

*Notes on Indian philosophy (from 2007)*

I've had enough of ignorance about Indian philosophy. I'm going to read three books about it—*Indian Philosophy: A Critical Survey* (by Chandradhar Sharma), *Comparative Religion* (by A. C. Bouquet), and *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*—and summarize what I read. I'll forget it otherwise.

Unfortunately Indian philosophy is very rich. So I have to quote only the barest essentials. (What follows are mostly quotations from the first two books I mentioned, without the quotation marks.) The books aren't particularly up-to-date, but, from my ignorant perspective, they seem fairly reliable. [I hope no one is offended by their general treatments, which I'm just quoting. Notes to myself from my journal, almost ten years ago, which I post here only to stimulate curiosity among general readers. Of course it would take books, not a dozen pages, to do justice to the Indian philosophical tradition.]

'See the Self' is [supposedly] the keynote of all schools of Indian philosophy. And this is the reason why most of the schools are also religious sects. Annihilation of three kinds of pains—sufferings (physical and mental) produced by natural and intra-organic causes, sufferings produced by natural and extra-organic causes, and sufferings produced by supernatural and extra-organic causes—and realization of supreme happiness is the end, and 'hearing the truth', 'intellectual conviction after critical analysis', and 'practical realization' are the means—in almost all the schools of Indian philosophy.

Perhaps the most deeply rooted idea in Indian thought (if we take the majority of Indians) is the lack of ultimate significance in the events of human life. The Indian, it is said, for the most part thinks of this world as a circular and unending journey, an ocean without a shore, a shadow-play without even a plot. The whole world of phenomena is simply the more or less purposeless and sportive energy of the Absolute Being, Who is beyond definition. Hence the ideal life is that of 'non-active Activity', the attainment by a well-defined technique of an exalted state of absorption in which one negates every moment of life, and becomes one with the changeless Absolute, beyond good and evil. Thus the world-renouncing ascetic is the type universally admired, and his renunciation is in no sense altruistic or philanthropic but is purely self-regarding... [That's surely a half-truth, like many of the statements in these books.] Self-forgetful service of others is more a Christian than a Hindu idea, at least originally.

A well-accredited member of the British Civil Service once wrote: 'Asceticism makes an extraordinary appeal to practically all classes of Hindus. They feel that whatever their own manner of life, self-denial is better than self-indulgence, the suppression of passions and desires is better than their gratification... Otherworldliness is a higher calling than the management of affairs.'

(Evidently the "life-denying" aspects of Indian tradition, as well as the superstitious and degrading religious practices, proceed largely from the caste system, its lack of dynamism and its oppressive structure. A society that worships Hanuman the monkey and Sabbala the cow, that countenances the burning of widows, is an inhuman one, in which man is subjugated both by the earth and especially by a caste-structured poverty.)

The Vedas. It is said [though the author disagrees] that we can notice a transition from the naturalistic and anthropomorphic polytheism through transcendent monotheism to immanent monism in the pre-Upanishadic philosophy. The personified forces of nature first changed into real gods and these later on became mere forms of one personal and transcendental God, the 'Custodian of the Cosmic and Moral Order', who Himself, later on, passed into the immanent Purusa. The Upanishads developed this Purusa into Brahman or Atman which is both immanent and transcendent. ...The correct position seems to be that the Vedic sages were intensely spiritual personages who in their mystic moments came face to face with Reality, and this mystic experience, this direct intuitive spiritual insight, overflowed in literature as the Vedic hymns. The keynote of the Vedic hymns is the same spiritual monism, the same immanent conception of the identity-in-difference which ultimately transcends even itself, the same indescribable absolutism which holds both monism and pluralism within its bosom and which ultimately transcends both... If there were polytheism in the Vedas, how is it that the binding principle of this world, the Supreme Soul of this Universe, is so much emphasized and repeated? ...The gods are regarded as mere manifestation of the Supreme God so that when any god is praised he is not praised in his individual capacity, but merely as the manifestation of the Supreme God... Hence there is no development from polytheism through monotheism to monism, but only of monism from the first Mantra portion to the last Upanishadic portion.

Examples: 'The One Real, the wise declare as many.' 'The real essence of the gods is one.' 'Aditi, the Boundless, is the sky, the air, the mother, the father, the son, all the gods and all the men, all that is, all that was and all that shall be.' [from the Rg Veda, the oldest] 'All the gods form the body of the World-Soul.' 'He is immanent in all this creation and yet He transcends it.'

The Upanishads were written mostly in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. The hymns in the older Vedas are replaced here by more philosophical reflections, and ceremonialism, even caste duties, are subordinated to the supreme good of self-realization. Atman is the absolute Self, the cosmic reality in its subjective aspect; atman (with a lower-case 'a') is the individual self.— The individual self stands self-proved and is always immediately felt and known. One is absolutely certain about the existence of one's own self and there can be neither doubt nor denial regarding its existence. The individual self is the highest thing we know and it is the nearest approach to the Absolute, though it is not itself the Absolute. In fact it is a mixture of the real and the

unreal, a knot of the existent and the nonexistent, a coupling of the true and the false. It is, in a way, a product of ignorance. But its essence is the light of the Absolute, Atman. Its real nature is pure consciousness, self-shining and self-proved and always the same. The senses, the mind, the intellect, feeling and will, the internal organs surround the individual self and constitute its 'individuality', but the self really is above them, being the Absolute. [There are similarities with the existentialist phenomenologists here. See the reflections on the self on my website, [wrightswriting.com](http://wrightswriting.com).]

The word 'Atman' originally meant life-breath and then gradually acquired the meanings of feeling, mind, self and soul. [Cf. the Greek 'pneuma', associated with air and the soul.]

The self is immanent in senses, mind, intellect, reason, but it is self-luminous. It can be directly realized only by transcending the empirical subject-object duality, because objects have content, which the self lacks. The goal of human life, then, is to become one with Atman, and thereby to transcend dualities and overcome karma. – Anyway, I already know enough about this side of Indian thought. I'll note only that the *objective* side of this ultimate reality is called Brahman, that which spontaneously bursts forth as nature and soul. It is manifested first as matter, but since matter is unconscious and dead Brahman cannot rest content with it; so then life evolves. "The purpose of matter is fulfilled only when life evolves." [A quasi-Hegelian conception: the truth of the lower is contained in the higher.] The destiny of life is fulfilled only with consciousness, and finally with self-conscious reason. But the highest stage of evolution is the non-dualistic bliss, identity with Brahman (and Atman). Brahman cannot be described; it is intuitive and ineffable. But "he who knows Brahman becomes Brahman. Only by knowing it can one cross the ocean of birth-and-death; there is no other way for liberation."

Interesting, though anachronistic, parallels with Hegel (except for the mysticism). Hegel thought that with absolute knowledge, one overcomes dualities and time and suffering. And Spirit objectifies itself first as matter, then as life, etc. It restlessly evolves, like Brahman, though not in quite the same way.

So, yes, Indian philosophy anticipates modern idealism and empiricism and rationalism and all that; but Hegel was right that when Spirit seems to return to earlier thought-patterns it is actually adding some new content to them. When I think the thoughts of my twenty-year-old self, they are far from identical with the former. They have evolved and become richer, broader.

The Bhagavadgita is a philosophical discourse to persuade a man, Arjuna, to fight. This man is appalled by the fact that he has to kill his friends and relatives, but the Lord Krishna tells him it is his duty as a prince and a righteous man to fight against evil and to restore order and peace. The book "is meant to lift the aspirant from the lower levels of renunciation, where objects are renounced, to the loftier heights where desires are dead, and where the Yogi dwells in calm and ceaseless contemplation, while his

body and mind are actively employed in discharging the duties that fall to his lot in life." *Yoga* means the synthesis of knowledge, action and devotion, which is preached in the Bhagavadgita. But it is essentially the path of knowledge. Only through attaining true knowledge can we become Yogis and rise above desire and attachment. Says the Gita: "Even the most sinful man can cross over the ocean of Samsara by means of the boat of knowledge alone. As a fire well-kindled reduces fuel to ashes, so the fire of knowledge reduces all actions to ashes. The culmination of action is knowledge. Having obtained knowledge, one soon embraces peace. There is nothing purer than knowledge."

So the Gita doesn't preach inaction or escapism but rather *detachment regarding action*. We should never be attached to the fruits of actions and at the same time we should never be inactive. The perfect man works for the benefit of humanity in the spirit of selflessness—like the liberated cave-dweller in Plato, who returns to the cave to free others from suffering. Bhakti, or devotion, is defined in the Gita as disinterested service to God. ("So it is a form of Karma.") The object of devotion is the personal God, the Purusottama on Whose mercy the devotee has to throw himself utterly. Absolute dependence and utter faith are very necessary. The Lord says, "Merge thy mind in me, be my devotee, prostrate thyself before me, thou shalt come unto me. I pledge thee my word; thou art dear to me. Abandoning all dharmas come unto me alone for shelter; sorrow not, I will liberate thee from all sins." The love of God is the supreme love; union with him, i.e. with the spirit pervading the universe, is the ideal.

Materialism in India (the school called Charvaka) was caused by, for example, "the idealism of the Upanishads unsuited to the commoners, the political and social crises rampant in that age, the exploitation of the masses by the petty rulers". It arose before Buddhism, around 600 B.C. "But Materialism in Indian philosophy has never been a force. Born in discontent, it soon died in serious thought... Jainism and Buddhism arose immediately and supplied the ethical and spiritual background which ejected Materialism." Unfortunately the founding text has been lost, so we have to rely on secondary sources.

Some of its doctrines: "perception is the only authority; earth, water, fire and air are the only elements; enjoyment is the only end of human existence; mind is only a product of matter. There is no other world: death means liberation." The soul is nothing but the conscious body. Death alone is liberation. There is no heaven, no God or soul, nor any being in another world; nor do the actions of the four castes produce any real effect. While life remains let a man live happily, let him feed on ghee even though he runs in debt... All the ceremonies are only means of livelihood for Brahmanas.

Its epistemological doctrine is that perception is the only means of valid knowledge. The validity even of inference is rejected; inference is just a leap in the dark. We proceed here from the known to the unknown and there is no certainty in this, though some inferences may turn out to be accidentally true. A general proposition

may be true in perceived cases, but there is no guarantee that it will hold true in unperceived cases. Deductive inference is vitiated by the fallacy of *petitio principii*. It is merely an argument in a circle since the conclusion is already contained in the major premise, the validity of which is not proved. ("Inference cannot be the means of knowledge of the universal proposition—the major premise—since in the case of this inference we should also require another inference to establish it, and so on, and hence would arise the fallacy of an *ad infinitum* retrogression.") Inductive inference undertakes to prove the validity of the major premise of deductive inference, but induction too is uncertain because it proceeds unwarrantedly from the known to the unknown. In order to distinguish true association from simple enumeration, it is pointed out that the former, unlike the latter, is based on a causal relationship which means invariable association or *vyapti*. *Vyapti* therefore is the nerve of all inference. But the Charvaka challenges this universal and invariable relationship of concomitance and regards it as mere guess-work. Perception does not prove this *vyapti*. [All this anticipates David Hume. There is nothing new under the sun.] Nor can it be proved by inference, for inference itself is said to presuppose its validity... Hence inference cannot be regarded as a valid source of knowledge. Induction is uncertain and deduction is argument in a circle. (A certain kind of Buddhism rejects the *ultimate* validity of both inference and perception, but, unlike Charvaka, it accepts their *empirical* validity.) All other Indian schools have criticized the Charvaka position, saying, e.g., that it is itself a product of inference, and that communication and thought are impossible without inference. This debate reminds me of modern debates between empiricism and rationalism, with Laurence Bonjour defending the *a priori*-ness of inference and Michael Devitt denying it, thereby vitiating thought itself.

Regarding Charvakan metaphysics, everything that exists, including mind, is due to a particular combination of the four elements. Consciousness vanishes when the body disintegrates. "Matter secretes mind as liver secretes bile." God is not necessary to account for the world. Indeed, both God and values are mere phantoms, social conventions, products of diseased minds, and religion is but the means of livelihood for priests. Sensual pleasure is the *summum bonum* of life. "Can begging, fasting, penance, exposure to the burning heat of the sun, which emaciate the body, be compared with the ravishing embraces of women with large eyes, whose prominent breasts are compressed with one's arms?" "These fools [viz., ascetics] conceive that you ought to throw away the pleasures of life because they are mixed with pain; but what prudent man will throw away unpeeled rice which encloses excellent grain because it is covered with the husk?" Sharma thinks that the main reason for Charvaka's downfall was its denial of all values that make life worth living. Other schools, for instance Buddhism and Jainism, do not believe in God, and some deny the soul, and others reduce the mind to matter, etc., but no others reject all values in favor of absolute hedonism.

Jainism, like Buddhism, originated in the 500s B.C. (The name is derived from 'Jina', which means conqueror—conqueror of passions and desires.) Like Buddhism and Charvaka, it rejects the authority of the Vedas. The Jainas classify knowledge into immediate and mediate. The former includes extrasensory perceptions, such as clairvoyance, telepathy and omniscience; it doesn't include perceptual knowledge, which presupposes the activity of thought—i.e., it must be given meaning and arranged into order through concepts—and so is mediate. Knowledge can also be divided into Pramana, or knowledge of a thing as it is, and Naya, or knowledge of a thing in its relation. (Most of these doctrines, by the way, were elaborated in the Middle Ages, though they may have been obscurely believed earlier.) Naya means a standpoint of thought from which we make a statement about a thing. All truth is relative to standpoints, and reality is "many-sided". It expresses itself in multiple forms, such that no absolute predication is possible. (Most other schools, of course, believe that reality has only one true nature.) A thing can both exist and not exist in different ways, or it can be describable and indescribable, and so forth. Thus, it isn't contradictory to make contradictory predications of an object because each predication is made from a different perspective.

So Jaina metaphysics is a realistic and relativistic pluralism. Matter and spirit are independent realities; there are innumerable material atoms and innumerable individual souls, and each atom and soul has innumerable—infinite—aspects of its own. To know all the qualities of a thing is to be omniscient. Therefore the Jainas say that he who knows all the qualities of one thing knows all the qualities of all things. (Cf. Leibniz.)

A thing exists independently and is called substance. It persists in and through all attributes and modes (or modifications). Substance is defined as that which possesses qualities and modes. Out of these innumerable qualities of a substance, some are permanent and essential, while others are changing and accidental. The former are called attributes and the latter modes. Substance and attributes are inseparable because the latter are the permanent essence of the substance and cannot remain without it. Modes or modifications are changing and accidental. Viewed from the point of view of substance, a thing is one and permanent and real; from the point of view of modes, it is many and momentary and unreal. Jainism here becomes a theological mean, between Brahmanism and early Buddhism. Brahmanism emphasizes the one, the permanent, the real; early Buddhism emphasizes the many, the changing, the unreal; Jainism points out that these are two sides of the same thing...

(Much of that is Aristotle. The Jainas may have come into contact with Aristotelianism; I don't know.)

Almost all philosophical, ideological and religious differences are mainly due to mistaking a partial truth for the whole truth. Our judgments represent different aspects

of the many-sided reality and can claim only partial truth. This view makes Jainism catholic, broad-minded and tolerant. It teaches respect for others' point of view.

Other schools have made the predictable objection that Jainism treats its own viewpoint as absolute. This is the same objection one can make against Sceptics, modern deconstructionists and relativists of most stripes. It's the paradox of self-reference. Thus, Jainas accuse other philosophers of mistaking relative truth for absolute truth, and they argue that Jainism is the only truly relative philosophy. But if so, then it is partly false. Or, on the other hand, Jainas say it is the only absolute truth—but then it contradicts itself. If relativity is the only truth, how can the Jaina teaching be absolutely true?

The Jainas, the Buddhists and the Vedantins agree that the world is neither absolutely real nor absolutely unreal. But whereas the Buddhists and the Vedantins say that because the world is neither real nor unreal it is indescribable and false, and ultimately is non-different from the Absolute where it is transcended, the Jainas say that because the world is neither absolutely real nor absolutely unreal it is both real and unreal from different points of view. They refuse to go higher... Their opponents argue that if you throw away the Absolute in your zeal to preserve the relative, you lose not only the Absolute but also the relative.

Consciousness is the essence of the self, or soul; its manifestations are perception and intelligence, or simple apprehension and conceptual knowledge. As I implied earlier, the relation between knowledge and its object is external if the object is physical, though not in the case of self-consciousness. In knowing any object the self knows itself simultaneously. [Cf. Kant, Hegel, Sartre.] The universe is brought under two categories, Jiva (conscious spirit) and Ajiva (unconscious non-spirit). Jiva is similar to Atman or the Purusa, except that it means *life*, of which consciousness is said to be the essence. Like the monads of Leibniz, the Jivas are qualitatively alike and only quantitatively different, and the whole universe is literally filled with them. They are divided first into those that are liberated and those that are bound. The latter are further divided into *mobile*—those with two senses (e.g., worms), three senses (e.g., ants), four senses (wasps, bees), and five senses (higher animals and men)—and *immobile*, which live in the atoms of earth, water, fire and air, and in the vegetable kingdom, and have only the sense of touch.

Every soul, from the highest to the lowest, possesses consciousness, though the degrees of consciousness vary according to the obstacles of karma. Purest consciousness is found in the emancipated souls, which have overcome karma. The soul is coextensive with the body, but really the body and the senses are obstructions placed by karma and hinder the souls in their direct knowledge. Knowledge is not a property of the soul; it is its very essence. Every soul, therefore, can directly and immediately know everything if it is not obstructed by matter. Freedom from matter means omniscience and emancipation.

Ajiva, on the other hand, is divided into matter, space, motion, rest and time. Matter consists of atoms, comparable to those of Leucippus and Democritus.

Karma is what unites the soul to the body. Ignorance of truth, and four passions (anger, greed, pride, delusion), attract karmic matter towards the soul. The end of our life is to remove this karmic dross and regain our intrinsic nature. Hence Jainism is primarily an ethical teaching, and its aim is the perfection of the soul. Since passions are due to ignorance, and passions are what attract the flow of karmic matter into souls, ignorance is the real cause of bondage. Here Jainism agrees with Sankhya, Buddhism and Vedanta. Now, ignorance can be removed only by knowledge. So right knowledge is the cause of liberation. This right knowledge is produced by faith in the teachings of the omniscient Tirthankaras (the liberated souls), so faith is necessary as well. And it is right conduct which perfects knowledge, since theory without practice is empty and practice without theory is blind. Right knowledge dawns when all the karmas are destroyed by right conduct. Hence right faith, right conduct and right knowledge together form the path of liberation.

Jainism is unusual for its extreme advocacy of non-violence, which issues in such practices as straining one's drinks to avoid swallowing organisms and filtering one's breath with a respirator for the same reason. The five virtues are non-violence, truth-speaking, non-stealing, chastity, and non-attachment to worldly things. It appears that Jainas were the first to make non-violence into a rule of life; they also may have been the first vegetarians. Jainism is a religion without a God.

The Jaina believes in reincarnation, of course, and spiritual advance across lifetimes (so that animals can be reborn as humans, women as men, etc.).

Buddhism originated in the sixth century. As everyone knows, Buddha himself was more a teacher and social reformer than a theoretical philosopher. He tended to dismiss metaphysical questions: "Philosophy purifies none, peace alone does." "Two things only do I teach—misery and the cessation of misery." Our duty is to overcome misery, not to philosophize idly.

After Buddha's death there were several Councils convened to establish the canon of the Vinaya, for instance one in 249 B.C. at the behest of Ashoka the Great. The Hinayana sect is distinguished from the Mahayana sect, which emerged later.

One of Buddha's core teachings is the Four Noble Truths: there is suffering (Samsara)—everywhere, even in the midst of pleasure; there is a cause of suffering; suffering can be suppressed, namely if the cause is removed; and there is a way to accomplish this. This way is the Noble Eightfold Path: right faith, right resolve, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right thought, and right concentration. Buddha's ethical 'middle path' is like the 'golden mean' of Aristotle. Self-indulgence and self-mortification are both ruled out, for the former is base and unreal, the latter gloomy and unreal.



The doctrine of Dependent Origination [or Dependent Co-production] is the foundation of all the teachings of the Buddha; it states that one thing is dependent on another, such that if you master the cause you master the effect. Given this universal empirical dependence, everything is relative, conditional, subject to birth and death and therefore impermanent. It is neither fully real nor fully unreal; all phenomenal things hang between reality and nothingness. All things pass away; nothing can resist death. The vicious circle of causation (and suffering), which has twelve links, ultimately starts with ignorance (which makes possible selfish craving), so it can be destroyed only with the destruction of ignorance. Only through knowledge can we overcome the ignorance-based *will to be born*. (Life is regarded by Buddha not as a product of the blind play of mechanical nature but as due to the internal urge, the life-force, the *élan vital*, the will to be born.)

All the other teachings can be deduced from the doctrine of Dependent Origination. The theory of karma is based on it, being an implication of the law of causation. Our present life is due to the impressions of the karmas of the past life, and it will shape our future life. Ignorance and karma go on determining each other in a vicious circle. Again, the theory of Momentariness is a corollary of Dependent Origination: because things depend on their causes and conditions, because they're relative, conditional and finite, they must be momentary. To say that a thing arises depending on its cause is to say that it is momentary, for when the cause is removed the thing will cease to be. That which arises must be subject to death; that which dies is not permanent; and that which is not permanent is momentary. The theory of No-Ego, the theory that the individual ego is ultimately false, is also based on this doctrine, for the ego too must be momentary and not as permanent as we take it to be. Similarly with the theory of the unreality of matter.

Hinayana, a religion without a God, emphasizes self-help: the individual has to work out his salvation for himself (because Buddha taught his disciples to "Be a light unto thyself".) Its goal is the negative one of the extinction of misery. Mahayana, on the other hand, is less egoistic and negative; it believes that Nirvana is not the cessation of misery but a positive state of bliss, and its ideal saint is the Bodhisattva, who defers his own salvation in order to work for the salvation of others. In this sect Buddha is transformed into God and worshipped as such. He is identified with transcendental reality; he is the noumenon behind the phenomena, the Absolute Self running through all individual selves. The Bodhisattva is he who attains perfect wisdom and is so full of love for others that he works and suffers for their sake. The Mahayana religion has more missionary zeal than the Hinayana; it is more progressive and dynamic.

The original teachings of Buddha were not incompatible with the Upanishads—for instance, he emphasized Atman, the Great Self, and encouraged people to act under the light of that Self, to seek union with it—but his early Hinayana disciples (of the Sarvastivada, or Vaibhasika, school) changed that. In this school, the so-called soul is

reduced to a series of fleeting ideas, and matter is nothing more than momentary atoms of earth, water, fire and air. Existence is an endless stream of becoming [cf. Heraclitus], and liberation is the extinction of desires and passions. There is no substance, no 'thing' which changes; only change itself. Similarity in things is mistaken for identity or sameness; a flame, for instance, is actually a succession of many similar flames, each lasting a moment. "The life of a living being lasts only for the period of one thought. As soon as that thought has ceased, the living being is said to have ceased." Buddha himself denied the ultimate reality of the empirical self but accepted its empirical reality: the soul is a bundle of matter, feeling, perception, disposition and consciousness. 'The soul' doesn't exist, only this aggregate of the body, the sensations and ideas.

Hinayanism admits action without an agent, transmigration without a transmigrating soul. It is the 'character' that transmigrates, not the 'soul'. Karma is an impersonal law that works by itself, not needing any agent or soul to cling to, as in Jainism. Nirvana is annihilation, the cessation of all activities and all becoming.

One Hinayana school believes in direct realism and may be called presentationist, while another believes in the 'copy theory of ideas' and may be called representationist. According to the first (Sarvastivada), external objects are directly known in perception; according to the second (Sautrantika), external objects are not directly perceived but are indirectly inferred. We do not know things-in-themselves; we know only ideas, which are copies of reality, and from these copies we infer the existence of the originals. The Sarvastivada responds that if we don't know the originals, we can't even say that our ideas are copies. (Cf. Berkeley.)

An ancient criticism of the Hinayana sect is that, if everything is momentary—if there is no self, or in each moment a new self is coming into existence—then the ethical theory of Karma is impossible. Bondage and liberation are impossible. Why should a person try to overcome suffering if he and his suffering will vanish in the next moment? Hinayana answers by saying that the preceding link does not perish before transmitting its content to the succeeding link and so the continuity is never broken. The successor bears all the burden of the predecessor. Etc.

As I read about Mahayana schools I'm struck by a single recurring theme: everything is unreal. Everything is relative, conditional, mere appearance. Even Nirvana is said to be mere appearance by some thinkers, and change is unreal, and *everything* is unreal! "Life is a dream", as Calderón said. Other schools deny the reality of everything except consciousness, so that even external objects depend on consciousness. There is surely some truth, therefore, to the old cliché that idealism is the philosophy of choice for most Indian thinkers. (Clichés almost always have a kernel of truth, which is one of the reasons for their being clichés to begin with.)

There are also a number of orthodox schools, so called because they take their inspiration directly from the Vedas, unlike Buddhism, Charvaka and Jainism. They

were founded in the Hellenistic age or a little earlier. (Vedanta, Yoga, Nyaya, etc.) “All the systems accept the view of the great world rhythm. Vast periods of creation, maintenance and dissolution follow each other in endless succession.” All the schools, too, aim at the practical end of salvation. “The systems mean by ‘release’ the recovery by the self of its natural integrity, from which sin and error drive it. All the systems have for their ideal complete mental poise and freedom from the discords and uncertainties, sorrows and sufferings of life.”

—Well, my summaries weren’t great, but I’m tired. In any case, I’m not interested in these philosophies only for their own sake but also, and even mainly, as manifestations of the human spirit and expressions of a caste-ish social organization. It’s fun to take a panoramic view of history and philosophy and see how the mind objectifies itself, and how similar are its objectifications across cultures. What will the following centuries, and millennia, bring? Will most of these philosophies, from Roman to Greek to Indian to Chinese to modern European, die out, or will they exist until the end of the species? What more can be said in these realms? I suppose that since the Hellenistic age it’s been mostly a refining of thought-systems already invented, and that this refining will go on forever.

(Well, in philosophy that may be true, but perhaps not in economics and sociology and psychology. Totally new developments have occurred in these areas. But maybe this second Hellenistic age of the past five hundred years will end up being the last one, at least when it comes to the creation of very original systems. For a qualitatively higher level, or rate, of material progress is surely not possible; and it was the exceptional growth-rate of capitalism that made possible Marxism, psychoanalysis, modern science, economics, etc. [by making possible industry, demographic growth, modern urbanism, and so forth]. Capitalism, at least on this scale, was thoroughly new; but a comparably dynamic system will never again be new. If it happens again, which it may not, it will surely take a form similar to modern capitalism. So how can truly original thought-systems ever arise again?)