ANTHROPOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN CLASSICAL INDIAN PHILOSOPHY[1]

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Among those standard themes of Western philosophical thought which are conspicuously absent in Indian (specifically Hindu) philosophy, *man* seems to be one of the most conspicuous ones. To be sure, there are images of man in the Indian tradition, there are challenging ideas and perspectives relating to what we call man; there may even be an elaborate implicit anthropology. But there is no tradition of thematic and explicit thought about man, of trying to define and explicate the nature of man and to distinguish it from other forms of life and existence; there is no tradition of explicit philosophical anthropology, comparable to that tradition in the West which, starting from ancient Greek as well as from Biblical sources, leads through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance to the growing anthropocentrism of modern Western thought.—By "man", of course, we mean man as *homo sapiens*, that very special earthly creature which is neither God nor just an animal. *Manuṣya*, the Sanskrit word which generally and most frequently comes closest to this meaning, plays a very marginal or even negligible role in the vocabulary of classical Indian (particularly Hindu) philosophy; and another word, which is often translated as "man" and in many contexts actually warrants this translation, sc. the word *puruṣa*, does in its philosophical application usually, and most notably in Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, not carry the meaning *man* as homo sapiens, but rather coincides with terms like *ātman* and thus designates that nature and principle *in* man which, instead of distinguishing him from animals and Gods, from lower and higher beings, is just that which he has in common with them[2].

It might seem therefore that in dealing with Indian philosophizing about man we are basically dealing with a gap, with an omission or an absence. Now absences of this kind have often been themes of cross-cultural investigation and speculation, and

[1] This is a revised and enlarged version of a paper read at the 186th Meeting of the *American Oriental Society*, Philadelphia 1976.

[2] However, in such compounds as *puruṣārtha* (goal of human life) and *puruṣakāra* (human effort, human initiative) the word *puruṣa* obviously refers to man in the full and concrete sense. In non-philosophical contexts, this sense is generally much more prevalent than in philosophical contexts.—In this case as well as in the case of several other words referring to man an ambiguity between "male" and "human" has to be kept in mind.—Also used are words like *nara* and various derivatives of or compounds with *manu*.

the fact that something has not been said or done in a particular tradition, may in itself constitute an instructive and noteworthy phenomenon. Thus, it has been asked, e.g., why the Greeks did *not* develop a specific notion of existence as distinguished from essence, why the scientific and technological revolutions were *not* initiated in China, why the Indians did *not* produce any historiography comparable to their achievements in other branches of literature. Our question of the conceptualization and thematization of man has also, although somewhat casually, been discussed in this manner[3]. However, before speculating on possible causes and general implications, it might be advisable to better determine the actual dimensions of the absence of explicit anthropological thought in the Indian tradition, and to take a closer look at what *has* actually been said about man in the different schools and periods of Indian philosophical thought. This is a topic which has not yet met with the scholarly interest which it deserves[4]. Obviously, we cannot attempt here a full and exhaustive treatment. We can only try to give some exemplary textual references and to present some historical and systematic perspectives. Buddhist and Jaina thought will remain excluded from our discussion.

Concerning the older, "pre-systematic" literature, the "absence" of anthropological thought is, as a matter of fact, much less conspicuous than in the case of classical philosophical literature. First of all, it is a well-known and perhaps sometimes over-emphasized fact that there is a more wordly, earthly atmosphere in the Vedic texts than in the philosophy of the later systems, and that in these texts the words *puruṣa* and *ātman* tend to have more concrete and secular connotations, even *ātman* often referring to the whole concrete earthly personality rather than to a timeless and transmundane principle in it[5]. However, what is more specifically relevant is

[3] Cf., e.g., B. HEIMANN, *Facets of Indian Thought*, London 1964, 21 ff.; 114 ff.—Cf. already Hegel's statement that man "has not been posited" in India (Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte II: *Die orientalische Welt*, ed. G. LASSON, Hamburg 1968, 399).

[4] A special issue of Studia Missionalia (19, 1970) was published under the title *"Man, Culture and Religion"*, presenting a series of articles on concepts of man in Indian and other traditions, some of which (cf. especially P. HACKER on Śaṅkara) offer highly interesting perspectives. However, most of these contributions do not deal with explicit thematizations and definitions of man, but rather with "images" of man or with certain anthropological implications of metaphysical and cosmological doctrines.— Some basic notes on the relationship between man and animal are given by J. GONDA, *Mensch und Tier im alten Indien*, Studium Generale 20 (1967), 105–116.—*The Concept of Man.* A Study in Comparative Philosophy. Ed. by S. RADHAKRISHNAN and P. T. RAJU, London 1960, remains for the most part, like several comparable publications, rather vague, general and at times speculative.

[5] On the older usage of the words *ātman*, *puruṣa* etc. cf. P. DEUSSEN, *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie* I/1, Leipzig 1894, 282–336.

that there are deliberate and explicit attempts of *defining* man, of drawing that borderline between man and animal which for later philosophical literature seems to be so much less important. According to the general character of the Vedic texts (we are mainly concerned with the Brāhmaṇas and early Upaniṣads), we cannot expect any coherent philosophical discussions of the nature of man. Whatever we find in terms of "definitions", descriptions, classifications and genealogical explanations of man, remains, if it is not in itself of a mythical nature, embedded in and intertwined with mythical-magical contexts[6]. Since we are primarily dealing with classical Hindu philosophy, we shall limit ourselves to mentioning some passages that open prospects and perspectives for philosophical thought; and we shall focus on the question of the relationship and distinction between man and animal. Basically, man (*puruṣa, manuṣya*) is considered a domesticated animal (*paśu*), appearing in the five-fold group of men, cows, horses, goats and sheep[7], to which other species, e.g. camels and dogs, also mules and asses[8], are sometimes added. Occasionally, man is called animal bipes (*paśur dvipād*)[9]. However, the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa tells us repeatedly that man is a very special animal—the first among the animals (*prathamaḥ paśūnām*)[10] and, above all, the only one that performs sacrifices[11]. One of the most explicit and most emphatic statements on the uniqueness of man is found in the Aitareya-Āraṇyaka[12]. In man, we are told, the self (*ātman*) becomes particularly explicit, manifest (*āvistarām*); he is most endowed with intelligence (*prajñā*); he alone understands, discerns (*vijānāti*) what he sees, and knows how to express what he understands. The intelligence, the power of knowledge of the other animals is bound by or coincides with hunger and thirst (*aśanāpipāse*); they are unable to plan for the future. Man, on the other hand, knows the tomorrow (*veda śvastanam*), the world and the non-world, and "by the mortal he desires the

[6] Cf., e.g., Atharvaveda XI, 8; Taittirīya-Upaniṣad II, 3, 1; Aitareya-Upaniṣad I, 2, 2; and in general the myths of Yama and Manu.

[7] Cf., e.g., Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa VII, 5, 2, 6; in later literature, *paśu* usually implies a contrast with man; e.g. Śaṅkara on Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad IV, 3, 6: *manuṣya* and *paśu* as *vijātīya*.

[8] Cf. the dictionaries of BOEHTLINGK/ROTH and MONIER-WILLIAMS s.v.*paśu*.

[9] Satapatha-Brāhmaṇa VII, 5, 2, 32.

[10] L.c., VI, 2, 1, 18; VII, 5, 2, 6.

[11] L.c., VII, 5, 2, 23.

[12] II, 3, 2 (ed. A. B. KEITH, Oxford 1909): *puruṣe tv eva-āvistarām ātmā sa hi prajñānena saṃpannatamo vijñātaṃ vadati vijñātaṃ paśyati veda śvastanam veda lokālokau martyena-amṛtam īpsaty evaṃ saṃpannaḥ atha-itareṣāṃ paśūnām aśanāpipāse eva-abhivijñānaṃ na vijñātaṃ vadanti na vijñātaṃ paśyanti na viduḥ śvastanaṃ na lokālokau ta etāvanto bhavanti yathāprajñaṃ hi saṃbhavāḥ.*

immortal"[13].—We may also mention in this connection that the word *manuṣya* is sometimes etymologically connected with the root *man*, "to think", "to consider"[14]. The Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa claims a special relationship between man and *manas*[15].

It seems that our passage from the Aitareya-Āraṇyaka does not yet presuppose a clearly and fully developed theory of *saṃsāra* and rebirth[16]. Once this theory has become a basic premise, it obviously gives a new dimension to man's openness for "the tomorrow" and the more distant future, namely the openness and freedom to strive after the distant goal of *mokṣa*, liberation, a goal which transcends any fulfillment of ordinary desires and all wordly horizons of planning. The idea that being human is a rare or even exclusive soteriological privilege is, in fact, quite familiar in such texts as the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas. In a soteriological context, there is "nothing higher than man"[17]; human existence may be full of misery, yet it is the only gateway to liberation, the only opportunity to actively change or cancel one's *karman*, and insofar the most desirable of all existences[18].

[13] Cf. the translation by A. B. KEITH (Oxford 1909): "The self is more and more clear in man. For he is most endowed with intelligence, he says what he has known, he sees what he has known, he knows to-morrow, he knows the world and what is not the world. By the mortal he desires the immortal, being thus endowed. As for the others, animals, hunger and thirst comprise their power of knowledge. They say not what they have known, they see not what they have known. They know not to-morrow, they know not the world and what is not the world. They go so far, for their experiences are according to the measure of their intelligence."

[14] Cf. Yāska, Nirukta III, 7: *matvā karmāṇi sīvyanti*.

[15] VII, 5, 2, 1 ff.

[16] In Sāyaṇa's commentary it is, of course, taken for granted that this theory may be applied in interpreting the text.

[17] Mahābhārata XII, 288, 20 (crit. ed.): ... *na mānuṣāc chreṣṭhataraṃ hi kiṃcit*. Cf. also VI, 116, 32; XIV, 43, 20; XIV, App. I/4, 70.

[18] XII, 386, 31–32 (crit. ed.): ... *caṇḍālatve 'pi mānuṣyaṃ sarvathā tāta durlabham // iyaṃ hi yoniḥ prathamā yāṃ prāpya jagatīpate / ātmā vai śakyate trātuṃ karmabhiḥ śubhalakṣaṇaiḥ //* Cf. Bhāgavatapurāṇa XI, 7, 19 ff. (Gītā Press ed.):
prāyeṇa manujā loke lokatattvavicakṣaṇāḥ ...; cf. esp. 21: *puruṣatve ca māṃ ... āvistarāṃ prapaśyanti*.
As a matter of fact, there are also passages in the Mahābhārata where man is praised not just in a soteriological perspective, but in a more worldly way. The most remarkable one among these is found in XII, 173, where, in a story told by Bhiṣma, Indra appears in the shape of a jackal and speaks to Kāśyapa who is in a suicidal mood: He tries to convince him that being human is a very favourable earthly situation and that, compared to the animals, such as the jackals, man enjoys special privileges and advantages. In particular, he can use his hands as instruments, which enable him to protect himself from insects, extract thorns, etc., to find shelter from cold, rain and heat, to provide for himself clothes, food and housing. Human beings enjoy their life as masters of the earth, letting other creatures work for them, and using various means, they win power over them (*adhiṣṭhāya ca gāṃ loke bhuñjate*

However, this popular notion of the soteriological privilegedness of man does not lead to any systematic theoretical interest in the nature and distinguishability of man; and it does not entail any emphasis on the unity and indivisibility of the human species. As a matter of fact, various qualifications and restrictions usually limit the soteriological privilege not to man in general, but rather to specific classes of human beings. It is often taken for granted that only Bhārata, India, is a *karmabhūmi*, a region in which actions and decisions have the power of shaping the future, in which *karman* can be neutralized, and in which liberation from the cycle of death and birth is possible[19]. Other restrictions and specifications relate in a variety of ways to caste membership, sex, etc.[20]; and although there are instances of a more universalistic approach, there is hardly any attempt at systematically interrelating the theory of man's soteriological capability with a theory or even a definition of human nature.

Moreover, it is quite obvious that the soteriological context as such is not conducive to any genuine interest in man qua man. Even if being a man constitutes a unique opportunity in a soteriological sense, it remains at the same time a merely transitory role and disguise. The metaphor of the dramatic actor, who plays various roles, is one of the familiar devices of describing and illustrating *saṃsāra*, most notably in Sāṃkhya—where, of course, the self (*puruṣa*) itself is much more detached from wordly life and human existence than an actor from his role[21]. Other familiar similes present the body as a temporary vehicle of the self, as some kind of machine operated by it, or as its changeable and disposable garment[22]. What constitutes human

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vāhayanti ca/ upāyair bahubhiś ca-eva vaśyān ātmani kurvate// XII, 173, 15).— However, later on in this same chapter, it is suggested that it might be better not to use these special abilities and powers at all: *aprāśanam asaṃsparśam asaṃdarśanam eva ca/ puruṣasya-eṣa niyamo manye śreyo na saṃśayaḥ* (l.c., 31). The jackal concludes by saying that, should he once more get the opportunity of being human, he would use it for sacrifice, giving and penance (*yajña, dāna, tapas*, l.c., 49). The special, privileged soteriological position of man is also emphasized in the Tantras, e.g. Kulārṇava-Tantra I, 12 ff.; I, 69.—The eligibility of the Gods is discussed and accepted by Śaṅkara on Brahmasūtra I, 3, 26–33.

[19] Cf. W. Kirfel, *Die Kosmographie der Inder*, Bonn/Leipzig 1920, 58.

[20] Cf. W. Halbfass, *Zur Theorie der Kastenordnung in der indischen Philosophie*, Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Klasse, Jg. 1975, Nr. 9, 35 ff.

[21] Cf. Sāṃkhyakārikā 42 with commentary by Vācaspati. What migrates and plays the various "roles", is the "subtle body".

[22] Bhagavadgītā II, 22; cf. the famous metaphor of the chariot, Kaṭha-Upaniṣad III, 3. In the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika proofs for the existence of the *ātman*, a recurrent pattern is that of an operator handling certain instruments or mechanical devices.—Cf. also the metaphor of the bird and the nest in Śaṅkara's Upadeśasāhasri I, 12.

existence in its empirical dimensions, appears as a mere accessory, not worthy of genuine concern; not the changeable role, not the disposable garment, but that which plays the role or wears the garment seems worthy of such interest and concern. Not man in his unity and totality is to be liberated, but something *in* man; and although being human is a soteriological opportunity, it remains as such a special case of bondage. There is no interest in explicating man in terms of an inextricable unity and community of soul and body. Wherever philosophical theories and conceptual devices seem to offer themselves for such an application, they are usually not applied for this purpose; it is, e.g., symptomatic that the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika philosophers do not use their concept of the "whole" (*avayavin*) to describe the nature of man[23].—

Summarizing this dicussion, we may say that the theory of man's special capability for *mokṣa* does not serve as a basis for anthropological inquiries. As a matter of fact, the classical systems of Hindu philosophy do not pay much attention to this theory. They do not thematize it, and they do not try to explicate and justify it by supplying a theoretical anthropology. By and large, they do not even mention it.

There is, however, one classical Hindu system which takes up the old notion of man as a thinking and planning creature and applies it explicitly to describe the nature of man as *manuṣya*, homo sapiens, and to single him out among other living beings. It is not surprising that this system is the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā, the most "orthodox" and traditionalistic, yet the least soteriological and most "secular" system, a system which deals primarily with *dharma*, not *mokṣa*, and which accordingly has a much more suitable context of dealing with man not just as a self or soul, but as a concrete temporal being and as a particular and unique biological species. Of course, we should not expect any genuine theoretical interest in anthropology per se; what we actually find is some kind of ad hoc anthropology, a by-product of the theory of sacrificial action which is the central concern of Mīmāṃsā: Why is it that, as stated in the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa[24], man alone performs sacrifices? Is it really true that only man has the *adhikāra*, i.e. is qualified and entitled to perform sacrificial acts? These and similar questions form the background of an interesting section in Śabara's commentary on the Mīmāṃsāsūtras[25]. The focal point in Śabara's discussion is again

[23] However, in Rāmānuja's philosophy, as well as in other theistic philosophies, the notion of an organic unity of soul and body is, in fact, fully present. See also below, n. 45, on Śaṅkara.—A Vaiśeṣika text of the 12th century, Vādivāgiśvara's Mānamanohara (ed. YOGĪNDRĀNANDA, Benares 1973, 124), applies the Concept of the *avayavin* to the cow, *go*, and to the *brāhmaṇa*, but not to man as such.

[24] See above, n. 11.

[25] On VI, 1, 5.

man's openness for a more remote future, the open temporal horizon which allows man to go beyond the fulfillment of immediate desires and to make plans not only for this life, but also for future lives. It may be true that also animals, just like human beings, desire happiness and try to attain it. However, animals are not able to desire results expected in a different or remote period of time (*kālāntaraphala*); they desire only what is immediately at hand (*āsanna*).—Apparent exceptions to this rule are discussed by Śabara and rejected: What might appear to be fasting or other observances of religious duty in the case of certain animals, is in reality nothing but an avoidance of food due to illness and accordingly nothing but an immediate bodily reaction[26]. Animals do not have any access to the knowledge of *dharma*, to the network of religious duty and to the mechanism of accumulating merit and of achieving results not just in this life, but in the hereafter. Our knowledge of *dharma* is based upon the Veda; but the animals do not study the Veda, nor the Smṛti texts; and they cannot learn it from others. Therefore, they have no idea of what *dharma* is. Without any knowledge of *dharma*, how could they legitimately and competently perform any sacrificial act, any ritual? Since they are unable to learn and to study, they have no way of understanding *dharma*, and they remain unable to perform any of the activities which constitute *dharma*.—Several other factors, e.g. non-possession of property, are mentioned to justify the denial of the *adhikāra* to animals[27].

Man in these discussions is man as homo sapiens and as concrete embodied being, as actor and enjoyer in an empirical world. However, there is an obvious ambiguity in Śabara's use of the word *puruṣa*: While in fact it often means man in concreto, it is also used to denote the eternal principle *in* man, the *ātman*. Such a principle is necessary according to the Mīmāṃsā in order to account for a permament basis of merit and demerit and for the possibility of reaping the fruits of our present actions in the hereafter[28]. Insofar, Śabara can insist that the responsible actor of sacrificial actions is not the body, but the *puruṣa* as an entity which is more permanent than the body[29]. Yet, the interest in this entity remains somewhat casual and marginal in Śabara's Mīmāṃsā, and we may readily agree with Madeleine Biardeau's characterization: "... la Mīmāṃsā en effet n'a jamais en vue autre chose que le sujet de la vie empirique : l'x quel qu'il soit, qui assure la continuité des phénomènes de l'expé-

[26] L.c.

[27] L.c.—The Gods are also excluded from the eligibility to perform sacrifices.

[28] Cf. the commentary on Mīmāṃsāsūtra I, 1, 5 (with frequent references to Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad IV, 3, 7; it is interesting to compare Śaṅkara's commentary on this Upaniṣad passage).

[29] On X, 2, 58.

rience courante, est le même qui doit subsister, pour rendre possible la récompense du *svarga* après la mort. Même si, alors, il est dépouillé de son corps, il garde au moins la possibilité de jouir du ciel d'une manière tout à fait analogue à celle du vivant"[30].

Śabara's commentators do not add very much to his exposition of the difference between man and animal. Kumārila's Tantravārttika does not add anything at all to Śabara's statements. Prabhākara[31] briefly paraphrases them. Śālikanātha observes that the animals, since they are unable to comprehend the meaning of words, i.e. to receive linguistic communications, cannot be the addressees of Vedic injunctions and cannot possibly have an access to what by definition can only be learnt from Vedic words—the *dharma*[32].

There are several reasons why questions of the definition of man and his distinction from the animals remain somewhat casual and marginal in Mīmāṃsā. The most important and obvious one among these is that when it comes to the problem of the eligibility (*adhikāra*) for the Vedic rituals, the exclusion of the Śūdras—not to mention outcastes, barbarians etc.—plays a much more important and explicit role than the exclusion of the animals (and Gods). A distinction within mankind is thus much more important than the definition and demarcation of mankind as such. In fact, emphasizing the unity of mankind, in terms of what men have in common as compared to animals, could easily undermine the traditional argumentation against the admission of Śūdras to the sacrifice, as we find it in Jaimini's Sūtras and Śabara's commentary[33]. If the openness for the future and for long-term planning would be presented as the sole and sufficient criterion of the *adhikāra*, then the exclusion of the Śūdras etc. would become a somewhat awkward business. This may well be one of the reasons why Kumārila does not enlarge upon this question of the demarcation of man among the animals. In several passages of his Ślokavārttika and especially of his Tantravārttika, Kumārila tries to establish or takes for granted that the four *varṇa*, the four main castes, are genuinely different species, which are defined and distinguished from each other by real universals (*jāti, sāmānya*), just as lions, elephants and other biological species[34]. In these circumstances, emphasizing a unity over and above such distinctions would not be a very advisable strategy.

[30] M. BIARDEAU, *L'ātman dans le commentaire de Śabarasvāmin*. Mélanges d'Indianisme. A la mém. de L. Renou, Paris 1968, 117.—There is, however, an increasing relevance of the *ātman* already in Kumārila's Ślokavārttika.

[31] Bṛhatī on VI, 1, 4 (ed. SUBRAHMANYA SASTRI, vol. 5, 55 f.).

[32] Ṛjuvimalā, l.c. 55.

[33] Mimāmsāsūtra VI, 1, 1 ff., with commentary.—Cf. the old formula *śūdro yajñe 'navakḷpaṭh* (already Taittiriya-Saṃhitā VII, 1, 1, 6).

[34] Cf. W. HALBFASS, l.c. (n. 20), 22 ff.

It is worth noticing that the followers of Prabhākara, most notably Śālikanātha Miśra, do not accept the theory of the caste-universals. For them, "man-ness", *puruṣatva*, remains the basic universal, constituting what we might call an infima species, a final indivisible species. They do not try to provide a metaphysical and biological basis for the exclusion of the Śūdras, which they nevertheless accept as valid. There is one basic "form" (*ākāra, ākṛti*) which is identical in all human beings and which distinguishes them from other species; there is no such "form" in all kṣatriyas which would distinguish them from brahmins etc.[35].

Examples of how the consolidation of the *varṇa* structure overshadows notions of the unity of the human species can also be found in other systems, e.g. in Sāṃkhya: The word *ekavidha*, "of one kind", which the Sāṃkhyakārikā[36] uses to characterize mankind, evidently poses a certain problem for the commentators of that work, and they tend to play down, if not explain away, its possible implications; Vācaspati Miśra's explanation is that in the usage of *ekavidha* the subdivision of the human species into lower species, sc. the four main castes, is simply left out of consideration[37].

To conclude our brief survey, we now turn to a system which in various significant ways responds to, i.e. supplements, continues and transcends the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā, sc. the Uttara-Mīmāṃsā or Vedānta, specifically Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta. The level of ultimate non-dualistic truth in Vedānta leaves obviously no room for anthropology in a concrete sense. Concerning the level of *vyavahāra*, of conventional, empirical truth, it might seem that Śaṅkara simply adopts and adjusts to his own context the teachings of Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā. In his commentary on the Brahmasūtras[38], he maintains the exclusion of the Śūdras from any access to the Vedic, specifically Upaniṣadic "revelation" (*śruti*) and to the liberating knowledge which it contains in the same way in which Śabara sets forth their exclusion from the Vedic sacrifice. However, as we have seen, Śabara nevertheless has a very explicit notion of the particularity and uniqueness of man, which, while it excludes the animals, includes the Śūdras, outcastes, etc.; and it is the response to this notion which reveals some more subtle and ambivalent aspects of what we may call the Advaita Vedānta attitude towards "anthropology".

[35] Cf. Śālikanātha Miśra, Prakāraṇapañcikā (with comm. Nyāyasiddhi, ed. A. Subrahmanya Sastri, Benares 1961), 100 ff.; the two usages of *puruṣa* in the following sentence (l.c., 100–101) present two different connotations ("male" and "human") of this word: *na hi nānāstrīpuruṣavyaktiṣu puruṣatvād arthāntarabhūtam ekam ākāram ātmasātkurvanti matir āvirbhavati.*

[36] Kārikā 53.

[37] Cf. W. Halbfass, l.c. (n. 20), 11 f.

[38] On I, 3, 34–38.

In the introduction to his Brahmasūtrabhāṣya Śaṅkara tells us that there is no basic difference between human and animal behaviour. Man as well as animals try to obtain the pleasant and avoid the unpleasant; fear and desire govern their actions[39]: "Animals, when sounds or other sensible qualities affect their sense of hearing or other senses, recede or advance according as the idea derived from the sensation is a comforting or disquieting one. A cow, for instance, when she sees a man approaching with a raised stick in his hand, thinks that he wants to beat her, and therefore moves away; while she walks up to a man who advances with some fresh grass in his hand. Thus men also—who possess a higher intelligence—run away when they see strong fierce-looking fellows drawing near with shouts and brandishing swords; while they confidently approach persons of contrary appearance and behaviour. We thus see that men and animals follow the same course of procedure with reference to the means and objects of knowledge (*pramāṇaprameyavyavahāra*). Now it is well known that the procedure of animals bases on the non-distinction (of Self and Non-Self); we therefore conclude that, as they present the same appearances, men also—although distinguished by superior intelligence—proceed with regard to perception and so on (*pratyakṣādivyavahāra*), in the same way as animals do ———" (In his following remarks, Śaṅkara refers to sacrificial activities.)

While the commentators[40] tend to see this discussion more or less as a pedagogical device, destined to convince us of the all-comprehensive presence of "ignorance" in this world, it seems to me that there are more specific references in this passage: It is the Mīmāṃsā distinction between men and animals in terms of intelligence and long-term planning, which is rejected here, as being reducible to an insignificant difference in degree. The basic mechanism of action, of wordly practical life remains what it is, whether a higher degree of intelligent thought (*citta*) and long-term planning based upon the scriptural knowledge of an after-life are involved or not; whatever its specific conditions may be, the basic orientation of *vyavahāra* is the same. The kind of pragmatic, practical intelligence, which is the criterion of Śabara's distinction between men and animals, is quite inappropriate to account for and explain the access to *mokṣa*, liberation. To be sure, the animals (just as the Śūdras) *are* excluded from the access to the sources of liberating knowledge, and there *are* references to natural, empirical, intellectual abilities and disabilities in this connection; the inability of the animals to study and comprehend the scriptures is as obvious and valid for Śaṅkara as it is for Śabara. Yet, in order for man to really be open for *mokṣa*, he has to stop seeing anything particular and privileged in himself as man (homo sapiens). Trying to empirically ascertain and theoretically justify what

[39] Brahmasūtrabhāṣya, Upodghāta (following the translation by G. Thibaut).

[40] E.g. Padmapāda, Pañcapādikā.

may be his soteriological privilege would, in fact, undermine and destroy it. Śaṅkara is quite explicit on this point[41]: Whatever we may discover as man's "wordly competence" (*sāmarthyaṃ laukikam*) is in itself alone not sufficient to explain and justify his *adhikāra* for liberating knowledge[42].—Man alone can discover himself, but he discovers himself not *as* man; and if he has any privileged soteriological position, it is the freedom to transcend that very context to which he owes this privilege, and in which he is man.

Nevertheless, there is a keen awareness of and interest in questions of intelligence and self-awareness; the empirical world is often seen in terms of a gradation, a hierarchy of knowledge and self-mastery, i.e. of transparency or manifestness of the *ātman*[43]. Moreover, there is a constant implicit presence of "anthropological" motives in Advaita Vedānta, and more than once Śaṅkara, like other Vedāntins, turns out to be an insigthful anthropologist malgré lui. P. Hacker has called attention to the anthropological implications of an important passage in Śaṅkara's commentary on the Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad[44], where Śaṅkara, for exegetical and pedagogical reasons still speaking the language of *vyavahāra*, shows how the human being "exists as a unity by virtue of the spiritual self pervading all his bodily and psychic constituents and functions"[45].—Yet, there is at the same time an almost deliberate way of *not* systematically pursuing these anthropological questions and motives.

In conclusion, we may say that the story of Indian philosophizing about man as *manuṣya*, as homo sapiens or animal rationale, is not merely a story of absences or non-occurrences. Man as thinking, planning, future-oriented animal—this classical theme of Greek thought[46], which has accompanied Western thought into its later developments, becoming even more prominent since the Renaissance, and which is still very much alive in an exemplary work of modern philosophical anthropology

[41] Qn I, 3, 34: *sāmarthyam api laukikaṃ kevalaṃ na adhikārakāraṇam bhavati.*

[42] Cf., however, the discussion on the *adhikārakāraṇa* for the Gods in the commentary on I, 3, 26.

[43] Cf., e.g., Śaṅkara on Brahmasūtra, I, 3, 30: ... *jñānaiśvaryādyabhivyaktir api pareṇa pareṇa bhūyasī bhavati.*—The evaluation of the "wordly" factor may differ in the case of other Advaitins.

[44] IV, 3, 7.

[45] P. HACKER, *A Note on Śaṅkara's Conception of Man.* German Scholars on India. Contributions to Indian Studies, I, Varanasi 1973, 105.

[46] Cf. M. LANDMANN, *De homine. Der Mensch im Spiegel seines Gedankens*, Freiburg/München 1962.—For an interesting contrast between the Indian and the Egyptian traditions cf. S. MORENZ, *Ägyptische Ewigkeit des Individuums und indische Seelenwanderung.* Asiatica. Festschrift F. Weller, Leipzig 1954, 414–427.

like E. Cassirer's Essay on Man (1944), is, as we have seen, not at all completely absent in Indian thought. However, it remains true that it has never been developed and explicated in a way which would be comparable to what we find in the Western philosophical tradition. Instead, it is overshadowed, suppressed by other preoccupations, and it evaporates in the later development of Indian thought. Philosophical thought, insofar as it is concerned with the final and ultimate goal of *mokṣa* and with the paths leading to it can obviously not focus on man as a temporal, social, earthly being; it emphasizes a reality *in man* (*ātman, puruṣa*) which as such is not a *human* reality.—There is thought about man in Hinduism, but there is no tradition of historical and secular thinking, in which alone interest in and thought about man as homo sapiens, as self-producing "cultural" and technological animal can really grow and develop.

In this paper, we have only been referring to ancient and classical Indian philosophy. It would, of course, be a very different question to investigate how modern Indian thought, which often, and obviously in response to the Western challenge, puts a peculiar emphasis on the concept of man, relates to, and contrasts with, this classical tradition[47].

[47] Conspicuous examples would be Bankimchandra Chatterji and Rabindranath Tagore, both reflecting Comte's "religion of man".—Even in otherwise rather traditionalistic modern Pandit literature, modified ways of dealing with man may be found; cf. Maheśacandra Nyāyaratna, Brief Notes on the Modern Nyāya System, Calcutta s.d. (in Sanskrit), 8 (on *manuṣyatva*); Vidyāśaṅkara Bhāratī, Dhārmikavimarśasamuccaya, Poona 1944, 142; 206 (man as purposeful, self-conscious actor).