Aporias in Brahmin Philosophical Systems

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In this article[1] I attempt to identify the *aporias* which emerge in the *darśanas* – classic Indian philosophical systems – in a situation when, on the one hand, their authors wish to support the indisputable metaphysical thesis of *śruti*, while on the other they try to reconcile it with the universal experience of the world as diversity. In my opinion, the most important ontological thesis developed in the last parts of *śruti* – *upaniṣads* – determines the absolute existence as "sat ekam advitīyam" – "one existing without another". All later *darśanas* refer to this thesis when formulating their metaphysical assumptions. *Aporias* appear regardless of whether the system is monistic, dualistic or pluralistic.

Looking at the beginnings, i.e. the crucial founding ideas of the tradition, we can identify the basic thesis which will subsequently become not only a starting point, but also a keynote of all later dissertations and philosophical discussions. Such a point of departure for all philosophical speculations in ancient Greece and then in entire European thought will be the determination of a being by Parmenides while in India this appears in the oldest *upaniṣads*. This paper is not of a strictly comparative character; its main focus is on the ontological assumptions of orthodox Brahmanical schools. These two great metaphysical theses of Parmenides and the *upaniṣads* which will be briefly analysed later are absolutely fundamental to their philosophical traditions. None of the later thinkers of the given tradition can practice any philosophy without at least making a remote reference to those theses. And if they are treated more or less literally and we try to agree them with other metaphysical theses, different kinds of *aporias* will appear.

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Let us begin with an analysis of an excerpt from *Chāndogya* 6.2.1. It goes: "sad […] ekam eva advitīyam" – "existing one, verily without another". This is the most abstract definition of the absolute being in the *upaniṣads*. We do not give it any name, not even as ambiguous as *ātman* or *brahman*. However, what we state, above all, about the absolute dimension of existence is that it is the only one which exists in a full way; everything that is different from it is not entitled to an absolute being, but a life full of changeability. The thesis of such a strong metaphysical stand did not appear in Brahmanical thought for the first time. It is a tradition dating back to *saṁhitās* of the Vedas, present in such famous anthems as *Nāsadīya* or *Puruṣasūkta*. I chose this fragment of the *upaniṣads* because it is the most abstract and strongest. The thesis expressed in such a general way will serve as a reference point for the *darśanas* – later orthodox philosophical schools. This absolutist approach of being will also be criticised by Buddha.

Let us examine the meanings of individual terms. The word *sat* is an active participium (participle) from the core *as* and literally means: "existing". Since it is a verbal form, it emphasises an internal activity. It breaks the schematic expressing of the Brahmanical being as completely static and unchanging, expressed by nominal forms. Complementing expressions appear later in the text. *Sat* was (existed) as "ekam advitīyam" – "one, without another". The initial being was the only element, *arché*, the only principle of the entire world appearing later in diverse forms. It points to the fundamental rule of orthodox Indian metaphysics – oneness is not only primary, but ultimately the only real one. Reality is one; it is only we who experience it as multitude. All later thinkers will not prove the existence of an absolutely simple reality, but they will consider how we perceive that which is one as a multitude.

The notion *sat* is associated with the notion *satyam* – which is real, genuine. The concept of *sat* does not only state the existence of a being, but it also determines its reality. Such an understanding is justified additionally by the identity, resulting from the *upaniṣads*, of *sat = brahman = satyam*. The word *sat* belongs both to the metaphysical order, meaning the real being, as well as to the epistemological order, meaning a way of stating the truth and the reality of being. The same notion is not only an ontological, but also an epistemological category. In this way, existence is at the same time real. It has a primary meaning for the shape of classical Indian thought. Only the real being is entitled to be named the absolute truth – *sat*. From such an under-

standing and functioning of the notion *sat* (*satyam*) comes the still intentional lack of distinguishing between the metaphysical and epistemological order. And as we are about to see, this will be one of the main reasons for the *aporias*. The terms *ekamadvitīyam* indicate that only the being – *sat* understood in this way exists fully and genuinely and everything else that is being experienced is not equally real or genuine.

Let us now examine in what context this fragment appears. It will limit the scope of issues associated with the basic metaphysical theses.

> In the beginning, son, this world was simply what is existent – one only, without a second. Now, on this point some do say: "In the beginning this world was simply what is non-existent – one only, without a second. And from what is non-existent was born what is existent."
> "But, son, how can that possibly be?" he continued. "How can, what is existent be born from what is non-existent? On the contrary, son, in the beginning this world was simply what is existent – one only, without a second."
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> (*Chāndogya* 6.2.1–2)[2]

This initial being was the one and only element, the only *arché*, and the only principle of the entire world coming into sight at later stages in diverse forms. The wise man Aruni then recalls that there were theories well-known to him that in the beginning there was "asat ekam advitīyam", that is "non-existent, one without another". But as he retorts, "it is impossible that from something non-existent arises something existent". It is a clear polemics with the concept *creatio ex nihilo*. For ancient Indians the concept of creating something from nothing was illogical or even absurd. As a matter of fact, even in later *darśanas* some crucial metaphysical theses were proven by adopting the thesis *ex nihilo nihil fit* as an axiom. For example, in the Samkhya system this very method was used to prove the undisplayed – *avyakta* – *prakṛti* form. We are experiencing only diverse expressions of *prakṛti*; we cannot see its primal form (*mūla*), because it is beyond our cognitive abilities – *antaḥkaraṇa*. Signs as variable cannot exist alone, but could neither come from nothing. In this way we prove the existence of the more subtle

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[2]Although I work on the Sanskrit sources in English papers I follow Olivelle's translations of the *upaniṣads*. See: P. Olivelle, *Upaniṣads*, Oxford 1996.

form of the material of object reality. This is a result of the approach that was clearly outlined already in the *upaniṣads*.

Before the thesis about the impossibility of existence coming from something non-existent – that is, the thesis about the invariability of being – a conversation is quoted between young Śvetaketu who returned after his studies and his father, Aruni:

> So he [Śvetaketu] went away to become a student at the age of 12 and, after learning all the Vedas, returned when he was 24, swell-headed, thinking himself to be learned, and arrogant. His father then said to him: "Śvetaketu, here you are, my son, swell-headed, thinking yourself to be learned, and arrogant; so you must have surely asked about that rule substitution by which one hears what has not been heard of before, thinks of what has not been thought of before?"
> "How indeed does that rule of substitution work, sir?"
> "It is like this, son. By means of just one lump of clay one would perceive everything made of clay – the transformation is a verbal handle, a name – while the reality is just this: It's a clay."

> (*Chāndogya* 6.1.2–4)

The fragment quoted above is very familiar. It is an attempt to explain the origin and bases of experienced reality. Both the one asking questions and the one being asked agree upon the fact that we experience a reality in its diversity. It is – so to speak – a universal, "unreflective" viewpoint of all experiencing humans. The majority of those experiencing the world we live in do not investigate its being: changeability and diversity are accepted as something obvious and natural. It is worth noting that such an attitude is common to people worldwide irrespective of their cultural background or the times they live in. After all, according to Aristotle, being surprised at the possibility of undermining this obviousness is the beginning of philosophy. There is a similar situation in the *upaniṣads*. Śvetaketu comes back from his studies convinced that he knows all the answers. His father questions his belief. He asks Śvetaketu about the nature of things that seemed simple and obvious. The father proves that behind the experienced reality there is just one principle. He claims that the whole experienced world – changeable and diverse – is not autonomous and exists thanks to something else; its being is determined by a constant, existing thanks to and for itself absolute dimension of *sat*.

In this fragment a basic *aporia*, the essential tension in Indian philosophical thought, becomes apparent. The experienced world is seen as changeable and diverse on the one hand, and on the other hand there is the existence of the absolute and unchanging dimension of reality. In the *upaniṣads* there are two dimensions of reality: the real dimension existing as an absolute – expressed by the core *as*, the presented, dynamic and variable reality – expressed by the core *bhū* as well as other cores expressing the process and its dynamics[3]. It is very interesting that Charles H. Kahn has also pointed to an identical regularity:

> The second feature of the Indo-European copula, the durative aspect, is even more decisive for the Greek view of being. This is the aspect which contrasts 'be' with 'become', *eimi* with *gignomai* as copula verb (and as with *bhū* in Sanskrit). […] But it is characteristic of Indo-European that the root *es* is typically, and in Greek almost exclusively, used to express the static aspect, whereas the variety of other copulas are used for predication with a mutative nuance (there is no single Indo-European word for 'become' as there is a single root for 'be'). There is, in short, an essential connection in Indo-European between the idea of being and the idea of stability or remaining in the same state[4].

All this philosophical consideration focuses on one question: how it is possible that what is unchanging, one, simple – *sat* is experienced as a changeable, diverse, existence – *bhava*. An additional question also appears: why? Another salient issue is that we refer to the *upaniṣads*, *śruti* text, a crucial text for the Indian tradition of an undeniable authority. We are not trying to prove here that *sat* exists. Critically thinking, we must admit that we are unable to prove the existence of *sat*, no matter which categories we use, because a definition of this dimension is beyond any category whatsoever. But we cannot deny its existence either. So all *darśanas* will defend on the one hand the common–sense of experiencing the reality of the represented world, and on the other – the invariability of the absolute dimension of *sat*. The second and main part of this text will be devoted to the analysis of individual *darśana*.

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[3]M. Kudelska, *Dlaczego istnieje raczej „Ja" niż „to"?* [*Why there exists rather "I" than "it"?*], Kraków 2009.

[4]Ch. Kahn, *Linguistic Relativism and the Greek Project of Ontology*, [in:] *The Question of Being: East – West Perspectives*, ed. M. Sprung, University Park 1978, p. 34–35.

First, let us move to ancient Greece, the cradle of the European thought. Let us quote the famous thesis of Parmenides:

> Come now, I shall tell – and convey home the tale once you have heard – just which ways of inquiry alone there are for under-standing: the one, that [it] is and that [it] is not to be, is the path of conviction, for it attends upon true reality, but the other, that [it] is not and that [it] must not be, this, I tell you, is a path wholly without report: for neither could you apprehend what is not, for it is not to be accomplished, nor could you indicate it[5].

We experience the world as changeability but, according to Parmenides, it is exactly this dimension that is an unexplored path. What exists as non-variable is real. It is very similar to *upaniṣads*. Even more strikingly, similar to it is also the next fragment:

> What is ungenerated and deathless, whole and uniform, and still and perfect; but not ever was it, not yet will it be, since it is now together entire, single, continuous; for what birth will you seek of it? How, whence increased? From not being I shall not allow you to say or to think: for not to be said and not to be thought is it that it is not. And indeed what need could have aroused it later rather than before, beginning from nothing, to grow? Thus it must either be altogether or not at all. Nor ever from not being will the force of conviction allow something to come to be beyond it: on account of this neither to be born nor to die has Justice allowed it, having loosed its bonds, but she holds it fast. And the decision about these matters lies in this: it is or it is not; but it has in fact been decided, just as is necessary, to leave the one unthought and nameless (for no true way is it), and that the one that it is indeed is genuine. And how could What Is be hereafter? And how might it have been? For if it was, it is not, nor if ever it is going to be: thus generation is extinguished and destruction unheard of[6].

The object of an examination either exists or does not exist. Parmenides rejects the latter option because it is unthinkable. In the first part of the poem,

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[5]J. Palmer, *Parmenides and Presocratic Philosophy*, Oxford 2009, p. 365.
[6]Ibidem, p. 369.

Parmenides examines the "is" road, the only certain one. Parmenides does not accept in his metaphysics and epistemology the existence of a world portrayed by senses. We are dealing with an identity here: being is a thought. Similarly, in the *upaniṣad Chāndogya sat* equals *cit*. Something that came into existence, could not exist, and therefore it does not exist absolutely.

In his *Ontology*, Władysław Stróżewski presents different ways of showing the subject of metaphysical consideration. He says that "that intuitive reading [...] makes possible a statement that a being is «what exists»"[7]. He then analyses the range of a concept "being" and asks what "it" can relate to. In the case of Parmenides the answer is obvious: "«It» points to the undifferentiated «wholeness» of being, where no essential divisions occur, including divisions into individual beings. In this way, the pluralism of being is ruled out"[8].

At the very beginning of ancient Greek philosophy, a very strong metaphysical thesis was formulated which has continued to mark the way for philosophy until this day.

> Parmenides was also the first to exploit the durative connotations of *einai* by a systematic contrast with *gignesthai*, the verb which normally provides an aorist for *einai*, and which expresses the developmental idea of birth, of achieving a new state, of emerging as novelty or as event. In Parmenides as in Plato, the durative – present aspect of *einai* thus provides the linguistic underpinning for the antithesis in which Being is opposed to Becoming as stability to flux[9].

Although contemporary philosophy seldom refers directly to the thesis of Parmenides, one can see its influence in every philosophical position. This thesis is a source of multiple *aporias*. In ancient times they took the form of Eleatic *aporias*, which is a truism in fact. It is interesting that a similar discussion on the idea of absolute being can be observed in India. This is because in India a surprisingly similar evolution of philosophical positions took place when all of the representatives of Brahmanical *darśana* referred to the thesis proposed in *Chāndogya*. Both state that a being is indivisible and unchanging, it does not come into being and does not disappear. It is not

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[7]Wł. Stróżewski, *Ontologia* [*Ontology*], Kraków 2003, p. 67.
[8]Ibidem, p. 68.
[9]Ch. Khan, *Essays on Being*, Oxford 2009, p. 29.

possible to single anything out in it. Here and there to think and to be is the same process: *sat = cit*.

One should still pay attention to the next essential resemblance. Parmenides identified with being not only thinking, but also the truth. Both *upaniṣads* and Parmenides express this identity in language:

> In particular, the present participle **sont* of the Indo-European verb **es* – forms one of the standard expression for truth, or for what is the case, in many different languages. A derivative of this participle still serves as the normal word for 'true' and 'truth' in languages so far apart as Norwegian (*sann* and *sannhet*) and Hindi (*sac, satya*)[10].

A sentence is true, provided it refers to something that exists. Only the constant exists, so only what is constant is real. It is the epistemological dimension combined with the metaphysical dimension. A similar and completely deliberate treatment was applied in Brahmanical thought long before the *upaniṣads*, in the *Nāsadīya* anthem. The notion *sat* denotes in this anthem both what exists and what is real. It is this levelling of both dimensions – metaphysical and epistemic – that causes further *aporias*. A majority of Brahmanical schools, even at the later stage of their structural development, will try to create coherent systems in keeping with this equilibrium. As we shall see, the best example of this will be Vedanta schools.

Both in India and in Greece, philosophical deliberations are founded on a very similar, equally radical metaphysical position. Both here and there – and by no means am I trying to establish a mutual influence at the developmental stage of both traditions – *aporias* that emerged during the course of developing philosophical thought were very much similar. Clarification of this thesis as well as an attempt to build a consistent system based on it, led to the forming of various philosophical positions: monistic, dualistic, and pluralistic. In Europe, it is possible to cite the most obvious examples, for instance: Plato, Democritus, Epicurus or Leibniz. In each of these systems there are some elements of Parmenides' concept of existence functioning, whether it is an idea or an individual substance. A similar situation occurs in India, where in the Vedanta tradition alone there are multiple ontological conceptions, while there are also other *darśanas* that regard some aspects of the

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[10]Ibidem, p. 23.

system as a direct continuation of the *upaniṣad's sat* – once it may be the principle of awareness, another time – the concept of individual substance.

So let us take a closer look at India and the solutions of individual Brahmanical schools. Let us sum up first, the conclusions that result from accepting the *upaniṣad's* thesis: "sat ekam advitīyam":

- Only the dimension of the absolute being is truly genuine and real, and what differs from it is not a full being;
- What exists (absolutely) is unchanging, it has no beginning or end, nor is it born, neither does it die;
- It is thanks to *sat* that a being is a being;
- On the absolute level *sat* has one referent – an all-embracing, undifferentiated reality. On the level of the represented world a being (*sat*) is experienced as divided, diverse. It is connected with the idea that sensory cognition as not truly appropriate. But, after all, it is exactly the second road of Parmenides, or the Plato's belief (*doxa*)[11].

The aforementioned stands are taken by all *darśanas*. There are, however, some other indirect interpretations linked to the "sat ekam advitīyam" thesis, which will not be taken on directly by all schools:

- What is existing, is conscious – *cit*, a Parmenides-like identification of the being with the thought. This will become a problem in Vaiśeṣika.
- The question of what structure reality is supposed to have so that it can be an object of real cognition. Sāṃkhya will present a thesis that only the unconditioned can be real (*prakṛti* is an object, it exists for somebody, and so it is conditioned, meaning that it is a result).

While building their systems, Brahmanical philosophers will try to reconcile the statements of *śruti* and its subsequent openness to *aporias* with the experience given to every thinking being – of reality as something variable and diverse.

I will now discuss the Brahmanical *darśanas* one after another, referring firstly, to their basic texts and secondarily to comments, since some

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[11]The guiding thought at the outset of Parmenides poem, the thought which motivates his articulation of the concept of Being, is the idea of Truth as the goal of knowledge and inquiry. But of course the 'being' which is known and truly asserted must be a 'reality' in the very general sense indicated earlier. So for Parmenides the veridical; notion of Being leads directly to the concept of Realty as opposed to Appearance of false seeming. See: Ibidem, p. 70.

of the comments may not only contain a slightly modified, but also a brand new philosophical stand. I will not be referring to all *darśanas*, but only to those representing the most pronounced, distinctive ontological concepts. And thus, from the pair Sāṃkhya–Yoga I will be referring mainly to Sāṃkhya and in the case of Nyāya–Vaiśeṣika – to the latter. I will omit Mīmāṃsā here, since in this context it would add very little to our deliberations. I will instead discuss the most pronounced schools of Vedānta.

The classic version of Sāṃkhya introduced by Īśvarakṛṣṇa in *Sāṃkhya-kārikā*, is extremely dualistic. Eternal existing is assumed for two orders – *modi* of being, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*. Let us see how Īśvarakṛṣṇa defines *puruṣa*. It should be reminded here that the term *puruṣa* denotes a man, a husband. The entire Sāṃkhya ontology is based on the metaphor of the mutual relation of the two elements – the male *puruṣa* and the female *prakṛti*, the recognising subject and the object of cognition. In the second *kārikā* the subject is being defined as *jña* – the one acquiring knowledge[12]. In the third *kārikā* the term *puruṣa* appears for the first time and is defined as: "na prakṛtir na vikṛti" – "neither created nor creating". As we can see these descriptions in general point to the absolute nature of *puruṣa* – its essence is cognition; *puruṣa* is eternal and invariable (undergoing no transformations). In the nineteenth *kārikā* some additional descriptions appear: "kaivalyaṃ mādhyasthyaṃ draṣṭṛtvam akatṛbhāvaś ca". Generally it can be translated: "he is a witness, he is separate, he is indifferent, he is a spectator, he is non-active". The term *mādhyasthya* is translated by Karl H. Potter and Gerald J. Larson as the one, whose nature is neutrality, or the one, whose nature is separate from all kinds of experience[13]. It emphasises the absolute autonomy and inertia of *puruṣa* as opposed to the active nature of *prakṛti*. If in the absolute sense *puruṣa* is separated from *prakṛti* and all cognitive acts belong to her domain, then how can we get to know *puruṣa*? So according to what the text says, we are not be able to get to know him directly, since it is impossible, but we conclude his being instead. This conclusion is based on accepting a thesis that whatever we experience is an object, and that the object must exist for some entity. And here occurs a sort of leap in thought. We start to comprehend the subject automatically as something absolute, rather than

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[12][Online] http://gretil.sub.uni–goettingen.de/gretil/1_sanskr/6_sastra/_phil/ [accessed: 02.08.2012].

[13]*Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, Volume IV, *Samkhya. A Dualist Tradition in Indian Philosophy*, ed. G. L. Larson, R. S. Bhattacharya, Delhi 1987.

a mere element of the cognitive relation; something that never changes its nature. The seventeenth *kārikā* puts it this way:

> saṁghātaparārthatvāt triguṇādviparyayād adhiṣṭānāt |
> puruṣo'sti bhoktṛbhāvāt kaivalyārthaṁ pravṛtteś ca ||

> = The *puruṣa* exists,
> 1. because aggregations or combinations exist for another;
> 2. because (this other) must be apart or opposite from the three gunas;
> 3. because (this other) (must be) a superintending power or control;
> 4. because of the existence or need of an enjoyer;
> 5. because there is functioning or activity for the sake of isolation or freedom[14].

In this paragraph, two groups of content are important: first of all expressing *puruṣa* as an unconditioned being, but at the same time a condition for the entire presented reality, secondly, as the one who is experiencing, but also getting to know the world. This separation of the subject of cognition from the object of cognition, which happens in every cognitive act, appears in the majority of classic and contemporary philosophical systems. At present, regarding this opposition as absolute is often subjected to criticism, but the thesis is deemed worthy of consideration. Surprisingly, the aspiration to liberation is regarded as something universal: "kaivalyārthapravṛtti" – an activity aimed at achieving the state of uniqueness, separateness.

It is thanks to this activity, says Īśvarakṛṣṇa, that there is a conviction existing immanently in every human being that there must be some transcendental dimension, different from *vyakta* and *avyakta prakṛti*. It is supposed that this transcendental dimension must be *sukha* – a dimension of happiness, as opposed to the field of the empirical world, experienced as suffering – *duḥkha*. We must admit that this lacks rationale. It is not uncommon for the orthodox Brahmanical *darśana* to accept a very strong metaphysical thesis this way. Other theses are justified on the basis of this one, obviously without further examination in any way. In Sāṁkhya, which is generally a rational *darśana*, the conviction about the existence of some other, transcendental

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[14]I follow Gerald James Larson's translation of *Sāṁkhyakārikā*. G. J. Larson, *Classical Sāṁkhya*, Delhi 1979.

dimension of reality was justified based on the existence of some intelligible factor in man– an impulse to seek liberation. This seems a reference to some unverified, but still empirical knowledge. As we shall see, in Vedānta systems this impulse is accepted on the basis of *śruti*.

Let us see now, how *prakṛti* is defined. The word *prakṛti* means something created primarily, but in the third *kārikā* we read that indigenous *prakṛti* – *mūlaprakṛti* is not created – *avikṛti*. This form of *prakṛti* which is not created and is eternal like *puruṣa* is called *avyakta* – undisplayed. Seven suchnesses emerge from it – *tattva*, seven evolutes which are created at the same time – *prakṛti*, and creating – *vikṛti*. This form of *prakṛti* and everything that emerges from it is called *vyakta* – the displayed. The *vyakta* form is actually the entire represented world. *Vyakta* is the result and the *avyakta* is the cause. As it says in the eighth *kārikā*: "elusiveness – *anupalabdhi prakṛti* is caused by its subtlety rather than its non-existence – abhāva"[15]. We never get to know the form of *avyakta*; we accept its existence on the principle of inference. On the principle of accepting the law of *satkāryavada*, the law of assuming an immanent existence of the effect in the cause, we determine the nature of *avyakta*, even though empirically we can never verify it. Let us note that accepting the existence of two basic elements for the system of Sāṁkhya, namely *puruṣa* and indigenous *prakṛti*, takes place not on the basis of experience, but according to inference. This is because they are both, even though for different reasons, outside the range of perception – *pratyakṣa* – the only certain cognitive measure. The eleventh *kārikā* defines the nature of *prakṛti* – both *vyakta* and *avyakta*, because they are the same. It consists of three *guṇas*, does not have the ability to distinguish – *aviveka*; it is an object – *viṣaya*, general, shared – *sāmānya*; it is unaware – *acetana*, and its feature is creating – *prasavadharmin*. So *prakṛti* has a distinctly objective nature, as whatever is an object is never independent for it exists and acts on account of some other subject. And as an object it is deprived of basic features of the subject – it does not have the ability to distinguish good from bad, right from wrong, and thus it is not an independent ethical subject. It is composed of three *guṇas* – *triguṇa*. It is worth noting that there is no pure, impeccable substance – *prakṛti* which is entitled to three features, three *guṇas*; it is only a combination of different properties, different qualities acquired through experience.

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[15] The non-perception (of *prakṛti*) is because of its subtlety – not because of its non-existence. Ibidem, p. 258.

The authors of Sāṁkhya obviously accept the widely adopted interpretation that we see the world in its variability and diversity. This is our shared experience. The authors, however, disagree that these objects of cognition exist separately on the ontological level; they simply do not accept the ontological pluralism. The fifteenth *kārikā* says that the entire world is one, because all signs – *vyakta* – have, according to the law of *satkāryavada*, one undisplayed basis, a cause. The fifteen and sixteenth *kārikās* say:

> bhedānāṁ parimāṇāt samanvayāt śaktitaḥ pravṛtteś ca |
> kāraṇakāryavibhāgād avibhāgād vaiśvarūpyasya ||
> kāraṇam asty avyaktaṁ pravartate triguṇataḥ samudayāc ca |
> pariṇāmataḥ salilavat pratipratiguṇāśrayaviśeṣāt ||

1. Because of the finiteness of specific things in the world which require a cause;
2. because of the homogeneity or sameness of the finite world;
3. because of the power or potency (of the cause) which the process of emergence or evolution implies;
4. because of separation or distinction between cause and its effect (with respect to modification or appearance);
5. because of the undividedness or uniformity of the entire world;
= the unmanifest (avyakta) is the cause; it functions because of or by the interaction of the three guṇas, modified like water, due to the specific nature abiding in the respective guṇas[16].

In this way the unity of the nature of the world – according to Sāṁkhya of course – has been defended and with it the inter-subjectivity of experience, as well as the functional (not absolute) operation of shared laws, the unity of human aspirations and goals. But here a difficulty occurs. As we remember from the seventeenth *kārikā*, it is in the nature of every *puruṣa* to crave liberation. In that case, would it mean that if *prakṛti* is one, because the world is a unity, then after the first *puruṣa* has liberated himself, will the world cease to exist? The world is still functioning after all. And here Sāṁkhya, in order to be consistent with one's assumptions, accepts the multiple *puruṣas*. The eighteenth *kārikā* says:

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[16]Ibidem, p. 260–261.

janamaraṇakaraṇānāṁ pratiniyamād ayugapatpravṛtteś ca |
puriṣababhutvaṁ siddhaṁ traiguṇyaviparyayāc caiʻva ||

= The plurality of *puruṣas* is established,
1. because of the diversity of births, deaths, and faculties;
2. because of actions or functions (that take place) at different times;
3. and because of differences in the proportions of the three *guṇas* (in different entities)[17].

The solution seems to be logically resulting from the adopted assumptions, but still in a way absurd. Experiencing the diversity of objects, and thus the conditioned, non-intrinsic beings – according to assumptions of all the imperfect Brahmanical metaphysics – is reduced to one shared basis. The subjective being, whose basic essence is being – *sat*, awareness – *cit*, cognition – *jña* and finally inertia and separateness from the actions of *prakṛti*, is multiplied. This multitude of *puruṣa* in the empirical dimension, differentiated above all by karma stories, causes naturally no stipulations. A problem appears when we ask the question about the difference between *puruṣas* after having been liberated, when they are completely separate from diversifying actions of *prakṛti*. And the answer here is – there is no difference. This seems to be a major *aporia* of this system – a multiplication of simple objects of consciousness, in fact not at all differing from one another. And the sentence from the *upaniṣad*, "sat ekam advitīyam", suits the description of *puruṣa's* essence that is a liberated single *puruṣa*.

The sixty-second *kārikā* makes space for further *aporias*: "None is enslaved, is not freeing himself or is not wandering in *saṁsāra*. *Prakṛti* that is wandering in *saṁsāra* in many shapes, is enslaved and is freeing herself". Does that mean that *prakṛti* is conscious? After all it was when we described the nature of *puruṣa* that we mentioned the natural desire for liberation, which was associated with making deliberate efforts. And if *puruṣa* is actually always free, then how could free *puruṣa* be involved in *prakṛti's* game, in other words how can he be enslaved? The *kārikās* do not tell us much on this subject. The twenty-first *kārikā* says:

puruṣasya darśanārthaṁ kaivalyārthaṁ tathā pradhānasya |
paṅgvandhavad ybhayor api saṁyogas tatkṛtaḥ sargaḥ ||

> The proximity (or association) of the two, which is like that of
> a blind man and a lame man, is for the purpose of seeing the
> *pradhāna* and for the purpose of the isolation of the *puruṣa*. From
> this (association) creation proceeds[18].

This secret contact – *saṁyoga* should be interpreted neither spatially, nor temporally. If free *puruṣa* is really involved in *prakṛti* and later frees himself, what guarantee is there that this situation will not repeat and that after being freed, *prakṛti* will not imprison the previously freed *puruṣa* again? This problem is generally not mentioned in *Sāṁkhyakārikā*. Later texts of Sāṁkhya tradition will try to solve this *aporia* in various ways.

In a completely different way this problem will be approached by the Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya schools. Here we are dealing with the next pair of *darśanas* and we shall concentrate on the system which shapes the basic ontological categories, namely Vaiśeṣika. As far as possible I try to refer to the oldest forms of this school that is the work of Kaṇāda[19]. As we know, this system represents a realistic ontological pluralism, and thus by definition it cannot refer to *upaniṣad's* "ekam sat advitīyam". I will briefly quote the fundamental assumptions of Vaiśeṣika's ontology which are essential for our deliberations.

We perceive reality as pluralistic and Vaiśeṣika claims that it is no illusion, as Advaita Vedānta states in turn, but the truth. In this context, an unusually strong metaphysical thesis appears: $astitva = jñeyatva = abhidheyatva$, "what is existing, is cognizable and expressible". This relation is mutually identical in all directions. One does not need to be particularly philosophically inclined in order to realise that many aporias can result from a consequent and too literal interpretation of this sentence. The ambition of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika schools was to – while presenting individual theses – avoid resorting to the language of metaphors and symbols.

The image of the world consists of a web of interrelations between an infinite amount of different elements. The basic relation between these elements is the simplest possible atomic fact. Three most simple parts comprise that atomic fact: *dharmin* – a carrier of some very widely comprehended attribute, *dharma* – the attribute and *sambandha* – relation between *dharmin* and *dharma*. Later, on the level of individual categories, this most widely comprehended relation is provided with details, especially when it comes to

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[18]Ibidem, p. 262.
[19]The oldest parts of this work might have been created in 6th or 5th century BCE.

the relationship between substance and feature – then specific solutions relate to these two categories. But while we remain at the level of the most widely comprehended relation, we can see that the individual elements can be part of all sorts of categories and also change their position depending on their relation. Nyāya scholars lead agitated discussions about the variability of positions of particular elements in widely extended relations[20]. For example, when we take the first sentence apart: "A fire burns strongly in the home hearth" we can see a few relations. The most basic is: "a (burning) fire burns", where the "fire" is *dharmin*, and "burning" is *dharma*. Whereas in: "burns strongly", "burns" is *dharmin* and "strongly" – *dharma*. And so: the "fire" is *dharmin* while "hearth" is *dharma*, but the "hearth" is *dharmin* for the *dharma* "home". Let us note that in the sentence above, "fire" is a term which in all the previously mentioned cases is on the position of *dharmin*. When in this pluralistic system one will be looking for exceptional elements, they will above all take into consideration what position each element has in the interrelations and whether it is possible to find one which will never be a *dharma* towards another. I will return to this issue later.

Another important assumption of this system is the adoption of a minimal number of categories that are not to be mutually reduced, and which are sufficient to describe the world. At the beginning, six of them were being accepted: *dravya* – substance, *guṇa* – attribute, *karman* – movement, *sāmānya* – this which is shared, a universal, *viśeṣa* – the individualising factor and *samavaya* – relation of belonging (1.1.4.). Later, particularly when Vaiśeṣika actually merged with Nyāya, the seventh element was accepted – *abhāva* – non-existence. There are nine kinds of substance: five elements, spatial orientation, time, mind – *manas*, soul – *ātman* (1.1.5.). Within the first category, *dravya*, different divisions of substance can be distinguished. Above all, we divide substances into material and immaterial; the immaterial are all-penetrating – *vibhu*. It is possible also to distinguish eternal substances from the non-eternal. The eternal are both immaterial and singular, like single individual atoms which upon entering relations, form passing aggregates of material objects. We notice that what remains in a relation has a beginning and an end, is variable, passing, and thus has the characteristics which cannot be attributed to an absolute being. And this is where we will not search for our "sat ekam advitīyam".

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[20] *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, Volume II, *The Tradition of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika up to Gaṅgeśa*, ed. K. H. Potter, Delhi 1995, p. 50.

Let us examine all-penetrating substances, as they are defined as unchanging and eternal. These are: *ākāśa* – the subtlest of elements, the element of skies, *kāla* – time, a substantial category responsible for describing objects in temporal relations, *diś* – directions of the world, thanks to which we can talk about the relations between objects in space, *ātman* – soul, the subject of all relations. *Ākāśa* is a blank, bright space which, in spite of being in relations with different objects, does not influence their location, and so does not change their mutual relations. It is *dharmin*, which is a means of conveying the feature of sound, but does not function as a *dharmin* towards most elements of the complex reality. The fact that *ākāśa* does not influence other elements makes its position exceptional. But it is not a truly absolute existence – it is not a condition for everything or a basis for all relations. Besides, *ākāśa* is learned not directly, but through inference, as the means of conveying the feature of sound. Only the soul, *ātman*, is the subject of all relations. We read about the privileged position of one exceptional *dharmin* in the Vaiśeṣikasūtras 1.2.4–6. *Ātman* is an all-penetrating substance, so in order to limit its functionality to a particular complex karma subject, he remains the entire *saṃsāra* cycle as a *dharmin* in relation to *manas* – mind. We will demonstrate this with an example by analysing the following sentence: "the soul brightly recognizes with the mind the freeing effects of good acts and poor acts tangling into *saṃsāra*". The *dharmin* of all relations is the "soul"; the "mind" is the most direct *dharma*. Whereas in the relation "recognizes with the mind (recognizing mind)", *manas* is the *dharmin* and "recognizing – *buddhi*" is *dharma*. "Brightly recognizes" – "recognizing (*buddhi*)" is *dharmin*, and "brightly" – *dharma*. And one by one: "recognizes the effects" – *buddhi* is *dharmin*, and "fruit, effect – *phala*" is the *dharma*, and so on. In every relation, *ātman* will always be the *dharmin* – that is in the meaning of the accepted interpretation of the *upaniṣad's* theses – it satisfies in this way the concept of an absolute being[21]. The *Sat* of the *upaniṣads* similarly to the Parmenides' being, is not only an absolute being, but also an absolute awareness, the essence of cognition. Can we say this about the emancipated *ātman* of Vaiśeṣika?

While constructing the understanding of the absolute being, Vaiśeṣika focuses mainly on this concept which emphasises the subjectivity of all relations and remaining separation from all relations in an absolute sense. And thus, the emancipated *ātman* does not even remain in a relation with its

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[21]K. H. Potter, op. cit., p. 70.

manas; that is it has no 'access' to such features as *buddhi* – cognition or
sukha – happiness. One could say it is an empty monad, deprived of any
features. The question remains: how to interpret *ekam*.

Ekam represents "one", while Vaiśeṣika accepts a multitude of *ātmans*.
Every subject of consciousness, every being has its own *ātman*, the same
both in the eternal *saṁsāra* cycle and in the state of liberation. The thing de-
termining the individuality of the given conscious beings which have their
ātmans is – to use the pan-Indian language – the karmic deposit. And the
build-up of karma is determined by the consequence of all kinds of rela-
tions, namely embroilment in a net of connections comprising the structure
of the represented world. This is how it looks at the level of *saṁsāra*, but
how do the liberated *ātmans* differ from each other? If at this point there
are no diversifying features, then one might say – there is no difference. In
Vaiśeṣikasūtra (6.2.15–16) there is the following definition of *mokṣa* – liber-
ation: "tatsaṁyogo vibhāgaḥ | ātmakarmasu mokṣo vyākhyātaḥ" – "separa-
tion from all relations, separation of *ātman* from *karman*, is called liberation".
And thus, liberation is understood as a lack of any contact between *ātman*
and anything else and not entering any relations. Admittedly, according to
its name, Vaiśeṣika recognises individuality (*viśeṣa*) as a particular category
that is ascribed to individual *ātman*. The oldest texts do not explain, however,
what *viśeṣa* in the liberated *ātman* actually is.

Similarly to Sāṁkhya, there is a multiplication of absolute subjective real-
ity. In defence of the validity of cognition of the world as diverse, a multitude
of subjects was accepted. However, although in Sāṁkhya we can say that the
emancipated *puruṣa's* essential feature is *cit* – the principle of awareness, the
essence of cognition, we cannot say the same about Vaiśeṣika's *ātman*. We
can only try to sensibly interpret *ekam* along with *advitīyam* and to explain
it as "one without the other", that is: only completely subjective objects, re-
maining in no relations, are fully true and real and everything that is different
from them – variable, dynamic, diverse, constantly entering relations, is not
fully a being. Thus *ekam*, is not so much one, but is uniform in nature. In this
way real pluralism of the represented world had been rescued – or so it was
thought.

Let us now move to Vedanta schools. The term *vedānta* – the final pur-
pose of Veda is used interchangeably with the name of the part of the texts,
being the last part of *śruti* – the *upaniṣads*. Apparently, in these schools it
will be possible to find a literal interpretation of the analysed thesis "sat ekam

advitīyam". In the framework of the Vedanta tradition there are schools that present different ontological stands. And even though, as we are about to see, there will be some radical differences between some of them, certain assumptions of the *upaniṣads* are common to them. The acceptance of shared fundamental assumptions also results from the fact that every school of Vedanta reconciles the texts of the *upaniṣads* with *Bādarāyaṇasūtra* and parts of *smṛti* that is *Bhagavadgītā*. In some places, in order to highlight the stand of a given thinker, I will refer to his comments to *Brahmasūtra*. The most essential axis of deliberations for all of them is the belief that a close relation exists between the subjective reality called *ātman* and the objective reality called *brahman*. In the sixth book of *Chāndogya* this relation was presented as "tattvamasi" – which in the context of *upaniṣads* is explained as: "you are this". We will see some differences even in the very translation of this formula. Let us consider the most pronounced stands now.

The oldest of these schools is *advaita vedānta* – the non-dual Vedānta. Śaṅkara is believed to be its founder, regardless of any historical predecessors, particularly Gauḍapāda. I will not elaborate on the doctrinal differences between them, although one should emphasise that Gauḍapāda's stand is definitely more radical. Advaitists say directly that only an absolute dimension is entitled to the expression "sat ekam advitīyam". Moreover, for them the absolute dimension is one, simple, uniform, and invariable in its essence; at the absolute level *sat* has one referent – an all-embracing, undifferentiated reality. And hence the term *advaita* – non-duality; a dimension in which it is not possible to distinguish structures or divisions. Everything that is different from it, does not exist in an absolute, real manner. So *advaita* could not assign full reality to the empirical world, experienced by us as in its full variability and diversity. It is in a way a literal reading of *Chāndogya* where, among others, a metaphor involving clay is used: entire reality is uniform in its essence just as a lump of clay, and different clay objects differ from each other only by the names we give them according to their functions – they are all clay after all. Furthermore, Advaita actually adopts the following theses resulting from the *upaniṣads'* message – what exists absolutely is invariable, has no beginning or end, is not born and does not die.

Advaita's viewpoint is the closest to Parmenides'. *Sat*, in its absolute dimension, is identified with *cit* – consciousness. In *Brahmasūtra* 2.3.18 appears the term *jña* – knowledge. Thus, in the advaitic texts, the soul (*ātman* interpreted here both as a principium of individuality, and universal

dimension) is called not only *sat*, but *jñātatā* – the essence of knowledge and *prākāśa* – brightness. *Ātman* exists by itself, but everything exists because of it. This dimension is unconditioned, but it is a condition of everything. It does not need to be justified at all, because the whole reality, all experiences are its testimony, its evidence. Only it is fully, clearly recognisable in its totality and in its simplicity. The philosophers of Advaita justifying the indisputability of such a simple and immediate experience of reality refer to *śruti* as the ultimate source. According to them, quoting *śruti* was supposed to settle all disputes. However, we cannot approach such argumentation uncritically. Using contemporary language, we can at most say it is evidence from the transcendence, that is evidence empirically unverifiable.

When it comes to the relation between *ātman* and *brahman*, it is interpreted as fully identical. In *Brahmasūtra* 2.3.16–53 the relation of the individual soul and *brahman* is discussed. As we are about to see, Śaṅkara[22] and Rāmānuja[23] comment on the same sutras differently. Śaṅkara consistently claims that not only *brahman*, but also *ātman* is all-penetrating. In his comment on the 2.3.16 sutra, he writes straightforwardly that neither birth nor death belong to the soul, but to the body with which it is bound in a given incarnation. The whole analysis of this fragment proves that his comment is an over-interpretation. Bādarāyaṇa holds the opinion that individual souls are the size of the atom – *aṇu* and that only the *brahman* is all-penetrating. He refers to the *śruti* testimony here, mainly to *Muṇḍaka* 3.1.9. In the passage 2.3.29 he deems all sentences of this type to be a metaphor, quoting another metaphor from *Chāndogya* about *sat* being in the form of a soul – *jīva* – penetrating individual bodies. In his opinion, *buddhi* can be the size of an atom, but not *ātman*. At the end of this fragment in 2.3.51–53 he also rejects – as absurd – the concept of Vaiśeṣika that there exist many all-penetrating souls. *Ātman* is one, identical with *brahman*, and only at the level of empirical world is it experienced as a multitude.

While interpreting the "tattvamasi" formula from a linguistic point of view, taking the Advaita perspective, it is divided into three elements: *tat* which is identical with the pronoun *tad* – it (when it is not devoiced in the initial sound), *tvam* – you and *asi* – you are (personal form of the verb *sat*), expressing the relation of unity. This sentence is supposed to make the one

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[22]Bādarāyaṇa, *Brahma-sutras*, ed. S. Vireswarananda, Almora 1948, p. 250–277.
[23]Idem, *Brahma-sutras, Śribhasya*, ed. S. Vireswaranand, S. Adidewananda, Calcutta 1995, p. 279–302.

who is experiencing aware that *tad* – the essence of all reality is identical with *tvam* – the nature of the experiencing entity. There are no major issues on the theoretical level – reality is one, from the position of the subject we talk about it as *ātman* and when it is being experienced from the position of the universal object, we refer to it as *brahman*. A problem occurs when this experience is considered from the position of a specific conscious subject. This problem of course requires a much broader elaboration, but here I would like to focus above all on *aporias*, rather than on various attempts to overcome them. In its description of the absolute dimension, Advaita agrees with the orthodox thought of the *upaniṣads*. However, was it able at the same time to defend the adequacy of our cognition of the empirical world?

And here the greatest difficulty for the thinkers of Advaita occurs. If it is only the absolute dimension that is entitled to full reality, then the empirical reality – by its very definition – cannot enjoy such a privilege. A convenient philosophical formula to describe this dimension is *sat asat anirvacanīya* – real, non-real, non-predicable accurately within any category. One can efficiently interpret these notions according to different ways of existing, but above of all according to the need to recognise the functionality of the empirical level – *vyāvahārika*. That functionality is the greatest challenge, as it is connected to justifying the law of *karman*, which – as is generally known – is the undeniable foundation of the Indian vision of the world. Here we face another problem. Beyond the universally recognised law of *karman*, there is the difficulty of the individualisation of samsaric paths, depending on the consequences of karmic acts. The empirical level is not truly real, and so all actions on this level should also be regarded as not truly real. An orthodox Brahmanical *darśana*, such as Advaita, could not agree with such an interpretation. Thus other interpretations were presented, and even though in practical terms one could even regard them as satisfactory, yet from the viewpoint of a critical philosophical approach it is hard not to notice certain inconsistencies. The karmic individuality lasts through the entire samsaric cycle but, at the moment of liberation, all souls are not only the same, but they become one with the absolute, losing their individuality completely. And this leads to a question if there are any differences between individual souls. The answer to that question contributes to further discussions on the value assigned to karmic acts. It is related to the notion of *māyā* – a cosmic power responsible for the manifestation of the empirical world. The dimension of *vyāvahārika* is a result of an incorrect overlap (*adhyāsa*) of the objective and

subjective reality. This mechanism has no beginning, since it comes to action through *māyā*, which is also eternal. Advaita offers no satisfactory answer to the question of how to explain the functioning of something with no beginning beside the only reality that is *ātman-brahman*. The usual answer is that it results from the very nature of *māyā*, which is unreality, a cognitive mistake, an illusion and whose nature cannot be fully known. Therefore, Advaita defended the *upaniṣad's* expression sat as the absolute being; however, in an attempt to explain the functioning of the represented world and its relation to the absolute, it became tangled in numerous *aporias*.

Advaita accepts Īśvara – a personal god limited in his omnipotence, but situates him on the same level as *māyā*, below the absolute dimension – *brahman*. Īśvara is not an absolute creator of the world, but a kind of guardian of the laws of the represented world. In this way it was possible to avoid the *unde malum* paradox which occurs in all other systems – no matter if they identify the absolute dimension with God the Creator or accept God the Creator as the highest being. Here the absolute being, called *brahman*, remains invariable, pure, pristine, while the one responsible for all kinds of suffering and evil of the world are lower dimensions of reality.

Another system of Vedānta – *viśiṣṭādvaita vedānta* – "non-duality with differentiating", while interpreting "sat ekam advitīyam" will make an attempt to defend both the invariability of the dimension *sat*, as well as the reality of the *vyāvahārika* dimension. According to the interpretation of the founder of the system, Rāmānuja, what exists absolutely has neither a beginning nor an end, is not born and neither does it die. On the absolute level *sat* has one referent – an all-embracing, undifferentiated, unconditioned reality, while the level of *vyāvahārika* is experienced diversely as a variable. These theses are common with the Advaita system. There are, of course, differences as well. Viśiṣṭādvaita identifies the notion of Brahman with the notion of Īśvara, the absolute with the personal God, therefore this system will aim at theistic interpretations. Therefore, a strong emphasis will be placed on appreciation of the empirical world, above all the acts assessed morally, including surrendering oneself to God. The empirical world is not, as in Advaita, a result of an incorrect overlap but is a real transformation of Brahman–Īśvara. What is more, because it exists, *sat* is a being. If the world is a real transformation of Īśvara, then naturally the value of our acts is real as well and enslaving or suffering and liberation – real as well. Philosophical opponents accused Viśiṣṭādvaita of not being able to explain in a satisfactory manner

how it happens that Brahman-Īśvara at the same time remains intact and changes into the world in a real way. The easiest way, I think, to explain it is to refer to *śruti*, to the *Puruṣasūkta* anthem where the model of transformation of the absolute into the world is presented. Rāmānuja attempts to explain it by commenting on *Brahmasūtra* 2.1.27. He claims that Brahman can exist both in the state of cause and effect. He refers here to the decision of Nyāya, according to which a class – *jāti* exists both in the entire species ("cowness") as well as in an individual cow. Individual souls – *jīva*, as well as the world – *prapañca* have a similar relation to *brahman* as attributes – *dharma* is in relation to the substratum – *dharmin*. The dimension of *prapañca* is shown in a similar manner as in Vaiśeṣika, as the net of the interrelation between the elements which have, at times, the function of *dharmin* and that of *dharma*. And so, all these elements mutually condition themselves and are mutually conditioned. The only element of the system that never acts as *dharma*, but is the *dharmin* in all relations, is Brahman-Īśvara. And therefore it is not only interpreted as *sat*, but also as *ekam advitīyam* – it is the only one that is in a special way distinguished from the entire reality.

And so how in this system is "tattvamasi" interpreted, if both individual souls as well as the world are treated as subjects of Īśvara? The first part of the formula, *tat*, is read as an abbreviation, for the purpose of creating the pronoun: *tasya* – his, of him. One should clearly note here that this is in accordance with the grammatical rules of the Sanskrit. But then this formula is interpreted as: you – *tvam* are – *asi* his – *tat* (*tasya*). The *upaniṣads'* formula read in this way justifies the fundamental assumptions of the Rāmānuja system.

From the Vaiśeṣika system Viśiṣṭādvaita borrowed also the distinguishing of all-penetrating substances – *vibhu* and atomic substances – *aṇu*. There are supposedly also differences between the souls. Only the soul of Īśvara – "ekam advitīyam" – is all-penetrating, immanent to the entire displayed and not-displayed world, while the souls of all living creatures are the size of an atom. In his comment on *Brahmasūtra* 2.3.21, Rāmānuja states that if one speaks about an individual soul that changing states of consciousness the soul is entering and leaving a body, this is only evidence of the soul's size of an atom and not of its quality of being all-penetrating. All souls are always conscious – *cit*, in *saṁsāra* they have an ability of consciously judging the acts, and as emancipated they are aware of the eternal, blissful communing with *brahman*.

A liberated soul is a soul that is deprived of the diversifying karmic deposit – that is all liberated souls are actually the same. But how to combine it with the thesis of the system that souls differ both in the samsara state, as well as in the state of liberation? It is one of the theses which distinguishes Viśiṣṭa from Advaita. Viśiṣṭa answers that when it comes to the essence there are no major differences between them; they differ only numerically, depending on which soul liberated itself earlier and which later. This answer does not seem entirely satisfactory. But I believe this system is the most coherent and contains the fewest internal contradictions among all considered so far. It has defended the understanding of Brahman-Īśvara as "sat ekam advitīyam", as well as the reality of the empirical world and the reality and universality of the karmic law.

The *dvaitavedānta* – dual Vedānta expressed by Madhva – will be the next Vedānta system, which I intend to discuss from the viewpoint of the *aporias*. Immediately arises the very first question, how can a dualistic system take *upaniṣads' ekamsat advitīyam*? The founder of the system will have to resort at this point to a very free interpretation. For Madhva, Brahman–Īśvara is the only fully perfect, unconditional, invariable and omnipotent being, understood as an identification of the absolute with the person, which is the *upaniṣad's sat. Dvaita* is understood not so much as a diada but as a radical difference instead: the difference between Īśvara and the individual souls, between souls themselves, between Īśvara and matter, and between material objects.

Thus, we see that it is a very free interpretation of *śruti*. Madhva faces the biggest problem, however, when he wants to prove that his Brahman-Īśvara is absolutely omnipotent. The absolute, unrestrained omnipotence means that it is absolutely free in its decisions, and ultimately even the law of karma does not really apply. This is why it suspends this law and, as a result, does not accept the decisive influence of karmic evaluated moral acts to the possibility of achieving liberation. To defend the omnipotence of Īśvara and its omnipotence over the fate of individual souls, Madhva introduces various classifications of souls whose fates are sealed by Īśvara. It can be noticed how much it resembles the doctrine of predestination adopted by some of the great philosophers of Christianity. Dvaita Vedānta is the only Indian classical system that discards the universality of karma and one can be actually surprised that it is still regarded as an orthodox Brahmanical *darśana*. But this is already the fourteenth century and orthopraxis is definitely more important

than orthodoxy.

But how will Madhva read the "tattvamasi" formula? Nowhere in this formula is there any element of negation, which would account for the duality, i.e. the distinction between *tat* and *tvam*, no matter if we interpret this relationship as a full identity, or as a relationship of subordination. Madhva resorts here, to put it lightly, to an intellectual abuse. He tries to read this formula within the entire context of the sentence. This sentence is: "saya eṣoʿṇimaitadātmyamidaṁsarvaṁsa ātmā tattvamasi śvetaketo", which means: "what is the most subtle essence of everything (the whole world), this *ātman*, this is you, Śvetaketu". According to the Sanskrit rules of grammar the form of the subject: *ātmā* cannot make a submission without further word. But Madhva forces us to treat it as a part of: "ātmātattvamasi" and to break it down as follows: "ātmātattvamasi" – "ātman it is not you". This example is actually a counter-example, showing how philosophical *aporia* should not be solved.

The purpose of the article was obviously not an original or innovative interpretation of the classic philosophical systems. All the information contained in this paper is well known to professionals in this field. I merely intended to draw attention to the process of analogical thinking in two great philosophical traditions. In my opinion, philosophy in Greece and India developed on the ground of similar intuitions and – as I am convinced – independently of each other. As I indicated at the beginning, it is important that both philosophical traditions composed their oldest texts in Indo-European languages, or rather in the ancient, often pre-philosophic forms of these languages. The following systems, based on very similar, and in many respects even identical theses, were developed in a similar manner. Interestingly, similar interpretative difficulties occurred in both traditions.

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ABSTRACT, KEYWORDS, ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abstract

The article presents the *aporias* that are found in classical Brahmin philosophical systems when their ontological assumptions are confronted with the fundamental metaphysical thesis formulated in the Upanishads. This thesis determines the way in which the absolute being is described: sat ekam advitiyam (existing one only, without a second). The wording considerably resembles Parmenides' description of being. Later European history of philosophy shows various problems that appear in subsequent systems when we attempt to construct a coherent ontological system which includes the Parmenidean concept of being. The account presented is not strictly comparative, and it mostly analyses selected Indian systems. It shows analogous processes of the origination of key metaphysical ideas peculiar to given traditions. It also

indicates significantly similar difficulties which are connected with assuming the Parmenidean understanding of absolute being in Europe, as well as the Upanishadic thesis in India.

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