirical experience that help explain the nature of the reality and shore up our sense of its feasibility.

20 *asannevasa bhavati asad brahmeti veda cet | asti brahmeti santamenaṃ tato viduḥ | |* TU 2.6.1.

21 Acharya 2016, describes a range of accounts including *Jaiminīya Brāhmana* 3.36.61, CU 3.19.1, *Śatapaṭha Brāhmana* 6.1.1.1, and *Taittirīya Brāhmana* 2.2.9.1, that seem to take *asat* as the indeterminate unformed reality from which the cosmos arose.

22 *tvaṃ jīrṇo daṇḍena vañcasi tvaṃ jāto bhavasi viśvatomukhaḥ | nīlaḥ pitaṅgo harito lohitākṣastaḍidgarbha ṛtavaḥ samudrāḥ | anādimat tvaṃ vibhutvena vartame yato jātāni bhuvanāni viśvā | |* ŚU 4.3–4.

23 The ŚU combines this with its characteristic theistic perspective by positioning the "controller" as the one who catalyses the seed to make it manifold (6.12), and it adds the image of a spider – containing the whole complex creation if its web – as a kind of panentheistic metaphor for beings that contain a secondary creation within themselves, but are not themselves changed in the processing of emitting it.

24 "Incubation" as an image of the catalysis of substantial change can be found in RV 10.72.3, AB 5.32, CU 2.23.2 and 3.1–5, AU 1.1.4 and 1.3.2).

25 *annād bhūtāni jāyante jātāny annena vardhante | | adyato atti ca bhūtāni tasmād annaṃ tad ucyate | |* (TU 2.2).

26 Contrasting with food, space (*ākāśa*) offered a different model of things that can evolve, emit, create, or develop new things without themselves becoming depleted, led to new appreciation of that which is "full" (*pūrna*) in the sense of having an un-fixed economy that is not depleted when it produces new things – as any fire can make infinitely more fire, and light can be refracted and reflected to create more light. Applied to the creation of the universe, this indicated that the self-existent entity at the root of everything remains rich in Being without becoming diminished by its prolific creation. A hymn in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanīṣad* praises this quality in the self-born (*svayaṃbhu;* BU 5.4.6) *brahman*: "Fullness from fullness proceeds, after taking fully from the full, it still remains completely full" (BU 5.5.1).

27 For more detailed scholarship on *pariṇāma* in Vedānta see Srinivasachari (1950) and Nicholson (2010), in Sāṃkhya see Chenchulakshmi 2005, Prasad 1984, Kolla *The Concept of Pariṇāma in Indian Philosophy: a critical study with reference to Sāṃkhya-Yoga, New Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan*, Burley, Ray 1982.

28 See SK 9 on arguments for the pre-existence of effects, and SK 15–16 on arguments for the existence of an unmanifest level of reality. On the philosophical life of the *satkāryavāda* doctrines, see Lipner 1986, 123–124; and Frazier 2017, 64.

29 Knut Axel Jacobsen (1999, 126) uses this analogy for the contrast between Sāṃkhya and Buddhist views of identity.

30 See Carman 1974; Lott 1980, 1980; Lipner 1986, on Rāmānuja's scholastic rendering of this theory, and its similarities to the development of Western modalism. For varieties of Bhedābheda

theology see Srinivasachari 1950 on Bhāskara and Nimbārka, Satyanand 1997 on Nimbarka, Nicholson 2010 on Vijñānabhikṣu, and Gupta 2007 on Jīva Gosvāmin.

31 See Bhattacharya (2012, 610–611) on the early competition to identify basic elements, and Larson (1969) and Jacobsen (1999) on the proto-Sāṃkhya lists in texts like the *Śānti Parvan* of the *Mahābhārata*. The Upaniṣads are full of lists of possible elements of the cosmos and/or the body (e.g. ŚU 1.1–3, BU 1.11–18, 3.7, TU 2.1–5, 3.1–6, AU 1.4). These lists often have a permeable boundary between what we normally think of as "inner" mental features and "outer" natural features.

32 Olivelle notes that the term *skandha*, translated in many philosophical contexts as "aggregate" is also used in literature to mean trunk of a tree, or the upper torso of a body (see Olivelle 1996, 541, in relation to CU 2.23.1). The meaning is similar to the *saṃghaṭa* – that which is collected and assembled.

33 *tiraścīna vitato raśmir eṣām adhaḥ svid āsīt upari svid āsīt* (RV 10.129.5).

34 The ritual sacrifices of the primeval man and the royal stallion embodied the more visceral division of a body: death creates the directions and regions of the cosmos by repeatedly dividing (*vyakṛ-*) his horse-shaped body into three (BU 1.2.3). Here, it is division not aggregation that generates something new.

35 *tāṃ dyotamānāṃ… manīṣāṃ* (RV 10.177).

36 *taddhedaṃ tarhyavyākṛtam āsīt | tan nāmarūpabhyām eva vyākriyatāsaunāmāyamidaṃrūpa iti | tad idam apy etarhi nāmarūpabhyam eva vyākriyate 'saunāmāyamidaṃrūpa iti |* (BU 1.4.7).

37 *adiḥ sa saṃyoga-nimitta-hetuḥ paras trikālād akalo 'pi dṛṣṭaḥ |* (ŚU 6.5).

38 The divine creator is said to be *svamāvṛnot* or "self-concealing" (ŚU 6.10) while its real nature is "without parts, inactive, tranquil, unblemished, spotless" (*niṣkalaṃ niṣkriyaṃ śāntaṃ niradyaṃ nirañjanam*; ŚU 6.19).

39 Here the two-levels' account is combined with the evolutionary model of a single substance "heated" to diversify and acquire new qualities and forms. I have differed slightly here from Olivelle's translation by translating as follows: *anirukta* I keep as "indistinct" and *avijñána* as unperceived following Olivelle, but *anilayana* I take as unmanifest rather than never-resting based on the reference to *laya* which has the cosmological connotation of a fallow or withdrawn phase in the recurrent emanation of the universe, and *anṛta* as unstructured rather than unreal; it is juxtaposed with *sat*, usually meaning "real" but here the author has chosen to contrast sat with that which lacks *ṛta* or cosmic order.

40 Earlier sources also allude to the four pādas of speech, giving special attention to a fourth part (e.g. AV 9.10.27).

41 *Na prajñaṃ nāprjñaṃ | adṛṣṭaṃ avyavahāryaṃ agrāhyam alakṣaṇam acintyam* (MaU 7).

42 These different gradations of consciousness are termed regions (*dhāmas*) or sections (*pādas*) of the "enjoyer" *bhaktṛ*; MK1.5.

43 MK 2.6, 2.9–10; such things are said to be *vaitathya* or "not the case" and *kalpita* or "imagined" *māyā* "delusions." The famous rope-snake analogy appears at MK 17–18, the *gandharva-nagara* or fairy-city at 2.31, and the pot-space analogy at 3.3.

44 Interestingly, a similar model is applied to the Indian metaphysical systems themselves, portraying all as ways of seeing reality. The polemical third chapter argues against the view that any real creation of the universe takes place, or that there is any assemblage of parts, or even that the underlying reality is really (rather than seemingly) multiple (3.1–2, 3.20, 3.13). This leads to a theory of the relativism of metaphysical schemes, such that "that manner of being that one is shown, that is what one sees." (*yaṃ bhāvaṃdarśayet yasya taṃ bhava sa tu paśyati*; MK 2.29).

45 *ātmānam rathinaṃ viddhi śarīraṃ ratham eva tu | buddhim tu sārathiṃ viddhi manaḥ pragraham eva ca | | indriyāni hayānāhur viṣayāṃsteṣu gocarān | ātmendriyam anuyuktiṃ bhoktety āhur manīṣinaḥ | |* (KṭU 3.3–4).

46 Specific examples of becoming what is known, or acquiring its characteristics seem to be preponderant in the early Upaniṣads or texts citing them, and include BU 1.4.9–10, TU 4.9–11, 2.6–7, PU 4.9–11.

47 *satyam eva jayate nānṛtaṃ satyena panthā vitato devayānaḥ | yenākramanty ṛṣayo hy āptakāmā yatra tat satyasya paramaṃ nidhānam || bṛhac ca tad divya acintyarūpaṃ sūkṣmāc ca tat sūkṣmataraṃ vibhāti|dūrātsudūre tad ihāntike ca paśyatsvihaiva nihitaṃ guhāyām ||* (MU 3.1.6–7).

48 See Preisendanz (2010, 28) on the development of Nyāya as a kind of referee for blossoming world of Indian philosophical thought.

49 *na dṛṣṭer driṣṭāraṃ paśyeḥ |na śruteḥ śrotāraṃ śṛnuyāḥ | mater mantāraṃ manvīthāḥ | na vijñāter vijñātāraṃ vijñānīyāḥ ||* (BU 4.4).

50 *bṛhac ca tad divyam acinta-rūpam sūkṣmāc ca tat sūkṣmātaraṃ vibhāti | dūrāt sudūre tad ihāntike ca paśyatsvihaiva nihitaṃ guhāyam || na cakṣuṣā gṛhyate nāpti vācā nānyair devais tapasā karmaṇā vā | jñāna-prasādena visuddha-sattvam tatas tu taṃ paśyate niṣkalaṃ dhyāyamānam ||* (MU 3.2.7–8).

51 *na tu tad dvitīyam asti tato 'nyadvibhaktaṃ yad vijānīyāt |... salila eko draṣṭād vaito bhavati ||* (BU 4.3.21).

52 Pierre Hadot's account of philosophy has been influential on the recognition of spiritual goals such as the "spiritual conquest of space" and the sense of "belonging to a whole" (Hadot 1995, 243, 208), inspiring historians of other traditions to seek the sense in which philosophical practices served goals of self-transformation. On *Bildung* and its ideal of a "beautiful soul," see Bruford 1975, Norton 1995, and Kolata 2019 on the embodied philosophical practices of conversation through which early nineteenth century Europeans tried to enact it. The "speaking together" (*saṃvāda*) and "out-speaking" (*ativāda*) that is described in classical Indian discourse belies its own "public sphere" with commensurate forms of cultures of cultivation (see Black and Ram-Prasad 2019).