

Chapter 10

Homo Hierarchicus: The Conceptualization of the Varna System in Indian Thought

Introduction

1. There is an old and oft-repeated assertion that classical Indian philosophy does not concern itself with social matters. This view, which seems to agree with the Indian tradition's basic "division of labor" between the soteriological and trans-social orientation of philosophical thought on the one hand and the socially committed sciences of *artha* and *dharma* on the other, has been evaluated and interpreted from a variety of perspectives.¹ The tradition of the Advaita Vedanta, which has been portrayed as the very culmination of Hindu thought, appears to lend especially clear and unequivocal support to the truth of this assessment.

On the other hand, proponents of what has become known as the Neo-Vedanta have argued that this supposed shortcoming actually hides a rich potential of untapped positive possibilities and that the Advaita Vedanta in particular has direct relevance for the social and political problems of our time: that it alone is capable of providing a metaphysically based ethical orientation that would be acceptable to modern thought and appropriate to the current situation in the world. No matter how one may assess the meaning and actual political weight of this claim, the "practical," politicizing Vedanta has had a significant role to play in the philosophical self-representation of modern India. It merits a more serious scholarly attention than it has thus far been accorded, apart from a few promising exceptions. Directly related to this, the question as to the "social relevance" of classical Indian philosophy should also be posed anew—but without simply taking for granted the above-mentioned

"division of labor," nor with a preconceived agenda of social and ideological critique. Instead, we should focus on those socially relevant statements that may indeed be found in the Indian philosophical texts, while admitting that these are scattered and isolated cases. There is no denying that India has never had a tradition of political and social philosophizing comparable to that reaching from Plato's idea of the state to the Marxist program of a "secularization" of philosophy.² Yet social themes have occasionally been taken up within the context of philosophical discourse, and philosophical terms and perspectives have been applied to social matters. The significance of these references cannot be assessed on a quantitative basis alone: even in their isolation, and as marginal phenomena within Indian philosophical literature, they are expressions of important attitudes and presuppositions of Indian philosophy, and symptoms of its social and historical role.

The conception of the four principal castes (*varna*) is the most obvious and significant point of reference for our investigation, and for this reason, the following pages will focus upon this conception. Drawing in particular upon the literature of the Hindu systems of the first millenium A.D., we shall compile philosophical testimony on this subject and examine how the *varna* structure of society has been portrayed, analyzed, and rationalized within the context of cosmological, metaphysical, and epistemological discussions.

There has never been a full survey of the texts that pertain to this subject, whether by historians of Indian philosophy or the historians of the Dharmasastra, and the following discussion can not and does not have any pretension to fill this gap. This notwithstanding, the passages which shall be presented and discussed below may be considered exemplary and should provide us with a textual basis sufficient for assessing the most important problems and developmental lines.³

2. The present chapter deals with theoretical concepts and constructs. It does not address the question to what extent these concepts correspond to social and historical realities; i.e., it does not deal with caste as an actual phenomenon. What this chapter discusses may, in fact, seem even more theoretical, abstract and removed from the realities of social life than what we find in the

Dharmasastra literature. The critique of brahminical schemes and constructions which É. Senart and many others have raised with regard to the Dharmasastras may seem to be even more appropriate when it comes to the philosophical reconstructions of the varna structure.⁴

Indeed, we are dealing with theoretical speculations and constructions; yet these are constructions and conceptualizations developed by traditional Indian theorists. Unlike the interpretations and paradigms of modern Western theorists, they are not only ideas about, but also symptoms and components of the multi-layered Indian tradition. They may not provide us with much factual information about the social reality of traditional India; nonetheless, they are its products and reflections.

The chapter discusses traditional Indian conceptualizations and rationalizations of the varna system of society, i.e., of a supposedly natural and inherent hierarchy among human beings. The "homo hierarchicus" is just a segment of the pervasive hierarchy of living beings, which extends "from Brahma to the tufts of grass" (*brahmadistambaparyanta*). The Indian authors use a variety of terms to characterize this hierarchy of human, subhuman and superhuman forms of life, for instance *taratamya* ("gradation"), *uccanicabhava* ("high and low status"), and *utkarsapakarsa* ("superiority and inferiority").⁵ This hierarchy involves different levels of merit and demerit (*dharma*, *adharma*), pleasure and pain (*sukha*, *duhkha*), and of the "manifestness of knowledge, sovereignty, and so forth" (*jñānaisvaryabhivyakti*); and it provides different stations of *samsara*, i.e., of karmic reward and punishment.⁶ Some authors suggest that mankind alone, and no other species of living beings, is subdivided into further classes characterized by mutual "superiority and inferiority" (*utkarsapakarsa*).⁷ In addition to such vertical hierarchies, we also find "horizontal" schemes of hierarchy, that is, concentric circles of increasing distance from a dharmic center. The brahmins would place themselves and the other "twice-born" (*dvija*) castes, as well as the orthodox followers of the Veda, in the central region, while the sudra class with its innumerable subdivisions and bastardizations, as well as all more or less heterodox sects, would be seen as more or less removed or "external" (*bahya*, *bahyatara*) in relation to this center of legitimacy and orthodoxy.⁸

3. The title of this chapter does not imply that it is an attempt to defend L. Dumont's classical and controversial book against its Anglo-American critics. Nonetheless, it does support in its own way what Dumont calls "the main idea" of his book, that is, "the idea of hierarchy separated from power."⁹ Regardless of all problems that social and cultural anthropologists may find with this idea, the world-view that is presupposed or articulated in our philosophical sources is indeed inherently hierarchical.

There is no need for us to speculate on the origin of the caste system, on the original meaning and function of the terms *varna* and *jati*, or on "the relationship between the caste system as it can be directly observed, and the classical theory of the varnas."¹⁰ However, a few general terminological observations will be useful. Many scholars have emphasized the fundamental differences between *jati* and *varna*, and they have argued that "caste" should be avoided as a translation for *varna*. A. L. Basham says that the "indiscriminate use" of "caste" for both *varna* and *jati* is "false terminology," and he adds: "All ancient Indian sources make a sharp distinction between the two terms."¹¹ While Basham's call for terminological caution is certainly appropriate, his claim that the two terms were sharply distinguished in the classical texts is untenable as a general statement. As a matter of fact, for most of the philosophical sources to be discussed in this chapter the terminological distinction is virtually negligible.

Unlike *varna*, the term *jati* does not play a noticeable and thematically relevant role in Vedic literature. It does appear in the Dharmasastra literature, beginning with the Dharmasutras and older verse texts. In these works, it is neither simply a synonym of *varna*, nor clearly and consistently distinguished from it. Manu and other authorities refer frequently to the "norms of the jatis" (*jatidharma*), usually in conjunction with the "norms of the regions and families" (*desadharma*, *kuladharma*); it does not seem likely that these are references to the four varnas.¹² Yajñavalkya mentions *varna* and *jati* side by side, as separate or at least separable phenomena.¹³

Yet from an early time, there was at least a partial overlap, together with much interaction and "osmosis." Apastamba's *Dharmasutra* uses *jati* in the sense of *varna*.¹⁴ In later texts, this is a more or less familiar phenomenon. As stated earlier, the *Manusmṛti* has

usages of *jati* that imply a distinction from *varna*; and Manu X, 4 states that (unlike the *jati*) the number of *varna* is strictly limited to four. Nonetheless, other verses of the same text use *jati* to refer to the four *varna* and, even more conspicuously, *varna* to refer to the unlimited number of other "castes" or "races" (*jati*). For instance, X, 31 uses the word *varna* with regard to the "inferior" (*hina*) groups which result from bastardization; in other verses, the two terms seem to be interchangeable.¹⁵

The commentators deal with this terminological situation in different ways. In a number of cases, they explain the term *jati* by referring to the four *varna*, i.e., the brahmins etc.¹⁶; in other cases, they note that *varna* is used in the sense of certain subspecies or intermediate groups within the human species (*manusyajati*, *manusyavantarajati*).¹⁷ There are, however, more specific and thematically relevant statements which explain the *jatis* as mixed castes, such as the *murdhavasikta* (of brahmin fathers and ksatriya mothers) or *ambastha* (of brahmin fathers and vaisya mothers).¹⁸ This does not necessarily imply that *jati* is used as a technical term; some authors state that, in addition to "mixed castes," it may also refer to "women" (*stri*) and other groups.¹⁹ At any rate, the texts do not recognize any independent "jati system," apart from the four *varnas*. The theory of "mixed castes" is an attempt to derive all other hereditary social formations from the *varna* system. Such derivation involves a basic ambiguity: Should the "mixed castes" be added to or subsumed under the four *varnas*? Do they constitute mere subspecies, or new, additional species, which are genetically derived from, but not included in the *varna* system? The answers may vary, and they are often more or less elusive.²⁰ While it may be true that the theory of caste mixture "was used to refer real *jati* to the *varnas*,"²¹ the instances of "mixed castes" mentioned in the texts are not necessarily more factual than the four *varnas*.

4. The philosophical sources which will be discussed in this chapter do not pay much attention to the "mixed castes," or to the distinction between *jati* and *varna*. They deal with the conceptual framework of the four normative and theoretical "castes" which they may call both *jati* and *varna*. In using the term *jati* for this purpose, they obviously exploit the fact that it means not only

"birth" or "species," but was also widely used in grammatical and philosophical literature as a term for "universals," as opposed to particular, individual entities (*vyakti*, etc.).

In the context and for the purpose of this presentation, the term "caste" shall be utilized in the sense of the theoretical notion of *varna*. Although this deviates from current terminological usage, it is not only convenient, but may also remind us of the fact that, in spite of all differences, the *varna* system is, indeed, the prototype for important aspects of the "real" castes.

The textual references found in the following presentation could have been easily augmented. For this, the literature produced by the orthodox traditions of the Purvamimamsa and Uttaramimamsa would be of great and obvious importance. In addition, the adaptations of the Mimamsa arguments by the Dharmasastra commentators, for instance Medhatithi, would have to be considered.²² The topic has continued to play its role in modern traditionalistic pandit literature. Among the relevant sources, the *Dharmapradipa* by Anantakrsna Sastrin, Sitarama Sastrin and Srijiva Bhattacarya deserves particular attention. However, Sanskrit pandits are also found among the advocates of a non-hereditary, ethical and characterological interpretation of the *varna* system.²³

In the later history of Nyaya and Vaisesika, epistemological and ontological discussions concerning the status of the four *varnas* are a somewhat marginal, though certainly not negligible phenomenon. There are even some—hitherto unpublished—monographs in this area, for instance the *Brahmanatvajativada*, the *Brahmanatvajativicara* and the *Brahmanatvavada*; manuscripts of these anonymous texts are found in the collection of the Sanskrit University Library (Sarasvati Bhavana) in Benares.²⁴ The topic has also been discussed in the sectarian theistic traditions, primarily in the literature of the Vaisnava Vedanta schools. Apart from the numerous *Brahmasutra* commentaries produced by these schools,²⁵ we have to mention some direct and specific adaptations of Purvamimamsa texts and procedures. Venkatanatha (also known as Vedantadesika), one of the chief representatives of Ramanuja's Srivaisnava school, provides a remarkable example in his *Sesvaramimamsa*, i.e., a theistic adaptation and interpretation of Jaimini's *Mimamsasutra*; he discusses the ontological and epistemological status of the *varnas* in detail and reproduces Kumarila's arguments from the *Tantravarttika*.²⁶

On the other hand, the opponents of brahminical orthodoxy, in particular the Jainas and Buddhists, have paid a great deal of attention to this issue. After the demise of Buddhism in India, the Jainas continued their vigorous attacks against the hereditary varna system and, more specifically, against the idea of real "caste universals." The great Jaina dialectician Prabhacandra (eleventh century) epitomizes this tradition of critique in two elaborate sections of his *Nyayakumudacandra* and his *Prameyakamalamartanda*.²⁷ Even within the Hindu tradition, the attempts of the brahmins to establish their hereditary rank as a quasi-biological species were questioned and ridiculed.²⁸ However, traditional Advaita Vedanta did not take part in this critique. Its non-dualistic metaphysics has generally not affected its orthodox and conservative position with regard to social norms; this includes its acceptance of the four varnas as legitimate and authoritative structures of the world of appearance. It has been left to the Neo-Vedanta to proclaim and exploit the social and political potential of nondualism.²⁹

Antecedents of the Philosophical Varna Theories

5. The present context precludes any discussion of the factual origins of the caste system or the problems of its later historical development and its actual role within Indian society. Concerning its documentation and interpretation in the mythological, cosmological, and ritual texts of the early period and its theoretical explication in the Dharmasastra, we may refer to the available standard works, in particular the presentation by P. V. Kane,³⁰ as well as the older yet still useful compilations of J. Muir³¹ and A. Weber.³² Nevertheless, it seems fitting to include at least a few basic remarks about those aspects of the *varna* conception that became important for later philosophical debates, and in particular for the debates between Buddhists and Hindus.

As exemplified by the concept of the brahmin, the cosmic and the social, the ethical norm and the supposed "biological" fact, have been combined within the four varnas since they were listed in the cosmogonic hymn Rgveda X, 90. This is in keeping with a world view whose key concepts interweave aspects of a normative and factual, and an ethical and physical nature. The doctrine of karma and

rebirth, which was gradually consolidated, came to provide a natural framework for this approach.³³ And yet the literature from the Brahmana period also contains a number of terms which indicate that these various aspects and meanings were being distinguished from one another. For example, we find the brahmin who was characterized as such solely as a result of his ancestry or his fulfillment of purely formal functions (*jatibrahmana*; *brahmabandhu*) being contrasted with the brahmin who was distinguished by his adequate knowledge and action and who had realized the full sense of his being a brahmin in this manner.³⁴ In other words, a distinction was made between the ethical and the hereditary aspects, which were conceptually juxtaposed and occasionally contrasted. What is more, the significance of hereditary legitimation occasionally appears to have been secondary,³⁵ although it would be going too far to see such scattered and often ambivalent passages as evidence of any far-reaching mobility or a predominantly ethical and characterological understanding of the caste system—as the Neo-Vedanta frequently does.

The critique by the Buddhists has to be seen against this background. Their "ethicizing" interpretation of the caste concepts was not a radical innovation. Instead, they drew upon aspects that had long been present in the spectrum of meaning of these concepts, but did so in a manner which credited the ethical aspect with the primary and more intrinsic meaning while playing this against the other aspects. It was here that the coexistence and occasional competition between the ethical/normative and the factual/hereditary aspects first came to be a problem; instead of being coordinated with one another, a sharp contrast began to be made between what was considered to be relevant and irrelevant. As a result, the caste distinctions themselves were ultimately called into question, and the traditional criteria subjected to fundamental criticism.³⁶

The concept of *svadharma*, which may be found in some of the later Upanisads and in particular in the Bhagavadgita, offered a way out of this problematic situation.³⁷ This concept assigns great weight to the ethical motif while simultaneously maintaining and defending the hereditary legitimation of caste membership. The hereditary and the ethical aspects remain distinct and even stand in contrast to one another while being related in such a way that there was no direct competition and confrontation, a procedure that skirts

the danger of weakening the hereditary aspect. There is a different ethical appraisal of behavior for each of the four hereditary stages. In other words, each person should prove himself according to his hereditary position. Thus, while a "good" sudra may be ethically "better" than a "bad" brahmin, this ethical hierarchy cannot change the fact that a brahmin will always remain a brahmin and a sudra a sudra.³⁸ The respecting of this hereditary affiliation and the avoidance of intermingling (*samkara*) is, in keeping with the concept of *svadharma*, in itself a standard and even a fundamental condition of ethical conduct: it is better to perform the duties appropriate to one's station poorly than to fulfill those of another well.³⁹

In Patañjali's *Mahabhasya*, the problems of reference and differentiation which arise in connection with the "coexistence" of ethical and biological aspects in the concept of *varna* appear as topics of linguistic and epistemological reflection. In a section of the *Tatpurusahnika* (on Panini II, 2,6:*nan*) that discusses the function of the particle *a-* in such forms as *abrahmana*, the possibility is considered that the nominal meaning to which the particle of negation refers in such a case is to be understood in the sense of an aggregation of properties (*gunasamudaya*), i.e., that the *a-* here signifies a deficiency or incompleteness. Such an interpretation would also explain the applicability of the remainder of the compound, i.e., - *brahmana*, for a share of those properties whose entirety makes up the full meaning of the word *brahmana* would be retained in its composition with the negative particle *a*. Here, several external criteria of identification (*gaura*, *sucyacara*, *pingala*, *kapilakesa*, i.e., light-colored, of faultless conduct, brown-eyed, with reddish-brown hair) are added to such traditional "components of meaning" as asceticism (*tapas*), erudition (*sruta*), and legitimate birth (*yoni*).⁴⁰ According to this interpretation, any *vaisya* who possesses certain ethical or physiological characteristics would be considered to be just as much a "partial brahmin" as a person whose "brahminness" was solely the result of his descent from brahmin parents. On the whole, however, this discussion remains noncommittal and can hardly be seen as an expression of social critique. At no time does the conceptual status of the brahmin etc. appear endangered, and the fact that there are certain problems and exceptions is not considered to be an occasion for questioning the fundamental validity of the caste system or the reliable identifiability of caste membership: as a result of ancient tradi-

tion, people know how to distinguish a brahmin from a non-brahmin in daily life. Such physical features as hair and skin color, as well as peculiar forms of livelihood, are still considered valid criteria, while more penetrating questions concerning the authenticity or demonstrability of brahminness, etc., are not posed. ⁴¹

A completely different level of reflection on this problem is developed in the Mimamsa, and in particular by Kumarila. Here, as a later section of this chapter will show, the Buddhist challenge was met in full. The ethical and factual connotations were distinguished from one another in a much more resolute manner, and the priority of the hereditary legitimation was developed with a previously unknown conceptual rigor. Here, safeguarding the caste concept against the ambivalences that resulted from the combination of various semantic components and against the dangers of mobility and variability became an important motivating factor.

In general, the discussions of the varna system within traditional Hindu philosophy were largely apologetical and remained reactions to criticism and challenges from without. In accordance with the different stages of development and the fundamental systematic positions of the Indian philosophical schools, a variety of metaphysical, cosmological, and epistemological concepts and theories were placed in the service of this essentially apologetic task.

The Varna System and the Guna Theory

6. Of all the theories that may be found in classical Indian philosophy, the doctrine of the three *guna*, the three basic forces of the dynamic primordial matter (*pradhana*) or nature (*prakṛti*) from which the visible world periodically develops, has been most widely applied to non-philosophical questions. This Samkhya theory was developed from pre-philosophical and mythological sources and offered a potentially universal, and, indeed, frequently utilized principle for classifying and explaining empirical phenomena; often completely detached from the remaining doctrines of Samkhya, it was applied in a variety of ways in cosmology, psychology, medicine, dietetics, poetics, etc. The guna theory was especially popular for classifying and characterizing living beings (especially humans) and their patterns of behavior. Similarly, it could also be used as a

means for discussing, justifying, and reinterpreting existing classifications and typologies. It is not surprising, then, that it also became linked in certain ways with the most significant of these classifications, that based upon the varna structure of society.

In the classical Samkhya texts from the first millennium A.D. (i.e., in particular in Isvarakrsna's *Samkhyakarika* and the corresponding commentaries) few explicit opinions are to be found; and—as these texts are concerned with fundamental cosmological, metaphysical, and soteriological questions—this was probably not to be expected. Yet one passage, *Samkhyakarika* v. 53, is worthy of mention:

*astavikalpo daivas, tairyagyonyas ca pañcadha bhavati,
manusyas ca-ekavidhah, samasato bhautikah sargah.*

("The divine domain of evolution has eight types, the animal five, the human one; this, in short, is the evolution of living beings.")

Directly after this verse (v. 54), this enumeration is supplemented by a hierarchical arrangement based upon the distribution of the three gunas. Now it would certainly be incorrect to draw more far-reaching conclusions from the characterization of the human race as "uniform" (*ekavidha*). Yet, it should be noted that no matter what other assumptions may have been made about the subdivisions of the human race, these were not elevated to the rank of primary cosmological and biological relevance (as occurs in the often-cited Rgveda hymn X.90 and in the numerous texts which concur with this). The view of man in his unity and distinction, which tended to recede in later Indian thought, still appeared to possess a certain self-evident validity within the natural philosophy of the *Samkhyakarika*.

In this context, it is interesting to consider some of the various ways in which commentators have reacted to this passage: in the richest and possibly oldest available commentary, the anonymous *Yuktidipika*, the word *ekavidha* is explicated through the comment that there are no subspecies (*jatyantaranupapatteh*).⁴² But the *Matharavrtti* and the *Samkhyasaptativrtti* (which has recently been published and which has obvious affinities with the *Matharavrtti*) limit themselves to the statement that the human race (which the verse characterizes as uniform) reaches from the brahmin to the candala on the

basis of the equality of characteristics (*linga*), i.e., primarily their visual appearance.⁴³ Vacaspati's remark that this characterization of the human race as uniform simply disregards the subdivisions into subspecies, brahmins, etc. is an obvious attempt to temper its tone.⁴⁴

In any case, one can hardly speak of any explicit social reference in the classical Samkhya; nor do we find any explicit applications of the three *guna* to the theory of caste. The situation is different in pre- and post-classical Samkhya, as well as in other texts—both older and more recent—that are either directly or indirectly related to the Samkhya.

In this context, much, and much that is controversial, has been said about the most famous of those early texts that utilized Samkhya concepts, the Bhagavadgita. Let us present a few basic observations which are directly relevant to our topic.

Referring to passages such as IV, 13,⁴⁵ which state that the institution of the four varnas follows the distribution of the gunas and "works" (*karman*) and speaking of the role of the guna theory in the Bhagavadgita in general, modern Hinduism has often advanced the thesis that the hereditary view of the caste system has here given way to an ethical or characterological view. S. Radhakrishnan, who tends to draw parallels between the Bhagavadgita and the Buddhist *Dhammapada* with respect to other questions as well, has been an emphatic spokesman for this view. Here, the concept of svadharma appears to provide additional support for this ethicizing interpretation.⁴⁶

It is very symptomatic of the literary character and the historical role of the Bhagavadgita that this work has also been subjected to completely opposite interpretations. That is, it has also been cited as an authoritative document which provides support for the traditional hereditary explication of the four varnas. Such modern traditionalist pandits as Vasudeva Sastrin Abhyankara and Durgaprasada Dviveda have cited the passages in the Bhagavadgita that deal with svadharma, etc., as evidence *for* the hereditary view and *against* the ethicizing corruption of the caste concept, for they assume that hereditary caste membership and the social roles traditionally ascribed to the castes also correspond to the true and metaphysical being of the individuals concerned.⁴⁷ Of course, the Bhagavadgita is distinguished by its avoidance of categorical and exclusive statements and its general tendency towards reconciliation, syn-

thesis, and ambivalence. For this reason, we should not expect it to explicitly play off the various meanings or aspects of the varna concept or claim exclusive validity for one meaning or one aspect. At the same time, it is clear that the fundamental hereditary meaning of caste membership remains unquestioned, and is in fact defended in a subtle, conciliatory, and very accommodating manner against the ethicizing meaning represented by Buddhism; in the opening chapters, the mixing of the castes (*varnasamkara*) is repeatedly referred to as a threatening phenomenon.⁴⁸ Classifications made on the basis of ethical or characterological criteria appear alongside of and within the biological and hereditary arrangement of the castes without replacing or even endangering it.⁴⁹ Here, it is obvious that we can no longer speak of any naive and unreflected coexistence among the meanings and aspects such as may be found in the older texts, and especially those dating from the pre-Buddhist period. The ethical and biological/hereditary aspects overlap and merge, albeit in a manner that clearly presupposes the confrontation between the meanings which the Buddhists brought about. The concept of *svadharma* (i.e., the duties that result for a person from his position in life) appears to allow a great deal of room for the ethical aspect while simultaneously securing and stabilizing the traditional, hereditary structure as the very context and foundation for ethical valuation; according to the doctrine of rebirth and retributive causality (*samsara*; *karman*, etc.), the caste rank results from previous existences and does not necessarily reflect one's current moral achievements. The "distribution of the gunas and the works" (*gunakarmavibhaga*) referred to in the above-cited passage IV,13 is doubtlessly to be understood within the context of the doctrine of *samsara*.⁵⁰

7. The manner in which the term *karman* was applied to the four castes is revealingly ambivalent: while "works" in the sense of ethically relevant behavior (*acara*) are ascribed to the two higher varnas (*brahmana*, *ksatriya*), "works" in the sense of types of livelihood or employment are associated with the two lower varnas (*vaisya*, *sudra*).⁵¹ The reasons behind this practice are easy to understand: since ancient times, the status of the brahmin, and to a lesser extent that of the ksatriya, has been associated with such characteristic virtues as wisdom, honesty, and self-discipline. These values were reserved for the higher castes, and could not also be assigned

to the lower castes as their appropriate norms (svadharma); for these lower castes, especially the sudras, were associated with such ethically negative attributes as an impure way of life, licentiousness, and dullness—attributes hardly suitable to be assigned or recommended as norms or duties. Accordingly, the only alternative was to refer to the means of occupation—whose faithful fulfillment could open up the dimension of "ethical" values—to give meaning to the concept of svadharma for the lower castes. For this reason, while a sudra could indeed be a "good" sudra, his caste-bound achievements could not help him to attain the peculiar ethical potential that belongs (i.e., is "innate") to the brahmin (*brahmakarma svabhavajam*; XVIII, 42).

A clear paraphrase of this point of view may be found in the rhetorical question posed by a nineteenth century pandit, "Soobajee Bapoo," who asked whether a mule, no matter how hardworking he is (i.e., who performs his functions as a mule as perfectly as he can) can ever become a horse.⁵²

It is remarkable that the central statements made in the Bhagavadgita about the svadharma were also utilized in the law book of Manu.⁵³ Moreover, Manu also made use of the guna theory in order to lend a metaphysical and cosmological emphasis to his hierarchical classification of all living beings. This is a "mixed hierarchy" like those so typical in the "presystematic" texts. Manu introduces us to the following beings, arranged in an ascending order determined by the relative distribution of the three gunas- *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*:⁵⁴ Plants (*sthavara*), worms (*krmi*), turtles, sudras, barbarians (*mleccha*), lions, birds, hypocrites (*dambhikah purusah*), and *pisaca* demons are dominated chiefly by *tamas*; wrestlers (*malla*), actors (*nata*), ksatriyas, great debaters (*vadayuddhapradhana*), and gandharvas are dominated chiefly by *rajas*; ascetics (*yati*), certain brahmins (*vipra*), stars (*naksatra*), *rsi*, *deva*, *Brahma*, *dharma*, the *mahan* (i.e., the cosmic *buddhi*, "knowledge"), and even *avyakta* (i.e., non-manifested "nature" itself) are dominated chiefly by *sattva*. Manu's list clearly intermingles a number of aspects and criteria; his categories are partly ethical, characterological, mythological, biological/cosmological, or refer to occupation. Within the sphere of human existence, the four varnas are not considered as a comprehensive and exclusive principle of classification and subordination (the vaisya are not mentioned at all). And Manu simply ignores the fact that much overlapping

and blending occurs in his list (this "overlapping of the genera," *jatisamkara* in the logical sense, was meticulously avoided by the later systematic philosophers).

There are a number of other examples in which the four varnas appear within comprehensive hierarchies and evolutionary series, for instance in the Mahabharata or in the Brahmanas (specifically in the "table of creation" used in the *agnicayana* ritual and first quoted by A. Weber).⁵⁵ The question whether the *varna* system was originally included in these hierarchies or added at a later time shall not be dealt with here. The passage from the *Sukanuprasna* chapter of the Mahabharata, which, in a series of progressive dichotomies leads from basic biological categories to the concept of the true brahmin who knows brahman, is on a different conceptual level and reminiscent of the diheretic procedure found in Plato's *Sophist* and *Politicus*.⁵⁶ Enumerations that proceed from biological or essentially cosmological categories to ethical concepts, eventually culminating in the concept of the true brahmin as the genuine sage or the true knower of the Veda, have a tradition that may be traced from the *Satapathabrahmana* to numerous more recent texts.⁵⁷

Returning now to our subject of how the guna theory has been utilized to explicate the varna system, it remains to be noted that the three gunas were not only applied within a context of general and comprehensive hierarchies, but also particularly and individually to the four varnas, sometimes in conjunction with the doctrine of caste colors.⁵⁸ Here, of course, difficulties, or inconvenience at the very least, arose from the fact that a threefold schema was being used to explicate and justify a group of four and that, quite generally, attempts were being made to link two schemas which originated from independent (and in fact divergent) sources.⁵⁹

One seemingly obvious solution to this conflict, yet one which was nevertheless surprising within the Indian context, was proffered by the *Anugita* in the Mahabharata; it applies the gunas to just three varnas, assigning *tamas* to the sudra, *rajas* to the ksatriya, and *sattva*, the highest guna, to the brahmin; the vaisya has no part in this process.⁶⁰ Now it would certainly be wrong to expect that a derivative text such as the *Anugita* would critically and autonomously apply philosophical and cosmological concepts to social conventions, and thus attempt a critical reconstruction and reform of the varna system along the lines suggested by the metaphysics of the gunas,

and many other passages leave no doubt that the *Anugita* never seriously calls the number of the four varnas into question.⁶¹

Other authors have used other means in their attempts to reconcile that discrepancy which the *Anugita* clearly avoids through mere omission. Often, the vaisya was endowed with a combination of rajas and tamas and the other varnas with "pure" gunas.⁶² Durgaprasada Dviveda, whom we have already mentioned, proceeded in a somewhat different fashion, and further elevated the position of the brahmin. In his view, the brahmin is defined through *sattva* alone, the ksatriya through rajas and *sattva*, the vaisya through rajas and tamas, and the sudra through tamas alone or through tamas and rajas.⁶³

P. T. Raju's attempt to depict Plato's threefold psychological and social scheme of *ἐπιθυμία* as an analogy to such applications of the three gunas is not convincing.⁶⁴ Instead, it underscores a fundamental difference. For Plato develops a comprehensive rational construction that considers social and political questions in a manner that deliberately distances itself from existing conventions; among the guna theorists, on the other hand, we find a cosmological scheme being coordinated with a social order that was considered to be as natural as the cosmos itself. There is no contrast here between a "natural" and a "positive" or merely conventional order. The guna theory was not used to question or criticize the varna system. To be sure, the concepts *sattva*, rajas, and tamas do serve to recall the ethical and characterological aspects of the varna system as opposed to its hereditary connotations; and in fact, modern authors have often used these concepts to explicate the four principal castes in the sense of psychological and physiological types.⁶⁵ Yet no criteria were developed for empirically determining and unambiguously distinguishing among these types and, therewith, for a practically feasible division of society independent of the hereditary order, and the readiness for alternatives often remained verbal. Even S. Radhakrishnan, one of the most persuasive spokesmen for an interpretation of the four varnas based upon character and vocation and not upon hereditary group membership, admitted: "Since we cannot determine in each individual case what the aptitudes of the individuals are, heredity and training are used to fix the calling."⁶⁶ When viewed against this background, the position of such a traditional scholar as Durgaprasada Dviveda

appears more consistent: he considers the application of the three gunas to be merely another way of specifying what is by definition implied in the hereditary membership in a caste; and such hereditary membership alone is able to provide reliable testimony about the true, metaphysical, gunic disposition of a person, which is never really accessible to independent, empirically oriented criticism or verification.⁶⁷

Castes as Real Universals

8. Another philosophical device that has been drawn upon in interpreting and discussing the caste system is the realistic concept of universals (*samanya*, *jati*). While this did not achieve the popularity of the doctrine of the three gunas, its many metaphysical, linguistic, and epistemological ramifications assured it a greater importance in the philosophical discussions of the classical period. The theory of real universals received its most distinctive treatment in the Nyaya and Vaisesika, and in this version, it became a classical target for Buddhist criticism. Yet it also played a very notable role in the Mimamsa, in particular with respect to the present topic. Before we take up the manner in which the concept of *samanya* was applied to the theory of castes, it seems appropriate to make a few remarks about its peculiar systematic role within the Vaisesika and on its historical role during the classical period.

Most probably in connection with linguistic considerations and initially in a more or less undifferentiated manner, the realistic concept of *samanya* or *jati* was at first concerned with the problem of the one-in-many, of what particular entities may have in common, of the identical and enduring meaning of words. That which is common and universal is one, indivisible, subject to no change or decay, yet inherent in many changing individuals. However, the development of thought about this topic soon led to a distinction between what were considered to be real universals and other, merely accidental, "additional qualities" (*upadhi*). While this does not amount to an equivalence of the concepts of *samanya* and *jati* with the Western concept of essence, they nevertheless served to demarcate what was substantial and constitutive from accidental attributes and merely temporal and extrinsic functions. In this sense, the actual *samanya*

is that which makes a concrete individual thing what it is: a horse (*asva*) is what it is insofar as "horseness" (*asvatva*) is inherent in it, while a cow is what it is insofar as "cowness" (*gotva*) is inherent in it. On the other hand, "cookness" (*pacakatva*) is merely an "additional quality," but not a real type and factor of identity. The samanyas thus signify structures of the universe, biological species, and other basic forms within the real, empirical world that remain unaffected by the periodic destructions of the world and always reappear at the beginning of a new epoch. For this reason, and in the face of the ancient cosmological associations of the varna doctrine, it would seem natural that the four castes were also viewed in the sense of such invariable prototypes.

Yet the old Vaisesika and Nyaya texts did not portray the four varnas as universals. To be sure, the caste hierarchy, both in itself and as an integral component of dharma, was unambiguously and unequivocally accepted. In his mythical/philosophical description of the regeneration of the world after its disintegration into atoms at the beginning of a new epoch, Prasastapada makes it clear that he attributes a cosmological status to the system of the four varnas. And in fact, he does this with much greater decisiveness than the classical Samkhya. He even includes a clear allusion to the *Purusasukta*, although in contrast to the Rgveda, he does not speak of an original cosmogonic act, but rather of a recurrent event. At the beginning of each new world period, souls (*atman*) are assigned to these social archetypes, as well as to other forms of life, in accordance with their unredeemed karma from the preceding world period.⁶⁸

In Nyaya and Vaisesika texts from the ninth and tenth centuries, we find that the interpretation and discussion of the varna theory within the context of the doctrine of universals had become a familiar and common theme. Here as well, the epistemological orientation which prevailed in the discussions of this period is in the foreground; that is, the discussions primarily revolve around questions as to how, within the context of the doctrine of the means of knowledge (*pramana*), each of the varnas may be safely recognized as such and distinguished from one another and how the view that the castes are determined by real universals may be epistemologically justified. Since the Vaisesika and subsequently the Nyaya claimed that the universals (*samanya*) are demonstrable in

perception as the data of "mere intuition" (*alocanamatra, nirvikalpapratyaksa*), the question of perception also had to be posed with respect to caste universals. And when countering objections from the Buddhists and others, it was essential to consider the relation between direct perception and that indirect knowledge which was acquired through "instruction" (*upadesa*) and genealogical tradition.

9. In his *Nyayamañjari* (ninth century), Jayantabhatta notes that a person initially requires "instruction" and genealogical knowledge if he is to be able to ascertain the caste membership of a particular individual—at the very least, one has to have learned the meanings of the corresponding words. Afterwards, however, one merely has to use one's perceptual abilities in order to identify a person as a member of a particular caste. The fact that learning is the prerequisite of this act does not, as he emphasizes, call into question the results of perception as such. Must not a person similarly first be instructed about the meaning of the word "cow" before he is able to identify a cow as such? According to this line of reasoning, linguistic instruction is merely the external preparation for a perceptual act, a preparation that does not in any way detract from the validity of the results of that act: just as that which a person perceives after he has reached the top of a mountain does not lose its status as content of perception (merely because it requires such preparation).⁶⁹ While Jayanta does mention another position, namely, that a brahmin can be identified merely on the basis of his distinguished appearance even without prior genealogical instruction, he does not seem to concur with this view.⁷⁰

In a later section of his *Nyayamañjari*, Jayanta resumes the discussion of the perceptibility of "caste universals," and once again, he cites the simile of the view from the mountain, which he has obviously borrowed from Kumarila's *Tantravarttika*.⁷¹

The fact that the perception of a brahmin, as opposed to the seeing of a cow, does not presuppose a one-time learning alone but also a genealogical inquiry that must be made for each case, was not considered a difficulty to be taken seriously. On this point, the Vaisesika commentator Sridhara (tenth century) was even more explicit. While admitting that the "brahminness" (*brahmanatva*) of a brahmin is not perceived as easily and directly as the "cowness"

(*gotva*) of a cow, he considers the difference merely one of degree. By being taught about the ancestry of a person, we learn to see him in the correct way, yet this does not detract from the authenticity of such seeing.⁷² Similarly, in order to be able to distinguish between the classes or "castes" of precious gems, one must have previously acquired a certain expertise in this field.⁷³ Sridhara' epistemological confidence was not shaken by the critics who pointed out that the possible marital unreliability of brahmin women could endanger the legitimate descent of the offspring and the authenticity of the universal "brahminness."⁷⁴

The notion of real "caste universals" is generally taken for granted by later Vaisesika commentators, although it is not an extensively debated topic in their works. An anonymous commentary on the Vaisesikasutra which was written some time after Udayana, possibly around 1200, resolutely dismisses all arguments against the real existence and perceptibility of a universal *brahmanatva*, and it concludes: "This is not so, since (the universal brahminness) is, indeed, established through sense perception expressed in (the recurrent observation) 'this is a brahmin, this (too) is a brahmin.' Otherwise, such universals as cowness would also be eliminated" (*tan na, brahmano 'yam brahmano 'yam iti pratyaksad eva tatsiddheh. anyatha gotvader api vilayat*).⁷⁵

As could be expected, the Buddhist philosophers took up positions against these arguments of the adherents of the Nyaya and Vaisesika. Examples of this may be found in Santaraksita's *Tattvasamgraha*, Kamalasila's accompanying commentary *Tattvasamgrahapañjika*,⁷⁶ and the extensive linguistic and epistemological discussions in Prajñakaragupta's *Pramanavarttikabhāṣya* (also known as the *Varttikalankra*).⁷⁷ Prajñakaragupta in particular discusses the relationship between "instruction" (*upadesa*) and perception (*pratyaksa*) that was also dealt with by Jayanta and Sridhara. In his view, however, no matter how this relationship is interpreted, there is no way to determine the reality and genuineness of caste universals, and especially of brahminness. In addition to these epistemological and "criteriological" questions, basic problems of definition associated with the doctrine of the four varnas are repeatedly touched upon.⁷⁸

10. In general, the Nyaya and Vaisesika philosophers did not consider the defense and analysis of the varna system to be their

main task. The majority of the texts simply take it for granted, and they do not discuss it explicitly. Those that do typically limit themselves to a few brief remarks or allusions.⁷⁹ Quite obviously, this topic is not really intrinsic to the Nyaya and Vaisheshika. The situation was different in the Mimamsa, a system whose apologetic motivation is straightforward and which, as a whole, represents an attempt to develop a comprehensive explanation and defense of the Vedic dharma. It was especially Kumarila (seventh century), the leading philosophical systematizer of the Mimamsa, who appropriated the concept of universals as an apologetic device for discussing the subject of caste. In contrast, the second major school of the Mimamsa, which follows Kumarila's rival Prabhakara, developed some exemplary arguments for criticizing such applications of the concept of universals. Sridhara's discussion seems to be inspired by and based upon the positive as well as negative arguments produced by these two schools of Mimamsa. The passage from the *Nyayakandali* discussed earlier does not go in any significant way beyond those ideas and arguments we find in the works of Kumarila on the one hand and in a representative text of the Prabhakara school, Salikanathamisra's *Prakaranapañcika*, on the other.⁸⁰

In a number of passages in Kumarila's main works, i.e. the *Slokavarttika* and the *Tantravarttika*, it is either explicitly stated or implicitly assumed that the four varnas are determined by real universals and thus "ontologically" different from one another, and that caste membership is metaphysically prior to all ethical, occupational and characterological criteria. In the reification and hypostatization of the universals (*jati*, *samanya*), Kumarila does not go as far as the classical Vaisheshika; his universals occur *in rebus* and are related to their substrates in an identity-in-difference relationship. Nevertheless, they are real, eternal prototypes. Kumarila's predecessors, in particular Sabara and the so-called Vrttikara, introduced the topic of universals under the title *akrti*, "form," "shape." According to Sabara's testimony in his commentary on *Mimamsaśāstra* I, 1, 5, the Vrttikara taught that such "forms" are directly perceived (*pratyakṣa*), not inferred (*sādhyā*). The Nyaya, on the other hand, distinguished between *akrti* and *jati*. According to Gautama's *Nyāyasūtra* II, 2, 65(68), the "form" or "shape" manifests the universal and its characteristic marks (*akrtir jatilīṅgākhyā*). Both of these positions imply difficulties, as far as the identification of "caste universals" is con-

cerned. Are there any distinctive visible forms (*akrti*, *akara*) or configurations (*samsthana*) that could support the assumption that different universals, real generic properties, inhere in the brahmins and ksatriyas? Obviously, they do not differ from each other in the same conspicuous manner in which a horse differs from an elephant. This is an observation which was sufficiently familiar to the opponents of the varna system.⁸¹

In his commentary on *Nyayasutra* and *Nyayabhasya* II, 2, 65(68), Uddyotakara notes that not all universals are indicated by "forms" (*na punah sarva jatir akrtiya lingyate*). Kumarila goes further than this. He claims that the Mimamsa concept of *akrti*, since it is used as a synonym of *jati* or *samanya*, i.e. as general term for "universal," has no connotation of "form," "shape" or "configuration" at all.⁸² Both in the *Akrtivada* of the *Slokavarttika* and in the *Akrtiyadhikarana* of the *Tantravarttika*, he argues vigorously for the conceptual dissociation of "form"/"shape" and "universal". This has obvious and significant implications for his theory of caste universals.

In the *Tantravarttika*, Kumarila remarks somewhat casually that the brahmins and the other castes have heads, hands, etc., that are quite similar in shape, and that they are usually the object of nondiscriminating perception; nevertheless, the caste distinctions can be ascertained on the basis of memories concerning the lineage of the parents.⁸³ In the *Slokavarttika*, he states that different types of criteria may serve to identify real generic properties and the distinctive classes to which they belong, for instance color in the case of gold and copper, smell and taste in the case of sesame oil and melted butter, the shape in the case of a pot, and birth or descent (*yoni*) in the case of the brahmin and the other castes. All this does not affect Kumarila's basic premise that ultimately the universals or generic properties themselves should be perceptible; reliance on these criteria is just the manner of accomplishing such perception.⁸⁴ Vacaspati adopts this argumentation for his *Nyayavarttikatatparyatika*, while commenting on *Nyayasutra* II, 2, 65(68) and on Uddyotakara's remark that not all universals are indicated by forms; Vacaspati, too, insists that universals such as brahminness are to be manifested by one's lineage (*brahmanatvadijatis tu yonivyangya*). Of course, unlike the other criteria, the criterion "descent" involves genealogical information and recollection. Kumarila does not deny this; but in his view, it is no fundamental difference. It simply means that the iden-

tification of caste universals is less direct and requires more preparation than that of other universals.

11. The passage most significant for our topic may be found at the beginning of the *Tantravarttika* (on Sutra I, 2, 2). In his typically free and independent matter, Kumarila discusses an opposing opinion (*purvapaksa*) which is presented in the *Mimamsasutra* and the corresponding commentary of Sabara. This concerns the view that the *arthavada* passages of the Vedas are irrelevant and devoid of authority. One of the reasons for this given by the *purvapaksin* is that the *arthavada* passages and other passages evidently contradict the results of perception. One of the examples given by Sabara is the following Vedic sentence: "We do not know whether we are brahmins or non-brahmins."⁸⁵ The assumption behind the use of this example is that such a statement (ignoring its incompatibility with other passages) contradicts the knowledge of the difference between brahmins and non-brahmins that is generally familiar in daily life. For Kumarila, this remark provides a starting point for a discourse on the "ontological" status and the recognizability of the four varnas. Here, more than defending the meaning and the authority of the Brahmana passage cited by Sabara against those who would simply deny or doubt the caste theory, he defends it against those among its adherents who have a naive and unclarified understanding of the varna concept, and who depend too greatly upon external features of behavior or visual appearance for identifying the castes. On this occasion, Kumarila demonstrates his thorough grasp of the definitional and epistemological problems associated with the subject as well as his recognition of the difficulties of genealogical derivation; for he actually stresses precisely these problems and difficulties, thereby lending further weight to his claim that it is quite possible to defend in an age of increased criticism and rational argumentation both the dharma and the varna system that is integrated therein. In developing his arguments in this section, Kumarila abstains from any clear or direct attack upon an opposing viewpoint that is clearly marked as such. Instead, he presents a kind of dialogue in which he gradually articulates and clarifies his own position.⁸⁶ It is important to remember that here Kumarila is commenting upon a *purvapaksa* passage—although he goes far beyond the starting point offered by Sabara, for he does not merely para-

phrase the purvapaksa, but also appends his own critical opinion thereto. In order to fully understand this discussion, one other point must be considered as well: the philosophical Mimamsa was concerned with securing the authoritativeness of the Vedic revelation and the sacred tradition (*sruti, sastra, agama*) within the framework provided by the doctrine of the means of knowledge (*pramana*); in other words, the intention was to place the Veda alongside of the other means of knowledge (perception, inference etc.) as a source of knowledge in its own right capable of conveying contents which would otherwise be inaccessible.⁸⁷ The problem of the four varnas should also be seen in this light: to what extent are they objects of the Vedic revelation, and to what extent are they accessible to and demonstrable through the worldly means of knowledge and normal human experience (*lokaprasiddha*)? Kumarila's position is carefully considered: while arguing that the varnas are essentially accessible to the domain of worldly knowledge, he adds that the sruti nevertheless retains a helpful and important role for discovering their true nature.⁸⁸ According to his commentators as well as his opponents, Kumarila took it for granted that the four varnas are determined by real universals. No special emphasis was laid upon this assumption.⁸⁹

Kumarila begins with the thesis that the castes may be demonstrated through normal human knowledge. What is the nature of this knowledge? Is it sensory perception? Is it really possible to argue that the class membership of a brahmin (i.e., his determination by means of the universal "brahminness") can be ascertained through sensory perception in the same manner as the class membership of a tree (i.e., its determination by means of the universal "treeness")? In the case of the brahmin, of course, we must first be told the facts of his ancestry. Yet in order to be able to identify a tree as such, must we not first be told about the meaning of the word "tree" as well?⁹⁰ Kumarila himself states explicitly that these two examples differ in more than just one respect. In the case of the tree, we have the impression of an entity that may be distinguished and identified on the basis of certain features of appearance that are independent of any knowledge of the appropriate word. Yet since such external features as conduct or occupation are unreliable because there is no way to be certain that a member of a particular caste will adhere to the duties he has been assigned, the same does

not hold true in the case of the brahmin.⁹¹ According to the doctrine which Kumarila develops in the *Slokavarttika*, however, external features such as these are not the only means for determining universals. A knowledge of genealogical relationships may also serve this purpose. This argument, in turn, leads into the problem of the possible unfaithfulness of brahmin women. At first, Kumarila simply states that one should not argue against a rule by citing its exceptions. Yet he does not fail to add that extramarital liaisons with men from the same standing are not problematic, and that the Smṛti has reliable rules available for cases of actual bastardization as well as rules for reassigning a lineage to a "pure" caste after a number of generations.

Yet none of these arguments are really able to call the existence and recognizability of the castes into question; using a simile which (as we have noted earlier) will appear again in Jayanta's *Nyayamañjari*, Kumarila states that that which is perceived after one has reached the top of a mountain does not lose its perceptual character as a result.⁹² His commentator Somesvara adds the general observation that non-perceivability does not result from the fact that something is difficult to apprehend. The difference between a male and a female Kokila (a type of Indian cuckoo) only gradually enters into the realm of perception; and so is it with the differences between the castes as well: it becomes possible to perceive these differences because we are initially aided by a genealogical knowledge based upon memory and uninterrupted tradition.⁹³ Elsewhere, Kumarila compares the identification and distinction of castes with the distinction of correct and incorrect Sanskrit words. In both cases, tradition, recollection, and learning are necessary before the appropriate determinations can be made through simple acts of perception. Knowing how to distinguish castes is like mastering the Sanskrit language.⁹⁴ The assumption is that, just as in the case of the expert gemmologist, the process requires a certain noncommunicable expertise or initiation.

12. Several key remarks follow. According to Kumarila, the alleged or real contradiction between the Vedic statement quoted by Sabara and the results of perception, which provides the starting point for the entire discussion, is pertinent to those who wish to derive brahminness, etc. from behavior. In his opinion, however,

there is no justification for deriving caste distinctions from behavior. Instead, we have to assume that the brahmins etc. are already established in their identity, for only on this basis can the behavioral norms to which they are subject be applied to them.⁹⁵ If their brahminness was a consequence of their behavior, then a vicious circle would result; it would be possible that the behavior of a person would render him a brahmin at one moment and a sudra at the next, provided that he was not (reflecting the fact that some actions are ambivalent) both at the same time. In Kumarila's view, reducing the castes to the status of temporary and ambivalent functions and behaviors would be destructive as well as absurd. The Vedic provisions concerning a particular caste could not be applied, and stable social and religious rules would be impossible. Only when a person *is* a brahmin, a ksatriya, etc., can he be told what his duties are as such. Someone *is* a brahmin only to the extent that the universal *brahmanatva* is inherent in him. Such an essential property cannot be added later; its acquisition must coincide with the event of entering into existence, i.e., with birth itself. Brahminness cannot be reduced to an aggregation of virtues, such as asceticism, nor can it be reduced to any disposition that arises as a result of such virtuous behavior; and it cannot be manifested thereby.⁹⁶ A brahmin's identity, like that of the member of any other caste, is rooted in his ancestry. For this reason, any knowledge of this identity must be founded upon genealogical relationships, although it may (ideally) also be attained through perception. In this way, Kumarila ruled out the possibility of an ethicizing reinterpretation or reduction of the four varnas as well as all caste mobility. Nothing on earth can affect one's caste membership, for this has a status of metaphysical stability.⁹⁷ It remains inaccessible to merely extrinsic criteria yet is not completely cut off from the domain of perception and argumentation. Kumarila's interpretation and defense of the four varnas conforms exemplarily with his program of defending the tradition of the Veda (i.e., primarily the Brahmanas) in an age of critical reflection and discussion while simultaneously saving it from the grip of autonomous rationality. Here again, we find a philosophy of the Vedic dharma that has produced its own complex and subtle epistemology and whose apologetic and restorative aims are nevertheless easily recognizable.

Kumarila's discussion in the *Tantravdr̥ttika* suggests that he was

already in a position to look back upon a tradition of philosophical discussions which had considered this subject from a number of perspectives. An epistemological discussion about different ways to grasp the "universals" or "forms" (*akṛti*) can be found as early as Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*, and this work in turn makes reference to still older sources. Patañjali also notes that *jāti* is that which is obtained by birth (*jananena ya prapṛyate, sa jātiḥ*).⁹⁸ Later commentators have found in Patañjali's work explicit references to the problem of the relationship between direct perception and verbal instruction (*upadeśa*).⁹⁹ By this time, the terminological coincidence between *jāti* as "caste" and as "genus" or "universal" was obviously quite familiar, and the conceptual association of "universals" and "castes" should have been a natural step. There is, indeed, evidence that this connection had been made long before Kumārila's time. Our most important source is Bhārtrhari (ca. A.D. 500), who is in turn indebted to Patañjali and other older authorities. In general, Bhārtrhari's work has been of great importance for Kumārila.

Bhārtrhari discusses the status of the *brahmana* in several sections of his *Vākyapadīya*, for instance in the *Vṛttisamūddesa* of the third Kanda, which resumes and expands Patañjali's explication of the term *abrahmana*.¹⁰⁰ In the *Jāṭisamūddesa*, *brahmanatva* appears repeatedly as a familiar example of a "universal" (*jāti*).¹⁰¹ To be sure, Bhārtrhari's understanding of universals is different from the static realism of the Vaiśeṣika; for him, they are potentialities or powers (*śakti*) of the dynamic "word-brahman" (*śabdabrahman*). Nevertheless, it was easy for Kumārila to combine this with his own adaptation of the Vaiśeṣika theory of universals. There are various other, more specific references in the *Vākyapadīya*. Just as Śrīdhara centuries later, Bhārtrhari mentions those experts who can identify precious stones or metals. They, too, exemplify the refinement of perception through training and practice. In the same verse, he states that superhuman beings (*asmadvīṣiṣṭa*) can perceive universals directly by means of all sense organs.¹⁰² In his long and remarkable commentary on this verse, Helarāja refers specifically to the perception of "caste universals" and claims that "something analogous to the dewlap," i.e. to the criterion of the universal "cowness" (*gotva*), must exist (and be accessible to superhuman perception) as far as "brahminness" (*brahmanatva*), etc., are concerned, although it may be utterly imperceptible for us.¹⁰³ The idea of a superhuman aware-

ness of caste universals which does not depend on recollection and instruction (*smṛti*, *upadeśa*) has become a familiar assumption in theistic circles. We find it, for instance, in the *Sesvaramimamsa* of Ramanuja's follower Veikatanatha (i.e., Vedantadesika, fourteenth century).¹⁰⁴

This notwithstanding, Kumarila appears to have been the first to give this "application" its radical and explicit character and to combine it with a comprehensive philosophical defense of the Vedic dharma. And in his assertion that brahminness does not issue from an aggregation of ascetism or other properties, he also appears to allude to the passage in the *Mahabhasya* which, as we saw earlier, refers to a verse of unknown origin that deals with precisely this question of "aggregation" (*samudaya*)—admittedly in a manner which Kumarila was no longer able to accept.¹⁰⁵ In any case, it may be said that to a large degree, Kumarila's discussion became the starting point for the subsequent debate not only in Mimamsa, but also in Nyaya and Vaisesika.

13. In general, Kumarila introduces numerous methodological and philosophical innovations in his endeavor to restore the allegedly original sense of the Vedic *dharma* and to defend it against innovations; he may, indeed, be considered as one of the most independent thinkers of the classical tradition. His relationship to Sabara is known to have been much freer than that of his great rival Prabhakara, whose own traditionalism frequently had radical and "innovative" consequences as well and whose own attempts to articulate the Vedic tradition in the medium of classical philosophy offers a revealing counterpart to Kumarila's technique. The ways in which he approached the question of caste provides us with a good example to illustrate this.

The school of the Prabhakaras, known to us primarily through its presentation by Salikanathamisra, attempted to develop a defense of the *varnasramadharma* which did not depend upon Kumarila's interpretation of the four principal castes as real universals: in their view, the existence of genealogical relationships and the traditional knowledge of these sufficed to make the Vedic rules applicable.¹⁰⁶ They saw no reason to seek recourse in questionable philosophical constructions. There are no human groups which are determined by and distinguishable through real universals; in fact,

there are no real universals at all below the *samanya* or *jati* of "humanness" (*purusatva*), that corresponds to the one essential form (*akara*) shared by men and women, brahmins and sudras. There is no determinable "form" nor anything like it that can serve as a sign of the generic differentiation between the brahmin and the ksatriya. In contrast to the Bhattamimamsa school founded by Kumarila, the Prabhakara school did not abandon the premise that "form" and visible similarity are essential features of genuine universals.¹⁰⁷ In Salikanatha's opinion, no practice, preparation, or instruction could help one further: since there is no real universal "brahminness," it cannot be manifested as a datum of perception. He dismisses Kumarila's argument that a person's experience in the domain of smell will eventually aid him to visually grasp the difference between melted butter and sesame oil, arguing that this amounts to a mere manipulation of the concept of perception; in reality, we are dealing with an implicit inference.¹⁰⁸

The alleged caste universals are nothing but "additional qualifications" (*upadhi*), i.e., extrinsic roles and functions which are admittedly sanctioned by tradition but do not fundamentally differ from such occupational epithets as "cook-ness" (*pacakatva*), the "additional qualification" most frequently mentioned in the discussion of the subject of universals. Brahminness, etc., means nothing other than descent from a particular lineage (*santativisesaprabhavatva*), and lineages do not require any theoretical or metaphysical explanation, since they are generally familiar and established through traditional usage (*lokata eva prasiddhah*). There is no need to hypostasize caste universals in order to justify the use of such words as "brahmin," etc., or the applicability of the specific Vedic rules for a caste. In this context, Salikanatha takes up the problem of the marital faithfulness of brahmin women, a topic that enjoyed some popularity among Buddhist critics of the caste system. However, he does not consider this to pose any serious danger to the fundamental reliability of the traditionally accepted genealogical relationships, and dismisses the problem as an artificial scepticism with no serious impact upon the traditional knowledge and behavior of men.¹⁰⁹ Whereas Kumarila attempts to provide an independent metaphysical and epistemological basis, the Prabhakaras limit themselves to sanctioning what tradition already accepts. At first glance, this procedure may appear naive and unreflected, yet the fact that they

avoid a metaphysical construction like Kumarila's in itself amounts to a philosophical statement. Salikanatha's arguments against Kumarila reveal an intellect sharpened on Buddhist criticism while his use of the term *upadhi* indicates a linguistic and epistemological position concerning this subject that was precise and radical in its own way.

Kumarila's school of the Mimamsa represents the mainstream of traditional Vedic/brahminic orthodoxy. In contrast, Prabhakara and his followers remained outsiders, and they were even suspected by the orthodoxy of an intended or unintended alliance with Buddhism. Kumarila himself found a one-sided yet poignant way to express philosophically what was intrinsic and special in the Hindu dharma as compared to Buddhism and other "heterodoxies." This may be seen in the manner in which he presented the varna system and the rigorous fashion in which he anchored the identity of the castes in real universals, thereby removing it from any change, mobility, or reduction to criteria of ethical standards and the quality of behavior. His position and procedure with respect to the question of caste has clear echoes in several discussions in the modern traditionalist pandit literature and in the arguments against reformers and reinterpreters contained therein. Vasudeva Sastrin Abhyankara has utilized them to counter the "idle chatter" (*pralapa*) of those "moderns" (*adhunika*) who wish to relate or even reduce the meaning of caste terms to behavior and who assert that a person can change his caste status and become a brahmin merely by virtue of his behavior."¹¹⁰ In this context, Abhyankara also speaks of the Bhagavadgita, emphasizing that the "behavior essential to the brahmin" (*brahmakarma svabhavajam*) referred to in verse XVII,42 can in no way be utilized to justify an ethicizing explanation: such forms of behavior as moderateness, etc., are not meant to be factors that first create brahminness, but are solely duties that apply to it.¹¹¹ Brahminness, etc., can only be attained through birth. It is a genuine and real universal (Abhyankara speaks of *jati* and *jatisamanya*), on the same footing as the biological species. Even if their outer forms are similar, brahmins, ksatriyas, etc. are as different from one another as lions are from elephants. There can be no caste mobility.¹¹²

Abhyankara's argumentation is noteworthy for its trenchancy and terseness, but is not unique with regard to its implications. In

his *Caturvarnyasiksa*, Durgaprasada Dviveda uses essentially the same arguments, namely, that the four varnas are constituted in a manner that is prior to all behavior, and in his eyes, this means that they must be determined by real universals.¹¹³ "Soobajee Bapoo," the pandit who completed the 1839 edition of the *Vajrasuci* for L. Wilkinson (and who used the occasion to include some critical remarks of his own in his *Tanka*, or "Tunku"), argues along essentially the same lines that Kumarila developed in such an exemplary manner.¹¹⁴

Non-Dualism and the Varna System

14. While the philosophical theories we have been discussing thus far have played no great roles in the social and political discussions of modern India, the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta has often been associated with social and political topics; it has even been claimed that it affords a metaphysical basis for practical ethical demands and programs. This has occurred in particular within the widespread movement loosely referred to by the term Neo-Vedanta, and it has had significant effects upon both the public culture of India and the manner in which India has presented itself to the rest of the world. It would not be difficult to compile a list of literally hundreds of statements asserting that the Advaita Vedanta has social relevance for India as well as a more fundamental relevance for the future of all mankind. It has been associated with, and even utilized to "derive," such concepts as tolerance, equality, peaceful coexistence, brotherhood, internationalism, the community of nations, democracy, and social and economic justice-as well as nationalism and anarchy.¹¹⁵ We encounter such phrases as "Vedantic socialism" (Ramatirtha), "political Vedantism" (Aurobindo), etc.; we hear of "collective economic liberation on an idealistic (i.e., Vedantic) basis";¹¹⁶ we are even informed that the Vedanta is capable of providing us with "food, shelter and clothing" or of protecting us from the hydrogen bomb.¹¹⁷

These proponents of Advaita Vedanta assume that its monistic metaphysics can be reconciled without difficulty with the political ideas of the French revolution, the Enlightenment's notions of autonomy, and the socialist ideal of justice; moreover, they suggest that the only prerequisite that must be fulfilled to ensure its practi-

cal effects is a correct insight into this metaphysics. "The Vedantic thought, if pursued honestly, is sure to give us a socialistic pattern of society wherein no distinction on the ground of colour, sex, caste, religion or age can be located." ¹¹⁸ "Domestic, social, political or religious salvation of every country lies in Vedanta carried into effect."¹¹⁹ While one may feel inclined to see in such statements a caricature of the Neo-Vedanta program, their basic tendency accords with other statements couched in more careful terms which have been expressed time and again by more important and representative persons in the public and cultural life of modern India, e.g., S. Radhakrishnan, C. Rajagopalachari, and K. M. Munshi.

M. S. Golwalkar summarized the line of reasoning (which he propounded as a principle of his own nationalistic political movement) that lies at the heart of the claims that the Advaita has social and political applicability in the following way:

The 'I' in me, being the same as the 'I' in the other beings, makes me react to the joys and sorrows of my fellow living beings just as I react to my own. This genuine feeling of identity born out of the community of the inner entity is the real driving force behind our natural urge for human unity and brotherhood. Thus it is evident that world unity and human welfare can be made real only to the extent the mankind realises this common Inner Bond.¹²⁰

Serious attempts at providing a philosophical rationale for political and social action have been linked with various forms of political rhetoric which utilizes Vedantic terminology for the purpose of propagating practical goals. An example of this is provided by one of the pioneers of Neo-Vedanta, Svami Vivekananda, a pragmatic visionary and orator who knew how to adjust his words to fit his situation and audience. Vivekananda became the successor of Ramakrishna (i.e., Gadadhar Chatterji, 1836-1886), whom Indians as well as Westerners have celebrated as the very symbol of modern Hinduism and the living Vedanta. Ramakrishna is seen as the incarnation of a universal yet never abstract synthesis and tolerance, and as the confirmation of the true potential of Hinduism, which could only become visible through the encounter with the West. Because he is portrayed as the representative of this "true" and universalized

Hinduism, he simultaneously appears as the very representative of religion itself and as the embodiment of a Hinduized notion of fulfillment capable of taking up and neutralizing the view expressed by many missionaries that Christianity represented the true fulfillment of all religions. In this role, Ramakrishna served Vivekananda as a model for political activity as well as social reform. It must be emphasized, however, that the motivation of practical and social responsibility which was so important for Vivekananda was unimportant to Ramakrishna himself, who would at best have greeted it with mild irony. To be sure, Ramakrishna was of the opinion that one should not disregard the social world; yet he stated that one should always understand that, ultimately, there was nothing which could or had to be done for it. ¹²¹

In contrast, Vivekananda and his successors were certain that not only could the Vedanta become "practical" but that it had to become practical if it was to fulfill its possibilities. They assumed that it alone, as the philosophy of absolute unity and the converging point of all religions, philosophies, and ideologies, was capable of providing a solid metaphysical foundation and an effective motivation for ethical demands and practical goals. Apart from Vivekananda, the most representative spokesman for this message was S. Radhakrishnan, who served in a number of both national and international offices. Radhakrishnan represented the "idea of fulfillment" in an exemplary and especially conciliatory and impressive manner, arguing that the Vedanta is "not a religion, but religion itself in its most universal and deepest significance."¹²² He saw it as providing the framework and goal for a future synthesis of all religions and philosophies and, therewith, for the resolution of ideological and political differences and the solution of social problems. Here, the basic assumption is that Sankara's doctrine concerning the absolute identity of the real in brahman must find its correspondence in a social attitude concerned with unity, equality, and reconciliation, and that it should also have fundamental effects upon the understanding of caste differences. Radhakrishnan was of the opinion that the Upanisadic formulas of unity, and especially the *tat tvam asi* ("that art thou") characterized the "basic principle of all democracy"; and he assures us: "Sankara's philosophy was essentially democratic."¹²³

15. In the face of such claims, we must ask to what extent (if at all) Sankara and traditional Advaita Vedanta provide a basis for socially applying the metaphysics of nondualism and for formulating a principle of equality that would have social and political dimensions. Once again, the question of caste will occupy the focus of our attention.

Scholars have repeatedly noted that Sankara's position was conservative, although they have occasionally done this with regret or consternation.¹²⁴ In this context, the most important passage may be found in Sankara's commentary on Brahmasutra, I, 3, 34-38. Naturally, this is a passage the representatives of the Neo-Vedanta tend to pass over without comment. Here, Sankara discusses the "right" or "mandate" (*adhikara*, *adhikarita*) to study the Vedas. Essentially, this revolves around the question as to whether the sudras should be allowed to study the Vedic revelation and, therewith, be admitted to the indispensable starting point for the liberating and saving knowledge of brahman. Sankara's position is clear and, in its detail and rigor, goes far beyond the sutra text he is commenting upon. In his view, the sudras may not be admitted to the study of the Vedas; they are to be excluded from the textual and educational access to the absolute unity of reality in the same way that (as the teachings of the Purvamimamsa maintain) they are to be excluded from carrying out the Vedic ritual sacrifices. Sankara presupposes that the varna system is based upon birth and physical family membership, and he makes it clear that the metaphysical unity of the real cannot in any way be taken as a premise of social and religious equality in an empirical sense.¹²⁵

To support his position, Sankara cites a number of passages from the sruti and the smrti; and he refers to the frequently-cited rule in Gautama's Dharmasastra which states that a sudra who illegitimately listens to Vedic texts should have his ears filled with molten tin or varnish (*trapu*, *jatu*).¹²⁶ Sankara discusses at great length a comment by his *purvapaksin* that in the sruti and smrti cases are reported in which sudras did indeed attain absolute knowledge; specifically, he refers to the cases of Janasruti in the *Chandogya Upanisad* and of Vidura in the *Mahabharata*. Sankara makes use of an etymologizing reinterpretation of the word *sudra* and assumes that in rare exceptions *smrti* texts (which are not prohibited for the sudras) are also capable of imparting liberating knowledge. He also

discusses the story of Satyakama Jabala (Chandogya Upanisad IV,4ff.) in a manner both noteworthy and instructive. The representatives of the Neo-Vedanta usually consider this story of a young man who does not know who his father was and is classified by his teacher Haridrumata Gautama as a brahmin by virtue of his honesty to be an example of an ethical, characterological, nonhereditary view of the varna system. Sankara, on the other hand, does not interpret Satyakama's honesty as the cause and defining factor of his brahminness, but as a mere indicator of his hereditarily legitimate membership in the brahmin caste.¹²⁷

Such a modern author as Deussen was not the first to claim that there is a discrepancy between the metaphysics of all-encompassing unity and the insistence upon strict hereditary barriers in the social domain and even in religious and soteriological matters. We may also find this view expressed within the Indian tradition; a very succinct example has been provided by Ramanuja, Sankara's great rival.¹²⁸ Ramanuja's position concerning the question of admittance to the study of the Vedas was essentially the same as Sankara's, and he does not fault Sankara for not drawing any social consequences from his metaphysical position; instead, he questions the legitimacy of a metaphysics that appears to be a priori incapable of providing a basis for the varna system and which poses a potential danger to the dharma. He asks how a person who considers brahman to be the sole, exclusive, and in itself completely undifferentiated reality can have any basis for denying the sudras access to salvation. If all individuals have always been in truth part of the one, all-encompassing brahman, and if the only real concern is with becoming aware of this truth, of realizing it within one's own self-awareness, what reasons could there possibly be for excluding a sudra who has the ability and the willingness to attain such self-awareness? Furthermore, Ramanuja considers the assertion that this liberating self-awareness may only be attained through "hearing" (*sravana*), i.e., on the basis of an "awakening" through the Vedic texts, to be unjustified—and to be completely unjustifiable within the context of Advaita Vedanta. Yet even if one acceded to this assumption, was it not possible that a sudra might accidentally hear one of the "great sayings" (*mahavakya*) of the Upanisads, such as the *tat tvam asi*, and thereby be directed towards final liberation? Moreover, why should someone who has attained the liberating knowledge of unity and has thus

transcended the ritual rules and social conventions exclude a sudra from sharing this knowledge with him? In short, Ramanuja is arguing that Sankara's position offers no basis for excluding the sudras from the study of the Vedas and from liberating knowledge.

For the Advaita Vedantins, these and similar problems are ultimately irrelevant, and they get around them by means of a conception that Ramanuja could not accept. Their doctrine of the "twofold truth" posits a distinction between truth in its absolute sense (*paramartha*) and truth in the conventional, relative sense of empirical life (*vyavahara*), juxtaposing the two without mediation or mutual adjustment. For this reason, they did not consider it necessary to "adjust" or reconcile the absolute (i.e., the unity of brahman) with the relative and ultimately unreal world of spatiotemporal particulars and interpersonal relations. All the same, some Advaitins exhibit an undeniable tendency towards formulations which are more conciliatory than those contained in Sankara's *Brahmasutrabhasya*, a tendency to mitigate the rigor of the social demarcations by referring to the unity of the absolute. Sankara's disciple Suresvara, for example, emphasized the identity of the "viewer" (*drastr*), that is, the absolute subject, in Brahma (as well as in the brahmin) and in the candala. ¹²⁹

16. Even in many of those texts which are ascribed to Sankara himself, absolute unity is explained and affirmed by referring to the irrelevancy of social distinctions; according to the short tracts *Svatmanirupana* and *Dasasloki* (whose authenticity is admittedly quite uncertain), Sankara would have stated that the castes (*varna*), stages of life (*asrama*), etc. have ceased to have meaning for him. ¹³⁰ The so-called "minor Upanisads," in particular those groups known as the "Samnyasa Upanisads" and the "Samanya Vedanta Upanisads," contain a number of similar tersely formulated statements. For example, the *Naradaparivrajaka Upanisad* describes the knower of the Vedanta as one who is "beyond the castes and stages of life" (*ativarnasramin*), while the *Maitreya Upanisad* looks down upon the "deluded ones whose behavior is linked to the castes and the stages of life" (*varnasramacarayuta vimudhah*). ¹³¹ The *Niralamba Upanisad* states that the castes cannot be ascribed to the skin, or the blood, or the flesh, or the bones, or even the atman itself, but are merely a product of *vyavahara*, the practical conventions of life. ¹³²

The *Vajrasici Upanisad*, whose age and authenticity is admittedly very obscure, goes especially far in this respect. This text, which S. Radhakrishnan later included in his collection of "principal Upanisads," caused some sensation in the nineteenth century. It exhibits important parallels to a polemic Buddhist treatment of the caste system, the *Vajrasuci* attributed to Asvaghosa. It refutes a number of attempts to define the brahmin, especially those that refer to birth and social function, and finally asserts that the true brahmin can only be determined by his knowledge of brahman.¹³³

Yet such statements, which do indeed explicitly declare that the hereditary differences between the castes are ultimately irrelevant, must always be seen in connection with the doctrine of the twofold truth. The caste differences are irrelevant only in the light of the absolute unity of the absolute, but not with respect to interpersonal relationships, and there is no suggestion of translating the metaphysical unity into social equality. The knower of brahman is "beyond the castes" because he is beyond all empirical distinctions whatsoever; the distinctions between father and son, human and animal, etc. are just as irrelevant for him as are the distinctions between the castes. He who has transcended the castes and the stages of life through his knowledge of brahman has been "liberated from space and time" (*desakalavimukta*) and is "free of creation" (*prapañcarahita*) as well.¹³⁴ If, as we may read in the *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad*, the father is ultimately not a father, the mother is not a mother, and the worlds are not worlds, then obviously the candala cannot really be a candala and the brahmin cannot be a brahmin. Since, in the view of the Advaita, everything below the unity of brahman may be traced back to cosmic illusion (*maya*), the castes are "unreal" only because the entire world in which they are found is "unreal."¹³⁵

Thus the fact that the castes are invalid in an absolute sense does not imply that they have been negated in a "worldly" sense or that the rules concerning their mutual relations may be disregarded. As we have already seen in our discussion of Sankara's notion of *adhikara*, the right to liberating knowledge, there can be no mention of any empirical equality, even with respect to the organized forms of religious life and the access to salvation.

The *Vedantasaraavarttikarajasamgraha*, a text whose attribution to Suresvara is at least questionable, appears to form an exception in this regard, since it does in fact imply equality in the access to

knowledge and thus to liberation (*vidyadhikarita*) "for all castes" (*sarvajatisu*)—to the extent that they are endowed with the capacity for self-awareness (*bodha*).¹³⁶ Yet aside from the fact that this text appears to be somewhat isolated within the tradition of the Advaita Vedanta, it should be noted that this assertion of equality is strictly soteriological. In other words, it refers only to the possibility of liberation from the world, but not to the status within the world.

The Indian schools display some freedom and variation with respect to the question of equality in soteriological matters, a fact which in the eleventh century even attracted the attention of the Islamic traveler to India, al-Biruni.¹³⁷ As is generally known, the sectarian theistic schools usually exhibit more openness and flexibility than the classical orthodox systems. One sectarian system well capable of competing philosophically with the Advaita Vedanta, the Pratyabhijñā doctrine of Kashmir Saivism, explicitly opens itself to all persons, regardless of their caste membership or other status.¹³⁸ Even within the sectarian traditions, one should not overestimate the concrete social applications and the historical effects of such equality with respect to soteriological matters. Yet they display a greater willingness to consider the commitment to a particular doctrinal system and a particular path to liberation as a unifying and equalizing factor. The willingness to revoke the normally valid and generally unquestioned social barriers for the more radical forms of religious life, above all, for "renunciation" (*samnyasa*), is particularly far-reaching.

17. Yet even with regard to such special areas of social life as *samnyasa*, the "orthodox" Advaita Vedantins tend to be cautious and conservative. The freedom conceded to the "renouncer" (*samnyasin*) and even the liberated *jivanmukta* is carefully channeled. Even in negation and in renunciation, he remains bound to that same order from which he is freeing himself. For the existence and fundamental validity of this order constitutes the precondition for the possibility of liberating oneself from it. Only a person who is entitled to study the Vedas and to carry out the Vedic sacrifices can be entitled to liberate himself from these. The *samnyasin* continues to draw his legitimation from that very dharma from which he is liberating himself.¹³⁹ And just as the access to renunciation and liberation is limited, so also are there rules of behavior (concerning the practice of

asking for alms, etc.) and distinctions between different groups of renouncers to be adhered to within samnyasa; only the highest of these groups, the *paramahansa*, is permitted a greater degree of freedom. In interpreting "liberation while alive" (*jivanmukti*), the strict representatives of Advaita Vedanta (who adhere most closely to Sankara) also make a point of stating that such transcendence of the social and dharmic domain does not jeopardize the social status quo and its basic structure, the system of the four varnas. Suresvara stresses that a person who is truly liberated during his lifetime will never exhibit "uncontrolled behavior" (*yathestacarana*), while his commentator Jñanottama remarks that such a person automatically continues to behave in accordance with his human nature as well as his caste membership. In this way, those radical sectarians (especially Saivites) and other alleged jivanmuktas who violate the rules of traditional social behavior (and, therewith, the dharma) are excluded from the domain of true and legitimate "liberation while alive." The possible consequences of the transcendence of all social norms that is implied in the concept of liberation (*mukti*) have thus been neutralized. ¹⁴⁰

In summary, we may say that in the "orthodox" Advaita Vedanta, the assumption of the absolute unity *in* liberation remains linked to an uncompromising adherence to an unequal, caste-bound access to it. In general, any intermingling of the two levels of truth, any "application" of the absolute (*paramartha*) to the empirical and conventional (*vyavahara*), is avoided. A basic metaphysical indifference with respect to questions of interpersonal and social relationships appears in conjunction with a decisively conservative attitude on the empirical level. Here, as well as in other matters of vyavahara, (i.e., in nonultimate matters) the Advaitins follow Kumarila's Purvamimamsa. In accordance with their basic orientation, they do not make any independent efforts to render the varna system metaphysically and epistemologically respectable.

It is obvious that the social and political argumentation of the Neo-Vedanta has not simply been borrowed from the teachings of the classical Advaita Vedanta or from the tradition of classical Indian philosophicizing in general. And the claim that the Advaita contains an implicit practical potential, and that this potential is, as it were, waiting to be actualized and carried out, deserves serious, but also critical attention. Since Rammohan Roy, there have been

numerous, sometimes deeply committed, sometimes merely rhetorical attempts to put the metaphysics of nondualism to ethical and political use, that is, attempts to relate the levels of the absolute and the empirical or conventional which were separated by classical Vedanta and make them fruitful for one another.¹⁴¹ Yet the fundamental problem of "mediating" between the metaphysical, all-encompassing unity and a socially and politically realizable equality was frequently ignored.¹⁴²

Ramakrishna, the apolitical inspirer of the Neo-Vedanta, spoke in his graphic, metaphorical language (which was certainly not intended to have any social or political significance) of some basic difficulties that any ideology of "practical" or "political" Vedanta has to face. In doing so, he displayed a religious common sense that most of his successors lack. In his parable of the elephant, he tells of a young student of Advaita Vedanta who places so much trust in the doctrine of the identity of all things within God that he fails, in spite of the warnings of its driver, to avoid an approaching elephant which he consistently identified with God. Seriously injured, he must be lectured by his master that although everything is indeed a manifestation of God, he should have nevertheless heeded to the equally divine words of the elephant driver.¹⁴³

Ramakrishna also used a famous metaphor of water that contrasts the unity of this thirst-quenching substance with the irrelevant multiplicity of its names. In this way, he wished to illustrate the unity of the divine and the truth in the face of the multitude of confessions and religions.¹⁴⁴ This metaphor has become so popular among the proponents of the Neo-Vedanta that Ramakrishna's use of another water metaphor has frequently been overlooked. As he notes, the scriptures assert that water is a form of God (and, we may add, a manifestation of his unity). Yet only some of this water is suitable for religious purposes; other water is suitable for washing the face, and still other water is only suitable for cleaning plates or dirty clothes.¹⁴⁵

Epilogue: Dharma and Mutual Sustenance

18. The oldest extant presentation of the fourfold division of society into *brahmana*, *ksatriya*, *vaisya*, and *sudra* is found in the cos-

mogonic hymn Rgveda X, 90, the so-called *Purusasukta*. For the later Indian advocates of the *varna* system, this text (which may be relatively late and somewhat retrospective within the Rgveda itself) provides one of the most authoritative pieces of scriptural evidence and support. It illustrates the idea of the *homo hierarchicus* in a most memorable and exemplary fashion; in a sense, it anticipates and supersedes its later formulations:

*yat purusam vyadadhuh, katidha vyakalpayan?
mukham kim asya, kau bahu ka uru pada ucyete?
brahmano 'sya mukham asid bahu rajanyah krtah,
uru tad asya yad vaisyah, padbhyam sudro ajayata.*

"When (the gods) divided Purusa (i.e., the primeval cosmic entity), into how many parts did they apportion him? What was his mouth (and head)? Which were his arms? Which (objects) are said to be his thighs and feet? The brahmin was his mouth, the ksatriya was installed as his arms; what is known as the vaisya were his thighs; the sudra originated from his feet." ¹⁴⁶

However, it is not only the idea of the *homo hierarchicus*, or of a hierarchic structure of society, which these verses convey. They also associate the four castes with an organic structure, and they evoke the idea of coherence and mutual support within a living totality. Modern defenders of an idealized *varna* structure have repeatedly referred to this connotation. For instance, S. Radhakrishnan states that in the *Purusasukta* "the different sections of society are regarded as the limbs of the great self." He adds: "Human society is an organic whole, the parts of which are naturally dependent in such a way that each part in fulfilling its distinctive function conditions the fulfillment of function by the rest, and is in turn conditioned by the fulfillment of its function by the rest. In this sense the whole is present in each part, while each part is indispensable to the whole".¹⁴⁷

The idea of interdependence and mutual supplementation has also appealed to Roberto de'Nobili (1577-1656), the great Jesuit missionary who has been called the first Western Sanskrit scholar.¹⁴⁸ Yet in "orthodox" Hindu thought and literature, including the majority of those sources which we have discussed in the preceding pages, it does not play a very visible and significant role. It is vir-

tually absent in the apologetics of the Purvamimamsa and the Nyaya-Vaisesika. In these systems, as well as in the more rigid Dharmasastra texts, the mutual separation of the castes is emphasized more strongly than their mutual rapport. For a somewhat different picture, we have to turn to other sources.

In a general and implicit sense, the idea of cosmic balance, and of the mutual support and supplementation of the various parts of nature and society seems to be present in a variety of religious, philosophical, and legal texts, for instance, in the Mahabharata and in several Upanisads. More specifically, we hear about the mutual support of brahmins and ksatriyas, gods, humans, and animals, etc.¹⁴⁹ However, explicit theoretical expositions of this idea are less frequent. They occur, above all, in Samkhya and Yoga texts, for instance, in the *Yuktidipika* and the *Jayamangala*, two commentaries on Isvarakrsna's *Samkhyakarika*.¹⁵⁰ The most interesting presentation is found in Vyasa's *Yogabhasya*, together with the so-called *Yogasutrabhasyavivarana* attributed to Sankara.

Vyasa's commentary on *Yogasutra* II, 28 deals with the theory of "nine causes" (*nava karanani*) or types of causation, which has parallels in Buddhist thought.¹⁵¹ The last type of cause in the list is called *dhrti*, "support," "sustenance." Vyasa explains it as follows: "The body is the cause of sustenance for the sense organs; and these support this (body). The elements sustain the bodies, the bodies support each other; and animal, human, and divine bodies support all entities, because there has to be mutual support."¹⁵²

The *Vivarana* explains in more detail how humans, animals, and gods are supposed to support each other, and how they contribute to the sustenance of all other entities in the world. In addition, the text notes: *evam varnasramanam apy anyonyopakarena dhrtikaranatvam, parasparopasrayena hi jagad akhilam api dhriyate* ("In this way, the castes and stages of life also sustain each other, since they are useful for each other. Indeed, the entire world is upheld through mutual dependence.")¹⁵³ A. Wezler says that according to this passage "the four *varnas* and the four *asramas* support and thus sustain each other mutually, that none of them is able to get along without the others." He emphasizes that such mutuality and interdependence distinguishes this passage from other texts which suggest a more "unilateral" dependence of social groups and forma-

tions, for instance, the dependence of the other three stages of life (*asrama*) on the productive "householder" (*grhastha*). ¹⁵⁴

19. Mutual support and upholding appear as fundamental conditions for the preservation of the natural and social world. Interdependence is a pervasive principle which is both factual and normative. All entities in the world, in particular living beings and different social groups, have to support each other actively or passively. Self-preservation is impossible without mutual support and sustenance. On the other hand, the mutuality of support and sustenance presupposes meaningful differentiation. Natural species and social groups cannot support and supplement each other if they are not sufficiently different from one another.

The word *dhṛti*, which is used in the presentation of the "nine causes," has a close etymological kinship with *dharma*. Both terms are derived from the root *dhṛ*, "to uphold," "sustain." Although this derivation cannot account for the semantic complexities of *dharma*, it is by no means negligible, especially with regard to its more ancient usages. *Dharma* is, indeed, associated with "upholding." As we have noted earlier in this book, the term refers originally "to the primeval cosmogonic 'upholding' and opening of the world and its fundamental divisions, and then to the repetition and human analogues of the cosmogonic acts in the ritual, as well as the extension of the ritual into the sphere of social and ethical norms. Subsequently, there is increasing emphasis on the 'upholding' of the social and religious status quo, of the distinction between hereditary groups and levels of qualification (i.e., the *varnasramadharma*), and on the demarcation of the *arya* against the *mleccha*."¹⁵⁵ Upholding the structure and the basic divisions of the social and natural world, and upholding one's own identity in a system of mutual balance—this is at least part of the semantic range of *dharma*, and it is probably part of its most ancient and original meaning.

This idea of mutuality in the Samkhya-Yoga concept of *dhṛti* seems to preserve connotations of the Vedic *dharma* which are missing, or at least much less conspicuous, in the supposedly more "orthodox" explanations of the Purvamimamsa and the Nyaya-Vaisesika. As we have seen, both the Nyaya-Vaisesika and the Mimamsa approach the Veda from a certain distance. Their ideas of the

Veda, and of the Vedic dharma, are not "real extensions" ("prolongements réels") ¹⁵⁶ of Vedic life and thought. And in general, those who present themselves as the most orthodox and uncompromising guardians of the sanctity and authority of the Veda are not necessarily closest to its spirit. Here as in other areas of Indian thought, the role of the Veda is ambiguous and elusive.

Chapter 10:

Notes

1. Two classical examples of such critique are provided by Hegel and Max Weber; cf. *India and Europe*, ch. 6 (on Hegel); M. Weber, *Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen. II: Hinduismus und Buddhismus*. Tübingen, 1921 (seventh reprint: 1988), 142 ff. (trans. H.H. Gerth and D. Martindale: *The Religion of India*. New York, 1968, 144 ff.).
2. While Kautilya's *Arthashastra* contains an elaborate methodology of politics and administration, it can hardly be classified as a system of political philosophy.
3. For an earlier German version of this chapter, see *Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen*. Philologisch-historische Klasse. 1975, No. 9 (published 1976).
4. Cf. R. Lingat, *The Classical Law of India*, trans. from the French by J.D.M. Derrett. Berkeley, 1973, 36 ff.
5. See, for instance, Sankara, BSBh I, 1, 4 (*Works* III, 13 f.); Manu X, 42 (*utkarsam ca-apakarsam ca*) and commentaries; Anantakrsna Sastrin et al., *Dharmapradipa*. Calcutta, n.d. (Preface: 1937), 67 f.
6. Cf. BSBh I, 1, 4 (*Works* III, 13 f.); 1, 3, 30 (*Works* III, 129).
7. Cf. Bharuci on Manu X, 42 (ed. J. H. Dave. Bombay, 1982, 307): *evam ca saty esa varnavibhaga utkarsapakarsasambandho manusyavisaya eva drastavyah, na gavadisu*.
8. Cf. Manu X, 30 f.; Medhatithi on Manu II, 6 (ed. J.H. Dave, 168).
9. Cf. L. Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus. The Caste System and Its Implications*. Complete revised English edition. Chicago, 1980, XXXV; Dumont finds this idea "generally rejected" by the majority of his reviewers.
10. *Homo Hierarchicus*, 72.
11. A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India*. New York, 1959, 148.

12. Manu VIII, 41 adds the norms and customs of the "guilds" (*sreni*) to this list: Gita I, 43 associates the destruction of *jatidharma* and *kuladharmā* with the "mixture of vamaś" (*varnaśamkara*).
13. Cf. Yajñavalkya II, 69: *yathajati yathavarṇam*; II, 206: *dandapranayanam karyam varṇajatyuttardharaiḥ*.
14. Cf. Apastamba II, 6, 1: *jatyacarasamsaye*; G. Bühler, *Sacred Laws of the Aryas*, part 1 (Sacred Books of the East) translates: "If he has any doubts regarding the caste and conduct . . ." Cf. also L. Dumont (see above, n. 7), 73: "Far from being completely heterogeneous, the concepts of *varṇa* and *jati* have interacted, and certain features of the osmosis between the two may be noticed."
15. See, for instance, Manu X, 5; 27.
16. Cf. Kulluka, Nandana, Narada and others on Manu VIII, 41.
17. Cf. Medhatithi on Manu X, 4; Nandana on Manu X, 27; see also Kulluka's statement that caste mixture or bastardization can produce a new *jati* comparable to a mule, but no new *varṇa* (on Manu X, 4: *samkirṇajatinam tv asvataravan matapitṛjativyatiriktajatyantarātvan na varṇatvam*).
18. See, for instance, Mitramisra, *Viramitrodaya*, and Vijñānesvara, *Mitākṣara*, on Yajñavalkya II, 69 (ChSS, 497; 502) and II, 206 (ChSS, 682; 684).
19. Cf. Mitramisra, *Viramitrodaya* on Yajñavalkya II, 69 (ChSS, 497).
20. Cf. *India and Europe*, 180; and on mixed castes in general: H. Brinkhaus, *Die altindischen Mischkastensysteme*. Wiesbaden, 1978.
21. L. Dumont (see above, n. 7), 71. In this connection, Dumont also notes the "the classical texts described in terms of *varṇa* what must surely have been a caste system in embryo."
22. Cf. Medhatithi on Manu X, 5; see also P.V. Kane, "The Tantravarttika and the Dharmasastra Literature." *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, N.S. 1 (1925), 95-102.

23. Calcutta, n.d. (Preface: 1937); the protection of the hereditary identity of Hinduism against reinterpretations and "new sects" (*nutanasampradaya*) is one of the main goals of the book, and the problem of castes (*jati*) is its major topic; see 63-187: *Jatitattvaparakasa*. As an example of a basically ethical and characterological interpretation, we may mention Mahesvarananda Giri, *Caturvarnyabharatasamiksa*, 2 vols. Bombay, 1963-1968. This work cites the *Vajrasuci Upanisad* (vol. 1, 22-25; see below, n. 133) and shows the influence of Neo-Vedanta.

24. Cf. *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts (Vivaranapañcika)*, Sanskrit University Library (Sarasvati Bhavana), vol. 8: Nyaya-Vaisesika Mss. Varanasi, 1962, Nos. 34 017; 33 731; 31 393.

25. On Ramanuja, see below, n. 128. Problems concerning the perception and identification of castes, especially "brahminness" (*brahmanya*), are also discussed by Ramanuja's predecessor Yamuna; cf. *Agamapramanya*, ed. and trans. J. A. B. van Buitenen. Madras, 1971, 66; 103. Yamuna (ca. 1000) is obviously familiar with the Mimamsa arguments on this topic.

26. Cf. *Sesvaramimamsa and Mimamsaduka* by Vedantadesika, ed. U. T. Viraraghavacharya. Madras, 1971, 144-151 (on MS I, 2, 2); see also below, n. 104. Venkatanatha/Vedantadesika discusses not only the theory of caste universals, but also the application of the guna theory to the varna system; cf. *Sesvaramimamsa*, 149 f. On Vallabha's version of the Mimamsasutra, see G. H. Bhatt, "Vallabhacharya's Text of the Jaimini Sutras II. 1." *Journal of the Oriental Institute* (Baroda) 2 (1952), 6870.

27. Cf. *Prameyakamalamartanda* (commentary on Manikyanandin's *Pariksamukha*), ed. Mahendra Kumar. Second ed., Bombay, 1941; especially 482-487 (482: *etena nityam nikhilabrahmanavyaktivyapakam brahmanyam api pratyakhyatam. na hi tat tathabhutam pratyaksadipramanatah pratiyate*); *Nyayakumudacandra* (commentary on Akalanka's *Laghiyastraya*), 2 vols., ed. Mahendra Kumar. Bombay, 1938-1941; especially vol. 2, 767-779 (*brahmanatvajativicara*).

28. See, for instance, Ksemendra, *Darpadalana*, ch. 1 (examples of false genealogical pride).

29. Cf. *India and Europe*, 234; 240 ff. Traditional Advaita Vedanta does not try to apply non-dualism in ethics; instead, it sees ethical conduct either as a prerequisite or as a natural concomitant of non-dualistic spiritual realization. According to *Vivekacudamani*, v. 37, those who have attained this realization are inherently beneficial, "just as the spring season" (*vasantavad*). This echoes Mahayana Buddhist ideas.
30. Cf. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, 5 vols. Poona, 1930-1962; especially vol. 2, 19-164.
31. Cf. Muir I, for a useful presentation of source materials.
32. See A. Weber, "Collectanea uber die Kastenverhältnisse in den Brahmana und Sutra." *Indische Studien* 10 (1868), 1-160.
33. Cf. *India and Europe*, 322 f.; myths about the origination of the nonbrahminical castes due to karmic deterioration are not unusual; see Mahabharata XII, 181, 10-20.
34. Cf. A. Weber, "Collectanea" (see above, n.32), 97 ff.
35. Cf. Weber, "Collectanea," 70 f.; 97 ff.; see also W. Rau, *Staat und Gesellschaft im alten Indien*. Wiesbaden, 1957, 4; 62 ff.; against Weber, Rau claims that the hereditary varna system did not take shape in the period of the Brahmanas, but only in the period of the Sutras. However, Rau's references seem to deal with exceptions rather than with the general norm. Ethical interpretations which presuppose an underlying hereditary system are more common in the epics; see, e.g., Mahabharata III, 206, 12 (*vrittena hi bhaved dvijah*); and O. Strauss, "Ethische Probleme aus dem Mahabharata" (first published 1911). *Kl. Schr.*, ed. F. Wilhelm. Wiesbaden, 1983, 11-153; especially 148 ff.
36. The following Suttas of the Pali canon contain critical references to the varna system: *Aggañña*, *Ambattha*, *Samaññaphala* and *Sonadanda* in the *Dighanikaya*; *Assalayana* and *Madhura* in the *Majjhimanikaya*; *Vasettha* in the *Suttanipata*. Several Buddhist texts in Sanskrit radicalize the critique, for instance the *Sardulakarnavadana* in the *Divyavadana* (ed. E. B. Cowell and R. A. Neil. Cambridge, 1886; ed. separately S. K. Mukhopadhyaya. Santiniketan, 1954) and the *Vajrasuci* falsely attrib-

uted to Asvaghosa; for editions of this text, see A. Weber, "Über die Vajra-suci (Demantnadel) des Aṣvaghosa." *Abhandlungen Preuss. Ak. Wiss.* Berlin, 1859, 205-264 (with German trans.); S. K. Mukherjee, "The Vajrasuci of Asvaghosa." *Visva-Bharati Annals* 2 (1949), 125-184 (with English trans.); *Vajrasuci*, ed. R. P. Dwivedi (with paraphrase and notes in Hindi). Varanasi, 1985.

37. On *dharma* and *svadharma*, cf. *India and Europe*, ch. 17.

38. Cf. *Bhagavadgita* I, 41 ff.

39. Gita III, 35: *sreyan svadharma vigunah paradharmat svanusthitat*; see also XVIII, 47 (and Manu X, 97): *varam svadharma viguno, na parakhyah svanusthitah*.

40. Cf. *The Vyakarana-Mahabhasya*, ed. F. Kielhorn; third ed. by K. V. Abhyankar, vol. 1. Poona, 1962, 411:

*tapah srutam ca yonis ca-ity etad brahmanakaranam/
tapahsrutabhyam yo hino jatibrahmana eva sa.*

*tatha gaurah sucyacarah pingalah kapilakesa ity etan apy abhyantaran
brahmanye gunan kurvanti.*

41. The application of the word *brahmana* to persons who do not have the hereditary legitimation remains ultimately confined to cases of doubt and inadequate information; see *Mahabhasya*, vol. 1, 411 f.: *jatihine samdehad durupadesac ca brahmanasabdo vartate*.

42. See *Yuktidipika*, ed. R. C. Pandeya. Delhi, 1967, 137.

43. Cf. *Samkhyakarika with Matharavrtti*, ed. V. P. Sarma. Benares, 1922; on v. 53: *tulyalingatvad brahmanadicandalntah*; *Samkhyasaptativrtti* (V1), ed. E. A. Solomon. Ahmedabad, 1973, 68: *tulyalingatvad brahmanadis candallantah*.

44. Cf. *Samkhyatattvakaumudi* on v. 53: *brahmanatvadyavantaratatibhedavivaksaya*.

45. Gita IV, 13: *caturvarmyam maya srstam gunakarmavibhagaahh*.

46. Radhakrishnan has published annotated editions and translations of both works; see also *The Hindu View of Life*. London, 1968 (first ed.: 1927), 86: "Caste is a question of character."
47. See below, n. 110-113.
48. Cf. Gita I, 41 ff.; see also III, 24 f. (avoidance of mixture, *samkara*, and maintenance of the social order, *lokasamgraha*).
49. See, for instance, Gita VII, 16.
50. Cf. Sankara on Gita IV, 13.
51. Cf. Gita XVIII, 41 ff.; IV, 13; see also D. P. Vora, *Evolution of Morals in the Epics*. Bombay, 1959, 129. There are, of course, also types of livelihood and occupation associated with the two highest castes; but they are not mentioned in the Gita passage XVIII, 41 ff.
52. Cf. *Vajrasuci*, ed. A. Weber (see above, n.36), 236.
53. See Gita III, 35; XVIII, 47; and Manu X, 97; for *svadharma*, see also Gita II, 31; 33; Maitri Upanisad IV, 3; Gita XVIII, 45 f. has *svakarman*.
54. Manu XII, 42-52.
55. See Mahabharata XII, 200; especially 31 ff. (on the four varna); cf. also A. Weber, "Collectanea" (see above, n.32), 7. We may also recall Rgveda X, 90.
56. Mahabharata XII, 229, 12-25.
57. Cf. A. Weber, "Collectanea," 97; among later texts, see, e.g., *Vivekacudamani*, v. 2.
58. On "caste colors," cf. Mahabharata XII, 181, 5; A. Weber, "Collectanea," 10 f.: Ps.-Sankara, *Sarvasiddhantasamgraha* XI, 48.
59. The coordination of the three gunas with the "human goals" (*purusartha*) creates analogous problems. It is easy as long as the older

group of three goals (*trivarga*) without *moksa* is involved; Manu XII, 38 correlates *kama* with *tamas*, *artha* with *rajas* and *dharma* with *sattva*. It becomes, however, more complex when *moksa* is added; cf. Bhagavan Das, *The Science of Social Organization*, vol. 1. Second ed., Adyar, 1932, 78.

60. Cf. *Anugita* XXIV, 11; the text is found within the Mahabharata XIV, 16-51.
61. Cf. *Anugita* XX, 43, which refers to three twice-born castes and presupposes the sudras as the fourth varna. The vaisyas are also omitted in Manu XII, 42-52.
62. Cf. K. Damodaran, *Indian Thought*. New York, 1967, 482 (referring to K. M. Munshi, *Foundations of Indian Culture*, 68: "energy/inertia"); P. T. Raju, *The Philosophical Traditions of India*. London, 1971, 209: "activity/ lethargy."
63. Cf. *Caturvarnyasiksa vedadrstya sameta*. Lucknow, 1927, 2.
64. *The Philosophical Traditions of India*. London, 1971, 209.
65. See, for instance, Vinoba Bhave, *Talks on the Gita*. New York, 1960, 191 ff.
66. *The Hindu View of Life*. London, 1968, 79.
67. See above, n. 63.
68. Cf. PB, 48 f.; 272 f.
69. Cf. NM, 204: *na hi yad girirngam aruhyā grhyate, tad apratyaksam*.
70. NM, 204: *upadesanirapeksam api caksuh ksatriyadivilaksanam saumyakrtim brahmanajatim avagacchati-ity eke*.
71. Cf. NM, 389; on Kumarila's usage of the simile of the mountain, see below, n. 92.
72. See NK (in PB), 13: *tada brahmano 'yam iti pratyaksena-eva pratiyate*.

73. Ibid. The reference to precious stones appears natural for an Indian author of that period, since these, too, were divided into "castes" (*brahmana*, etc.); cf. R. Garbe, *Die indischen Mineralien* (*Naraharis Rajanighantu* 13). Leipzig, 1882, 81. Kumarila refers to expert jewelers in his TV on MS I, 3, 25; on Bhāṭṭhari, see below, n. 102.

74. Here, of course, one may refer to Manu's view that an illegitimate child would reflect the defects and the low status of the father in its behavior; cf. Manu X, 60 ff.

75. See *Vaisesikadarsana of Kanada with an Anonymous Commentary*, ed. A. Thakur. Darbhanga, 1957, 14 f. (on VS I, 2, 7).

76. Cf. TS, v. 1554 ff. (with commentary).

77. Ed. Rahula Sankṛtāyana. Patna, 1953 (Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series); see especially 10 ff.; also 209 f.; 530.

78. Cf. *Pramanavarttikabhāṣya*, especially 10 ff.; also 209 f.; 530.

79. See, for instance, Bhāṣarvajña, NBhus, 311 (in connection with problems of inference); Laugakṣi Bhāṣkara, *Tarkakaumudī*, ed. M. N. Dvivedin. Bombay, 1886 (Bombay Sanskrit and Prakrit Series), 21; Kesavamisra, *Tarkabhāṣa*, ed. D. R. Bhandarkar. Poona, 1937 (Bombay Sanskrit and Prakrit Series), 33 (perception of a *brahmana*).

80. See below, n. 83 ff.; 106 ff.

81. Cf. the *Vajrasūci* (see above, n. 36); the same type of argument has also been attributed to the materialists; see Kṛṣṇamīśra, *Prabodhacandrodaya*, ed. and trans. S. K. Nambiar. Delhi, 1971, 38 (II, v. 18): *tulyatve vapusam mukhadyavayavair varnakramah kidrso*. . .

82. Cf. SV, 438 (*Vanavada*, v. 16): *akṛtir jatir eva-atra samsthanam na prakalpyate*; 385 (*Akṛtivdda*, v.3): *jatim eva-akṛtim prahur, vyaktir akriyate yaya*; and 388 (v. 18): *samanyam akṛtir jatih saktir va*.

83. Cf. TV on MS I, 3, 25: *tulyasirahpanyadyakaresv api samkirnalokadrstigrahyesu brahmanadisu matapitrsambandhasmaranad eva varnuvivekavadharanam bhavati*.

84. Cf. SV, 439 f. (*Vanavada*, v. 22-30). In v. 29, Kumarila notes that conduct (*acara*) indicates the presence of *brahmanatva* only if it is properly supervised by a king (*rajanupalita*). In v. 30, he emphasizes that the pervasive inherence of the universals in their substrates cannot be refuted since it is directly perceived (*pratyekasamavetatvam drstatvan na virotsyate*); and such perceptibility may well be "dependent on the knowledge of the parents" (*matapitrjñanpeksha*; see Parthasarathi on this passage, with reference to TV).

85. Sabara on MS I, 2, 2: *na ca-etad vidmo vayam brahmana va smo 'brahmana va iti*; cf. *Gopatha Brahmana* I, 5, 21: *na vayam vidmo yadi brahmana smo yady abrahmana smo*; *Maitrayani Samhita* 1, 4, 11 (ed. L. von Schroeder, vol. 1, 60): *na vai tad vidma yadi brahmana va smo 'brahmana va*. The reference *Taittiriya Brahmana* II, 1, 2, given by the editors of TV, is incorrect.

86. The commentator Somesvara feels occasionally compelled to state explicitly that Kumarila is, indeed, presenting his own view; cf. NSudha, 10: *asankita svabhiprayam aviskaroti*.

87. Cf. E. Frauwallner, *Materialien zur ältesten Erkenntnislehre der Karmamimamsa*. Vienna, 1968; see also above, ch. 2.

88. Somesvara tries to clarify Kumarila's somewhat ambiguous reliance on both perception and authoritative instruction; see NSudha, 14: *pratyaksavagatisambhavad anyatra sastravyaparo na-angikrtah, iha tu tadasambhava chastravisayatvam na-ayuktam . . . nanv akarasamyena kvacid api brahmanyadivivekasya pratyaksena-avagatyasambhavad sarvatra-agamagamyatvam eva-angikaryam ity asankam nirakurvan upasamharati*.

89. Somesvara, NSudha, 10, states that it is necessary to assume something that is universally present in all individual brahmins and forms the content of the notion "brahmin" (*tasmat sarvesu brahmanesu anusyutam pratyekasamavetat brahmanapratyayavisayabhatam kimcid avasyam estavyam*); on p. 11, he adds that universals such as brahminness, which are to be known through such special pervasive notions, cannot be denied (*tasmat samanakaresv api pindesu vilaksanabrahmanapratyayavedyabrahmanyadijati na-apahnotum sakyate*).

90. For the following discussion, see TV, 4 ff. (on MS I, 2, 2). The *siddhanta* section (on MS 1, 2, 7 ff.) does not address this issue at all.

91. As Kumarila notes in the *Slokavarttika*, conduct would be a valid criterion only under proper supervision; see above, n.84.

92. See above, n. 69 ff.; cf. also Somesvara, NSudha, 12: *na ca durjñanatvamdtrena-apratyaksatvam sankyam*.

93. See TV, 6: *darsanasmaranaparamparyanugrhitapratyaksagamyani brahmanatvadini*.

94. Cf. TV, 217 (on MS I, 3, 27):

*aditas ca smrteḥ siddhah pratyaksena-api gamyate/
sadhvasadhuvibhago 'yam kusalair varnabhedavat.*

See also above, n. 73, on the case of the expert jewelers.

95. Cf. TV, 6: *siddhanam hi brahmanadinam acara vidhiyante*.

96. Cf. TV, 7: *na tapaadinam samudayo brahmanyam, na tajjanitah samskarah, na tadabhivyangya jatih*.

97. According to Kumarila, there is no loss of brahminness etc. in the strict and literal sense. Authoritative statements which seem to indicate that a brahmin sinks to the level of a sudra due to certain types of misconduct can only mean that he is deprived of particular rights and responsibilities. Critics of the varna system sometimes use the loss of caste status as an argument against its hereditary nature; see, for instance, the *Vajrasuci*.

98. Cf. *Mahabhasya* on IV, 1, 63; V, 3, 55; and above, n. 40.

99. Nagesa makes explicit reference to *upadesa*; cf. Patañjali's *Vyakarana-Mahabhasya: Tatpurusahnika*, ed. with trans. by S. D. Joshi and J. A. F. Roodbergen. Poona, 1973, 118 f.

100. Cf. VP 111/14, 250 ff.; and K. A. Subramania Iyer, *Bhartrhari*. Poona, 1969, 390 ff.; 397 ff. On *abrahmanatva*, see also Kumarila, SV, 402 ff. (*Aphavada*, v. 13-30).

101. Cf. VP III/1, 44:

*brahmanatvadayo bhavah sarvapranisv avasthitah/
abhivvyaktah svakaryanam sadhaka ity api smrtih.*

Helaraja paraphrases: *brahmanatvaksatriyatvadayah samanyavisesah*. Cf. also VP III/1, 28 (*brahmanatvadi*).

102. Cf. VP III/1, 46.

103. Cf. *VP with the commentary of Helaraja*. Kanda III, part 1, ed. K. A. Subramania Iyer. Poona, 1963, 51-55; especially 55: *brahmanatvadisv asti kimcit sasnadisthaniyam upavyañjanam asmakam param atindriyam*.

104. Cf. *Sesvaramimamsa* (see above, n. 24), 151: *atah isvaramaharsiprabhrtinam pratyaksam brahmanyadikam*.

105. See above, n. 40; 90.

106. For the following discussion, cf. Salikanathamisra, *Prakaranapañcika* (with *Nyayasiddhi* by Jayapurinarayana), ed. A. Subrahmanya Sastri. Benares, 1961, 100-103.

107. *Prakaranapañcika*, 101: *na hi ksatriyadibhyo vyavartamanam sakalabrahmanesv anuvartamanam ekam akaram aticiram anusandadhato 'pi budhyante*. In his preceding rejection of a highest universal "beingness" or "reality" (*satta*; cf. 97ff.), Salikanatha also refers to a lack of "similarity."

108. See *ibid.*, 101: *na hi tadanim caksusasya samvedanasya visayatirekah, kim tv anumanam eva tatra sarpisah*.

109. *Ibid.*, 102: *katham punas tajjanyatvam eva sakyam avagantum, strinam aparadhasambhavat. sambhavanti hi pumscalyo striyah parinetaram vyabhicarantyah*. The *Vajrasuci* (ed. A. Weber, 220; 232; see above, n. 36) epitomizes the manner in which the Buddhist critics exploit this issue.

110. Cf. *Dharmatattvanirnaya*, ed. Marulakara. Poona, 1929 (Anandasrama Sanskrit Series), 18 ff.

111. *Ibid.*, 18: *na hi tatra samadikam karma brahmanatvajatiprayojakatvenauktam, kim tu brahmanatvajatiprayojyatvena*.

112. Ibid., 19: *tatha ca janmasiddha jatir, na kvapi kathamapi nivartate*.
113. Cf. *Caturvarnyasiksa vedadrsty sameta*. Lucknow, 1927, 198 f. also 1: *asvativaj jatigunakriyabhir vibhinnabhavatisayam prapannah*.
114. Cf. *Vajrasuci*, ed. A. Weber (see above, n.36), 237; 239; 252.
115. See S. L. Malhotra, *Social and Political Orientations of Neo-Vedantism*. Delhi, 1970, VII f.
116. See G. C. Dev, *Idealism and Progress*. Calcutta, 1952, 440 ff.; also his *The Philosophy of Vivekananda and the Future of Man*. Dacca, 1963, 96 f. ("Gospel of Emancipation of Common Man").
117. See S. Joshi, *The Message of Shankara*. Allahabad, 1968, 177; R. N. Vyas, *The Universalistic Thought of India*. Bombay, 1970, V.
118. R. N. Vyas, *Universalistic Thought*, 16.
119. Ramatirtha as cited by H. Maheshwari, *The Philosophy of Swami Rama Tirtha*. Agra; 1969, 169.
120. *Bunch of Thoughts*. Bangalore, 1966, 5f.; on the idea of a "practical Vedanta," see also *India and Europe*, 239 ff. (specifically on Vivekananda).
121. Ramakrishna often compared the world to a worthless "hog plum"; cf. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Nikhilananda. Madras, 1969 (first ed.: 1944), 379; 903. In his *Karmayoga* (ch. 5, conclusion), Vivekananda himself still cited Ramakrishna's metaphor of the "dog's tail" to illustrate the incorrigibility of the world.
122. *The Hindu View of Life*. London, 1968, 18; see also *India and Europe*, 409.
123. Cf. *The Hindu View of Life*, 87; *History of Philosophy, Eastern and Western*. London, 1952-1953, vol. 1, 447.

124. See, for instance, P. Deussen, *Das System des Vedanta*. Second ed., Leipzig, 1906, 63 ff. (trans. Ch. Johnston: *The System of the Vedanta*. Chicago, 1912, 60 ff.).

125. On Sankara's concept of *adhikara*, see above, ch. 3, § 12 ff. Further statements on castes are found in BUBh I, 4, 6; 14; II, 4, 5 (castes and superimposition); TUBh II, 6, 1.

126. Cf. BSBh I, 3, 38; see also Gautama XII, 4.

127. Cf. BSBh I, 3, 37; in the Upanisad itself, the situation is somewhat ambiguous. The story of Satyakama is also cited and discussed by several Dharmasastra commentators; see, for instance, Medhatithi and Govindaraja on Manu X, 5.

128. See Ramanuja's *Sribhasya* on BS 1, 3, 34-38.

129. See *Naiskarmyasiddhi* II, 88; cf. also Sankara, BUBh II, 4, 5.

130. Cf. *Svatmanirupana*, v. 139: *varnasramarahito 'ham arnamayo 'ham; Dasasloki*, v. 2: *na varna na varnacarahmah*. Both texts are found in: *Minor Works of Sankaracarya*, ed. Bhagavat. Second ed., Poona, 1952.

131. Cf. *The Minor Upanisads*, ed. F.O. Schrader, vol. 1: *Samnyasa-Upanisads*. Madras, 1912. 193: 112.

132. *Niralamba Upanisad*, v. 10 (in: *The Samanya-Vedanta-Upanisads*, ed. Mahadeva Sastri. Adyar, 1921).

133. See *The Principal Upanishads*, ed. and trans. S. Radhakrishnan. London, 1953. A. Weber (see above, n. 36) saw the *Vajrasuci Upanisad* (which he ascribed to Sankara) as the model for the Buddhist *Vajrasuci*; according to S.K. Mukherjee, the Buddhist text is the original. It has been generally overlooked that a version of the *Vajrasuci Upanisad* was already published and translated into Bengali by Rammohan Roy in 1821; see *Ramamohana-Granthavali*, ed. B.N. Bandyopadhyaya and S. K. Dasa. Calcutta, n.d. (1959), section 4, 43-48. According to Rammohan, the text is by Mrtyumjaya; this can hardly

be Mrtyumjaya Vidyānānka, Rāmmohan's teacher and, later on, opponent.

134. Cf. *Maitreya Upaniṣad*; in: *The Minor Upaniṣads* (see above, n. 131), 114 f.

135. Cf. *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* IV, 3, 22; see also Śaṅkara, USG 1, 15 ff. (freedom of the *ātman* from caste distinctions); and the following statement by Madhusūdana Śaṛasvatī: *varṇasramādīvyavahārasya mithyājñānamulatvena mithyātvam* (*Siddhāntabindu*, ed. P. C. Divāṇjī. Baroda, 1933, Gaekwad's Oriental Series, 41).

136. Published in *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Tanjore Maharaja Serfoji's Śaṛasvatī Mahāḷ Library*, ed. P. P. S. Śāstri, vol. 13. Śrīrangam, 1931, No. 7736; see especially v. 11 f.

137. Cf. *Alberuni's India*, trans. E. C. Sachau. London, 1910 (and many reprints), vol. 1, 104.

138. Cf. Abhinavagupta, *Īśvarapratyabhijñānavimarsinī* IV, 2, 3; ed. M. Kaul Śāstri. Bombay, 1921 (Kashmir Series of Texts and Studies), vol. 2, 276: *na-atra jatyaadyapekṣa kcit*.

139. Cf. P. Olivelle, "A Definition of World Renunciation." *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 19 (1975), 75-83.

140. Cf. P. Hacker, *Schüler Śaṅkaras*, 105; but see also *Vivekacūḍamānī*, v. 542.

141. See *India and Europe*, 205 f.; 212; 239 ff.; 251 ff.

142. There were, of course, important representatives of modern Indian thought who denied or questioned the ethical and social applicability of non-dualism; in the nineteenth century, Debendranāth Tagore (Thakur) and Dayānānda Śaṛasvatī were among the critics of Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta.

143. *The Gospel of Śrī Rāmākrishṇa*, trans. Nīkhilānānda. Madras, 1969 (first ed.: 1944), 8 f.

144. *The Gospel*, 204; for a somewhat different version, see 374 f.
145. *The Gospel*, 9.
146. Rgveda X, 90, 11-12.
147. See S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life*. London, 1968, 107.
148. See *India and Europe*, ch. 3; S. Arokiasamy, *Dharma, Hindu and Christian, according to Roberto de Nobili*. Rome, 1986, 289 ff.; 292.
149. See, for instance, *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* I, 4, 10, on the interaction of animals, humans, and gods; see also the concept of *lokasamgraha*, as used in Bhagavadgita III, 20.
150. See P. Chakravarti, *Origin and Development of the Samkhya System of Thought*. New Delhi, second ed., 1975, 218 ff.
151. See A. Wezler, "On the *varna* System as Conceived of by the Author of the Patañjala-Yoga-Sastra-Vivarana." *Dr. B. R. Sharma Felicitation Volume*, Tirupati, 1986, 172-188; specifically p. 185, note 14. A. Wezler deserves credit for having drawn our attention to the remarkable statements in the Vivarana.
152. The Sanskrit text reads as follows: *dhr̥tikaranam sariram indriyanam, tani ca tasya. mahabhutani sariranam, tani ca parasparam. sarvesam tairvagyonamanusadaivatani ca paraspararthatvat.*
153. See YSBhV, 210 f. (on YS and YBh II, 28).
154. See A. Wezler, "On the *varna* System," 180 f.
155. See above, ch. 1; and *India and Europe*, 332.
156. See above, ch. 1; and L. Renou, *Le destin*, 3.