distance between the two, but rather to focus primarily on Indian thought in its own terms as it presents itself to the participants in its discourse from ancient times up until the beginning of the Colonial period. The question is: How was the Indian world of thinking circumscribed? If we can give an adequate representation of this world in the broadest outline, it would enable us to compare and contrast the pictures that emerge. I will attempt a total circumspection of the structure of Indian thought, in the hope that it would not only make differences between Indian and Western philosophies evident, but also recognize affinities brought out by the thinkers of the last generation.

II Philosophy and Cultural Context

All human activity, philosophical or otherwise, takes its distinctive shape within a cultural setting and tends to bear the mark of that culture. In reviewing the concept and the scope of "philosophy" in the Western context, we see that it has changed considerably over the 2,500 years of its existence. As is well known, the word "philosophy" etymologically means "love of wisdom" (from the Greek "*philia*" meaning "love or desire," and "*sophia*" meaning "wisdom"). Philosophy thus originally signified any general practical concern, encompassing in its scope what today are generally known as the natural and social sciences. As late as the eighteenth century, physics was still called "natural philosophy." Eventually, science broke away from philosophy and became an independent discipline in its own right. The separation forced philosophers to redefine the nature, goals, method, and boundaries of their own inquiry.

One tradition within speculative philosophy has always focused its attention on metaphysics. Philosophy in this context is considered to be an inquiry into the nature of ultimate reality. The business of metaphysics, it is argued, is to answer the most fundamental questions possible about the universe: its composition, the "stuff" of which it is composed, and the role of individuals within the world. The Platonic theory that over and above the world of particulars there exists a realm of forms, the theory that God created the universe, and that the soul is immortal, all furnish examples of metaphysical speculations. Until fairly recently, a majority of philosophers believed that speculative theorizing was one of the most important tasks of a philosopher. Most Western philosophers today no longer believe that the role of philosophy is to "discover" the real nature of the world; it is rather, first and foremost, to provide a clarification of the basic concepts and propositions in and through which philosophic inquiry proceeds. These philosophers are only interested in the linguistic study of logical analysis of propositions, concepts, and terms. Their contention is that philosophy's primary function is to analyze statements, to identify their precise meaning, and to study the nature of concepts *per se* to ensure that they are used correctly and consistently. This conception of philosophy as conceptual analysis is widespread among philosophers, especially in Great Britain and America, and such a linguistic analysis is considered to be the *sine qua non* of any proper philosophical

enterprise. The point that I am trying to make is as follows: the presuppositions behind Western philosophy, which give it its unique character and flavor, are the product of a particular history and a set of discrete cultural traditions. Both the content and forms of inquiry distinctive of Western philosophic inquiry have been shaped to some indeterminate extent by—for want of a better term—the "meta-philosophical" assumptions, presuppositions, and values which, historically, have given philosophy its own unique and distinctive character.

Likewise, the context of Indian philosophy is particular to a specific set of cultural conditions, and its lineage is likewise different from the complex set of social, cultural, intellectual, and sociopolitical forces that have formed Western philosophy. The Indian tradition represents the accumulation of an enormous body of material reflecting the philosophical activity of 2,500 years. It goes back to the rich and the large Vedic corpus, the earliest and the most basic texts of Hinduism.[1] The earliest extant texts of the Hindus are the Vedas, a title which does not refer to a particular book, but rather to a literary corpus extending over two thousand years. The Indian philosophical tradition, in its rudiments, began in the hymns of the *Ṛg Veda* (which we will study in the next chapter), the earliest of the four Vedas composed most probably around 2000 BCE.[2] This rootedness has given rise to the widespread belief—not only among educated Western intelligentsia but also among the Indian scholars—that Indian philosophy is indistinguishable from the Hindu religion. The reason for this belief is obvious: it is possible that whoever were the first translators/interpreters of the Vedic literature saw there what they found to be a religious point of view consisting of beliefs, rituals, and practices, having an eschatological concern, and came to the unavoidable conclusion that, given that all Indian philosophical thinking goes back to the Vedic roots, the entire Indian philosophy must be religious in its motive, inspiration, and conceptualization. But to draw this conclusion from the literary and the philosophical evidence available is uncalled for. There are several mistakes in this argument, which will be obvious to my readers as we proceed in this work; however, I will draw the attention of my students to two such mistakes: (1) It results from an unthinking application of the Western word "religion," or its synonym, that covers up the distinctive character of Vedic religion. The very word "religion" being Western in origin, when applied to the Indian context, prejudges the issue. The entire attempt to impose the Western concept of "religion" over Vedic thought is a mistake. It completely distorts the significance of the Vedic hymns, the Vedic deities, and the entire worldview that articulates a certain relationship between human beings, nature, and the celestial beings in poetic forms. (2) The second mistake consists in not recognizing that if philosophy is borne out of pre-philosophical literature, then philosophy must also be of the same nature as that out of which it arises. Thus, the conceptual and logical sophistications of the Indian philosophical "schools" are totally overlooked out of either prejudice, or ignorance, or both.

Indian philosophy is rich and variegated. It is a multi-faceted tapestry and cannot be identified with one of its strands. Therefore, any simplification is an

oversimplification. The problem is further compounded when we realize that in the Indian tradition there is no term corresponding to the Western term "philosophy." The term *"darśana"* used in the Indian tradition for "philosophy" is a rough approximation and lends itself to a variety of meanings not connoted by its Western counterpart. "*Darśana*," derived from the Sanskrit root "*dṛś*," means "to see" or a "way of seeing." "Seeing" as the end result of *darśana* is "seeing within"—the Indian seer sees the truth and makes it a part of his understanding. "Seeing within" should not, of course, be understood in a subjectivist sense; it signifies "seeing" or "insight" using the intellectual means with, the help of which insight is gained. Indian philosophy is not merely a search for knowledge of the ultimate reality but also a critical analysis of the data provided by perception. Leaving aside *darśana*, another term used to describe Indian philosophy is *"ānvīkṣikī*," which has been defined as "a critical examination of the data provided by perception and scripture."[3] Inference is called *nyāya* because it consists in critically analyzing the data previously received by perception as well as by the authority derived from the foundational texts (Vedas). In case of a conflict between two, the testimony of the foundational texts was probed into, analyzed, in order to determine how far it could be reconciled with the canons of logical reasoning.

Darśana also means a "standpoint" or "perspective" (Cf. *dithi*, the Pāli word for "a point of view"). And it is in this second sense that Indians allowed the possibility of more than one *darśana*. There are nine *darśanas* or "schools" or "viewpoints" of Indian philosophy: Cārvāka, Buddhist Philosophy, Jaina, Sāṁkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṁsā, and Vedānta. Traditionally these schools are grouped under two headings: *nāstika*, and *āstika*, which in common parlance, signify "atheist" and "theist" respectively. However, in the Sanskrit philosophical commentaries and schools of Indian philosophy these terms mean "the one that denies the authority of the Vedas" and "the one that accepts the authority of the Vedas" respectively. Accordingly, the first three schools are generally called "*nāstika*," and the last six "*āstika*." It is customary to couple the six *āstika darśanas* in pairs: Sāṁkhya-Yoga, Vaiśeṣika-Nyāya, and Vedānta-Mīmāṁsā; the former in each pair is viewed as providing a theoretical framework and the latter primarily a method of physical and spiritual training. However, in viewing the evolution of these schools such a coupling together does not make much sense: for example, it is misleading to characterize the Nyāya school as a method of physical and spiritual training. Neither the six *āstika darśanas* nor their basic framework is found in the Hindu foundational literature (Vedas). As a matter of fact, each *darśana* has grown and developed far beyond what was anticipated by the early scholars.

Philosophy in the Indian tradition was not simply an intellectual luxury, a merely conceptual hair splitting, a mere attempt to win an argument, or defeating an opponent, although all these excesses characterized many works of Indian philosophy. Underlying these excesses, there was an awareness of a thorough process of thinking towards a distant goal on the horizon for the individual

person or for humankind as a whole. These *darśanas* had a certain acceptance of the relations between the theoretical and the spiritual, and a certain conception of being from within the bounds of a tradition. In order to comprehend the philosophies of these *darśanas*, it is imperative that one understands the context in which these philosophies are embedded. To this end, I will focus on several presuppositions of Indian philosophies.

III Presuppositions of Indian Philosophy

I will discuss three presuppositions, which are: (1) *karma* and rebirth, (2) *mokṣa*, and (3) *dharma*. In the language of R. G. Collingwood, we may call them "absolute presuppositions"[4] and the rest of the philosophy may be regarded as a rational and critical elaboration of these presuppositions. The resulting philosophies do not justify these presuppositions; they rather draw out what follows from them.

Karma/Rebirth: it is almost universally admitted that a common presupposition of pan-Indic thought is encapsulated in the words "*karma*/rebirth." The word "*karma*" is derived from the verbal root "*kṛ*," meaning "act," "bring about," "do," etc. Originally, "*karman*" referred to correct performance of ritualistic activity with a view to receiving the desired results. It was believed that if a ritual is duly performed, nobody, not even divinities, could stop the desired results. On the other hand, any mistake in the performance of rituals, say, a word mispronounced, will give rise to undesired results. Thus, a correct action was a right action and no moral value was attached to such an action. Eventually *karma* acquired larger meaning and came to signify any correct action having ethical implications. Depending on the context, it could mean (a) any act, irrespective of its nature; (b) a moral act, especially in the accepted ritualistic sense; and (c) accumulated results, i.e., unfructified fruits of all actions. Underlying these senses is the idea that a person by doing, by acting, creates something and shapes his/her destiny.

Karma is based on the single principle that no cause goes without producing its effects, and there is no effect that does not have an appropriate cause. Freed from any theological understanding, that is, independently of postulating any God or supreme being as the creator and destroyer of the world including animals and humans, the idea is to posit a necessary relation between actions in this life, previous births, and rebirth in the next. Since many of our actions seem to go unrewarded in the present life, and many evil actions go unpunished, it seems reasonable to suppose that such consequences, if they do not arise in this life, must arise in the next. *Karma* carries the belief that differences in the fortunes and the misfortunes of individual lives, to the extent they are not adequately explicable by known circumstances in this life, must be due to unknown (*adṛṣṭa*) causes which can only be actions done in their former lives. These two concepts of *karma* and rebirth are interlinked and together form a complex structure. Belief in *karma* is also shared both by the Buddhist and the

Jaina thinkers despite the differences in their metaphysical and religious beliefs. It has entered the American vocabulary and is expressed as "what goes around comes around."

The doctrine of *karma* forms the basis of a plethora of ethical, metaphysical, psychological, and religious Indian doctrines. A commonly stated account of *karma* in terms of "as you sow so shall you reap" or "as you act, so you enjoy or suffer" are attempts to connect the underlying thought to our ordinary ethical and soteriological thinking and, precisely for this reason, does not capture the underlying thought in its totality. A necessary sequence of lives, worlds (insofar as each experiencer has his/her own world), destinies, and redemptions is posited in order to eliminate all traces of contingency, arbitrariness, or good/bad luck from the underlying order. It is not a causal order in the ordinary sense, because the causal order obtains within a world and is not the result of the moral nature of God as the creator or attributing moral nature to the God (e.g., when one says "the God is good"), which presupposes that the God's will, despite its omnipotence, conforms to this underlying order. As a consequence, though religious thinkers in India formulated their concepts of divinity to conform to this underlying order, the very fact that the atheistic thinking, e.g., Buddhism, and non-theistic thinking, e.g., Advaita Vedānta (non-dualistic Vedānta), recognized this absolute presupposition only shows that theology, like morality, is only a faint attempt to throw light on this presupposition and does not completely illuminate it.

Though we understand the ideas of "*karma*" and "rebirth" and in some way wish to accept it, nevertheless our understanding and acceptance never rise up to the level of clarity that we expect of our thoughts. In this context, Heidegger's insight—Being as distinguished from beings can never be brought to pure presence or complete illumination, that all unconcealment goes with concealment, presence with absence, light with darkness—makes me wonder whether it is possible to achieve clarity in the case of an absolute presupposition. All our attempts to capture the idea of *karma*/rebirth by employing the categories of causality, moral goodness, reward/punishment, and the logical idea of God as the dispenser of justice, are faint attempts to illuminate *karma* and rebirth, because the chosen categories are from the areas of experiences in mundaneity with which the thinker is familiar, areas *karma* and rebirth however cover past, present, and future experiences.

Most Indian thinkers seek to establish *karma* on logical grounds. The two familiar arguments are that in the absence of such an order, there would arise the twin fallacies of phenomena that are not caused and that which do not produce any effect. This idea of necessary causality requires, better yet, demands, that every event has a cause and that every event must produce its effects. It is worth noting in this context that the idea of causal necessity that is applied is modeled after empirical and natural order best exemplified in scientific laws and philosophically captured in Kant's Second Analogy of Experience.[5] The resulting understanding of *karma*/rebirth then becomes a super science, a

science that not only comprehends the natural order and the human order but also all possible worlds, each world corresponding to one birth. The order that is being posited in the *karma*/rebirth is not a natural order, and what is called a "theory," if it is a theory, is neither a scientific theory nor a super science. Many Hindu and the Buddhist enthusiasts wish to see it as a scientific theory, though it does not share any features of a scientific theory. Then, there are those who regard it a "convenient fiction,"[6] which would imply that the entire pan-Indian culture, both the Vedic and the Buddhist, is based upon a fiction. Again, where must we position ourselves as critics in order to hold such a view of these ultimate presuppositions? As thinkers, we have no ground to stand upon from which we can pass such a judgment.

A plausible philosophical move would be to say that *karma*/rebirth encapsulates Indic peoples' understanding of a transcendental ground of the human life and the world. It is not an empirical or scientific theory, it belongs to a different order, neither natural nor supernatural (the supernatural being understood as another natural). The transcendental, usually construed as the domain of subjectivity, selectively isolates an area of human experience and grounds the totality of the empirical in it. Many thinkers have rejected this conception of ground and prefer that the ultimate ground be ontological, some principle of being. *Karma* and rebirth encapsulate a fundamental understanding of that ontological ground, of our relationship to the world, which cannot be adequately accounted by the metaphysic of nature or metaphysic of subjectivity. Both the Advaitins and the Buddhists postulate beginningless ignorance (*avidyā*) and argue that this principle accounts for our inescapable experience of obscurity, darkness, and failure to completely understand this ontological ground. And yet, both the Hindus and the Buddhist philosophers have sought to throw light on it in different ways and have assured us that though we do not quite understand it, wise individuals do, because they have a direct experience of this ontological ground. It is worth noting that in Advaita Vedānta, this beginningless *avidyā* is not simply non-knowledge, i.e., not knowing; it is also a positive entity, the source of all creativity, indeed, of entire mundaneity. In Indian thought *karma* rebirth, no matter how shielded from us, no matter how inviolable in its operations (even gods cannot escape it), gives to humans the possibility of escaping from its clutches, becoming truly free, and realizing one's essence, which is *mokṣa*.

Mokṣa: *Mokṣa* is the next absolute presupposition, functioning not as a determining ground but as the *telos* as it were beckoning humans to escape the ontological ground of *karma* and to come home to its transcendental essence. "*Mokṣa*" is derived from the Sanskrit root "*muc*," which means "to release" or "to free." Accordingly, it signifies "freedom," "release," i.e., freedom from bondage, freedom from contingency. *Mokṣa*—notwithstanding the differences regarding its nature and the path that leads to it—means spiritual freedom, freedom from the cycles of bondage, freedom from the mundane existence, and the realization of the state of bliss. It is the highest value—value in its most

perfect form—a state of excellence, the highest good, which cannot be transcended and, when attained, leaves nothing else to be desired.

From the Indian standpoint, all human beings, in fact all living beings, are of dual nature, they are, in the words of Foucault, "empirical-transcendental doublets."[7] In one aspect, as being in the world, i.e., mundane, he transcends this-worldly nature into a series of other lives posited by the *karma*/rebirth order, in the other aspect, i.e., as transcendental self, he is a pure, free, non-worldly spirit as though inserted into the mundane context from which he aspires to achieve and return home. These two kinds of transcendences are different: transcendence into other lives and other worlds with which this life and world are connected by unspent traces conceived as forces is very different from the transcendence of all mundaneity into the pure spirit to be accomplished in *mokṣa*. The first transcendence we do not quite understand, although we try to make it intelligible in various ways using such natural categories as necessity, such moral categories as desert and punishment, and theological categories as divine goodness. The later, viz., *mokṣa*, is a possibility that stands before us on the horizon as pure light, self-shining, and whose pure light seems to blind us, because we are accustomed to seeing things in a mingling of light and darkness.

The conceptual problem really concerns how the empirical-transcendental doublet is made possible. How do I, who in essence is pure freedom, become or appear as my empirical being? In other words, how the transcendental appears as empirical? The origin of the empirical, its ontological ground, is not in the transcendental, but rather in the dark ground of being, viz., in the order of *karma*/rebirth. Thus, we have an ultimate dualism between *karma*/rebirth and the transcendental, which is both my essence and serves as the *telos* of my empirical being. The conceptual situation in which the human existence is caught may be analogous to, but not identical with (and I introduce it for the benefit of my students familiar with Western philosophers), the dualism with which Kantian philosophy leaves us, between the unknown and the unknowable thing in itself and the pure self which reflection uncovers and to which moral thinking adds content as pure willing.

There is no need to belabor the point that the two dualisms, the Indian and the Kantian, are not the same but they are somehow analogous. The dualism between *karma*/rebirth and *mokṣa* is forced upon us as we try to understand the human situation but it soon dawns upon us that *mokṣa* is freedom from the clutches of *karma*/rebirth. In *mokṣa*, one is awakened to one's true being.

All schools of Indian philosophy, with the exception of Cārvāka, accept *mokṣa*. Saying this does not amount to asserting that all the schools of Indian philosophy ended with the same conception of *mokṣa*. Each school developed its own conception of *mokṣa* and also demonstrated the possibility of *mokṣa* so conceived. "*Anirmokṣa*" (impossibility of *mokṣa*) then becomes a material or non-formal fallacy (*hetvābhāsās*), which, for a philosophical position, is more serious than a formal logical fallacy, belonging to the domain of logical argumentations. Thus, we have a general conception of *mokṣa* as freedom or as release,

but the specific understanding of *mokṣa* in each system is determined by the conceptual categories available in that system. The general conception of *mokṣa* as freedom serves as an ultimate presupposition and the specific understanding becomes a philosophical doctrine.

Dharma: so far we have seen that there are two ultimate orders: the first pointing backward to the order of *karma* and rebirth, and the second pointing forward to the possibility of freedom as the *telos* which beckons upon us. Human life is not truly human if it is not conscious of these two opposite directions. *Dharma* promises to mediate between these two and announces itself as grounded in the tradition handed over from the past and promises to help accomplish the goal sought after in future. The term "*dharma*" is derived from the Sanskrit root *dhṛ*, meaning "to sustain," "to support," "to uphold," "to nourish," etc. It is the most basic and pervasive concept, and embraces a variety of related meanings. It signifies the harmonious course of things; at times, it refers to a necessary attribute (the *dharma* of water is to flow, of the sun to shine); at other times, to religion; and, still at other times, it refers to duty in its normative aspect. *Dharma* in the last sense—setting aside the many different understandings and interpretations—means the rules and laws which individuals should follow. In short, *dharma* is the Hindu counterpart of Western "moral duty."

Dharma as a system of rules governs every aspect of human life in the human's relationship to himself, to his family, to his community, to the state, to the cosmos, and so on. Accordingly, we have family-*dharma*, royal-*dharma*, *dharma* pertaining to various stages of an individual's life, caste-*dharma*, ordinary *dharma*, and so on. Besides the social differentiation of *dharma*, there are also *dharma*s that cannot be brought under the social rubric, e.g., an individual has a duty to himself (e.g., purity), to others irrespective of *varṇa* (e.g., charity), to gods (e.g., sacrifice), and nature (e.g., protecting the plants). These rules have different strengths, and hold good with differing binding force, permitting exceptions at times, and, in their totality, form a world by themselves. But how does one determine the essence of each domain? Who legislates them, if at all they are legislated? Alternately, do they flow from the essential nature of each domain as the *dharma* of water is to flow and fire to burn? It is here that philosophy can get down to work instead of simply invoking a *dharma śāstras* (*dharma*-treatises). But the work is endless, and *dharmas* provide an endless field of philosophical research.

Now, with this enormously complex notion of *dharma*, it is only inevitable that there would be situations in one's life when these *dharmas* under whose powers one lives one's life come into conflict with each other. It is these duties that generate moral dilemmas and determine the tragedies of the epics, leading to deeper spiritual vision and to the need for *mokṣa* or spiritual freedom to override what seems to be the inviolable claim of *dharma*. The origin of *dharma* does not lie in the command of God, but rather in immemorial tradition and customary usages. *Dharma* is the embodiment of truth in life, eternal and "uncreated," as is life itself. The relation of *dharma* to God is thus somewhat nebulous and

constitutes a perennial issue for commentary and disputation in Hindu literature exemplified, for example, in the great Hindu epic, *Mahābhārata*.

Dharmas also promise consequences and goals to be reached in the future. If you wish to attain such and such goal, then you should follow such and such line of actions. This hypothetical imperative, to use Kantian language, always refers to future goals to be reached. The conceptual world of *dharma*, therefore, talks about rules of actions received from time immemorial, and ascending orders of human existence to be reached by performing these rules. Human existence is thus caught up in the pursuit of goals in this world or in the next, thereby giving rise to theories of morality and theological doctrines. The philosophical systems find here a fertile field for conceptualization.

But *dharma* in the long run cannot bring to a human being the ultimate freedom or *mokṣa* which is his constant secret aspiration. *Dharma* is still caught up in the order of *karma*/rebirth and within that order promises to humans better and happier lives. *Dharmas* are only stepping stones always pointing beyond themselves, never reaching a resting place, because each world, no matter how much happier and better, is still within the clutches of the dark ontological ground of *karma*/rebirth and contains the same distant *telos* of *mokṣa* on the horizon. It is this human situation which comprehends human's pursuit of knowledge, morality, and religion, but aiming at something still higher which includes both human history as a development of the race and of the individual which all take place as though *a priori* delimited by the ground of *karma*/rebirth and the goal of freedom from it. In between lies the space of thinking, of the philosophy of the *darśanas*.

IV Important Features of the *Darśanas*

Before proceeding further, let me briefly review some of the important features of the eight *darśanas* (excluding the Cārvākas) so that the readers may gain an overview of their philosophies before diving into a detailed study of some of these issues.

1 Each *darśana* has a *pramāṇa* theory. The technical word "*pramāṇa*" has been variously translated as "proofs," "means of acquiring knowledge," "means of true or valid cognition," or even "ways of knowing." The Indian materialists admit perception to be the only means, the Buddhists accept perception and inference, the Nyāya admits four by adding *upamāna* (comparison) and *śabda* (verbal testimony) to the Buddhist two, and Advaita Vedānta accepts six and adds *arthāpatti* (postulation) and *anupalabdhi* to the Nyāya list.
2 In the Western epistemologies, e.g., in Kant, there is a continuing tension between the causal question of how cognition comes into being and the logical question of its validity, a tension not found in Indian epistemologies. The *pramāṇas* are both instruments by which cognitions arise, as well as the ways of justifying a cognitive claim.

3 The *pramāṇa*s are advanced not merely to validate empirical cognitive claims, such as "it rained yesterday, or it will rain tomorrow," but also to validate such philosophical claims as "the world has a creator," or that "all substance is permanent." In most Western philosophies, philosophical and empirical statements are sharply differentiated, and the grounding of the empirical epistemic claims follows a pattern that is different from what the grounding of philosophical claims requires. In Indian epistemologies, philosophical-epistemic claims are treated on a par with the empirical-epistemic claims insofar as the methods of validation are concerned. Even the Advaita Vedānta school uses the *pramāṇas* to validate its basic thesis that reality is One, universal consciousness, although there is a gradation of the *pramāṇas* with regard to their relative strength.

4 Another feature of the theory of *pramāṇas*, irrespective of the system one has in mind, is the primacy of perception. This feature has two aspects: every other mode of knowing—inference (*anumāna*) or even verbal testimony (*śabda)*—presupposes and is founded on perception. One must *see* the smoke on the yonder hill in order to be able to infer that there must be fire. One must *hear* the words, in order to grasp their meanings. Perception, however, is not limited to sensory perception. According to many schools, perhaps with the exceptions of the Buddhists, one also perceives universals and relations.

5 Every knowledge is a manifestation of an object to and by consciousness, so that consciousness—irrespective of the theory of consciousness upheld—plays the evidencing role. The *darśanas* disagreed regarding the self-manifestedness of consciousness, but that it is the only source of manifestation of an object was beyond dispute. The above thesis led to an epistemological realism in the *darśanas*, which will become obvious as we proceed in our investigation.

6 Though correspondence and coherence (*samavāda*) were widely used as a criterion of truth, all *darśanas* held in common a pragmatist account of truth. The two concepts when available tended to merge together: Truth leads to successful practice (*arthakriyākāritva*) pointing to a close relation between theory and practice. This relation has often been noticed but misconstrued as implying that Indian philosophy lacks theoretical thinking; it is practically motivated by the ultimate goal of freedom from the chain of rebirth/*karma*. The truth however lies deeper. Suffice it to note here that in this respect, Indian thinking is a close ally of the Greeks, especially Socratic thinking, which assumed that philosophical thinking paves the way for the cultivation of wisdom.

7 The ultimate goal, not alone of philosophy but also of ethical life, serves as a spiritual transformation of existence. This presence of a spiritual goal for all philosophical thinking has been well recognized but at the same time misconstrued. Spirituality in this context does not exclude theoretical thinking, but demands that one searches for the *truth* in order to reach this goal. Saying that Indian philosophy is spiritual calls up the picture of a

philosopher meditating in the *yogic* postures. This picture is misleading insofar as much of philosophical thinking transpired in the form of objections and replies *ad nauseum*.

8 At the same time it must be recognized that the practice of *yoga* was a pervasive component of the Indian culture—the Hindus, the Buddhists and the Jainas, so that many philosophers while excelling in theoretic thinking did as a matter of fact practice *yoga*. A consequence was the development of the various types of *yoga* as well as various differing concepts of the spiritual goal sought after, consistently with a *darśana's* theoretical position.

9 What was common to all the *darśanas*, then is the acceptances of the following soteriological structure:

Avidyā → *karma*/rebirth → (*saṁsāra)* bondage → *mokṣa*.

Each term in this chain was differently conceived in light of the *darśana's* theoretical system, and the practical goal and the path to reach the goal suitably made the system's own representation of it.

10 Within the fragments of their work, Indian philosophers did practice what Western thinkers call "theory." However, they neither conceptualized the idea of a "pure theory" nor glorified it by making it autonomous; they made it a stage in a process, which is motivated by the spiritual goal of self-knowledge. Basic to the metaphysical theories of the classical schools of Indian philosophy was the distinction between self and not-self, and the goal of the removal of suffering by self-knowledge.

11 At the same time, parallel to the spiritual pursuit, there is a strong naturalistic component of each *darśana*. The Sāṁkhya, Nyāya, and Vaiśeṣika had a strong naturalistic strand which was however joined to a spiritual strand insofar as it recognized that the true self—even the individual self—is not a product of nature, and that the pursuit of *mokṣa* is the highest goal. Thus, there are two independent strands of thought: the naturalistic and the spiritualistic. The two eventually merged, each retaining its own identity while influencing the other. It may be a more authentic characterization of Indian philosophical thought to say that *a reconciliation of the two seeming opposites, "nature" and "spirit," is what it aimed at*—analogously to the opposition between theory and practice.

12 Ethics in the Hindu context parallels Hegel's concept of *Sittlichkeit*, i.e., the actual order of norms, duties, and virtues that a society cherishes. Whereas in classical Western moral philosophy the task of ethics is to legitimize and ground our moral beliefs on the basis of fundamental principles (e.g., Kant's principle of universalizability without contradiction, Mill's principle of utility, etc.), the Hindu ethical philosophies do not give a supreme principle of morality to legitimize all ethical choices, but rather cover a large spectrum of issues encompassing within its fold a theory of virtues, a theory of rules, the ideal of doing one's duty for duty's sake, actual norms, customs, and social practices that an individual in society cherishes.

I hope the above overview lays down and circumscribes a boundary within which the philosophies (*darśanas*) found their fields of work. Once this field was opened up by *the Vedas* and circumscribed by *karma* and rebirth, *mokṣa*, and *dharma*, philosophy could now reflect upon not merely these mysteries and presuppositions, but also explore the nature of human existence that they helped to delimit and define reality, truth, and values.

This space, which I have just described as the space for thinking or philosophy, for knowing, was first opened up, disclosed, and given to the people of this India by what came to be known as the Vedas (*śrutis*). But to exactly understand the nature of this "origin," one must clearly understand what is meant by "opened up," "disclosed," or "given to the people." Schleiermacher, a German interpreter of the sacred texts, held that hermeneutics is the art of avoiding misinterpretations,[8] and in the case of the *śrutis*, misinterpretations abound. To say that *śrutis* "opened up" or "disclosed" means they gave people a new way of looking at things. The three presuppositions listed above define a new way of looking at things. How this disclosure took place cannot be made precise by using the model of Moses receiving the "Ten Commandments" from God. It surely was not a revelation in the standard Judaic-Christian sense of the term. One could, using Kant, say that "a light broke upon all students of nature."[9]

With this in mind, let us discuss the Vedas, the foundational texts of Indian tradition.