Systematic Philosophy between the Empires

Some Determining Features

Johannes Bronkhorst

INTRODUCTION

It would be a mistake to take the Vedic Upaniṣads as point of departure for the development of systematic philosophy in India. These Upaniṣads contain no systematic philosophy, nor are they taken as basis for the elaboration of systematic philosophy during the period that interests us. No sources of systematized so-called Vedānta philosophy—which should perhaps be called “Vedāntism” or “Vedāntic” or even “Vedāntistic” philosophy—have come down to us from this period, and it is the one school of thought that is absent in the debates of that time. Probably the first more or less datable reference to systematic Vedānta philosophy occurs in the work of the Buddhist scholar Bhāvaya, who belongs to the sixth century CE. Systematic philosophy did exist before this date in India, and its practitioners were interested in each others’ opinions, but systematized Vedānta philosophy was either nonexistent, or ignored by all (Qvamström 1989: 15).

The other two so-called orthodox ontologies, viz., Sāṃkhya and Vaiśeṣika, did exist during the period preceding the Gupta Empire, but the number of surviving texts is very small indeed. This small number stands in sharp contrast with the number of Buddhist philosophical texts that are still accessible to us. Two volumes of the Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, nos. VII and VIII, describe Buddhist texts composed before 350 CE (Potter 1996, 1999). No Sāṃkhya text from that period survives, and for Vaiśeṣika we only have the Vaiśeṣika Śūtra, which is known to have undergone changes and interpolations.

These contrasting numbers should not induce us to draw hasty conclusions. An important number of Buddhist texts have survived because they had the good luck of being translated into Chinese at an early date. Few Brahmanical texts had this good fortune. It is also clear that Sāṃkhya and Vaiśeṣika were in existence at least during the last centuries preceding the Gupta Empire, and that texts belonging to these schools existed but have not survived. It seems yet undeniable that during the early centuries of
that found its direct expression in texts that are now lost to us? Or do these passages provide glimpses of the nonsystematized predecessors of Sāṃkhya philosophy? The fact that Sāṃkhya-like ideas still appear in much more recent religious texts suggests that nonphilosophical Sāṃkhya largely led a life of its own, little influenced by the attempts of systematic thinkers to create a coherent whole out of these floating elements. It also suggests that nonphilosophical Sāṃkhya existed before, as well as beside, philosophical Sāṃkhya. Regarding the latter it is difficult to look back further than Vārṣaganyā, even though it is clear that some form of philosophical Sāṃkhya existed already at the time of Āryadeva and therefore most probably before Vārṣaganyā (see Bakker and Bisschop 1999; Brockington 1999).

The situation of Vaiśeṣika is similar to the one of Sāṃkhya in that we have a short exposition of the classical system in the Paññāрагama of Āraññā, and various fragments from a more detailed earlier work which appears to have been for some time the main text of this school of thought. This lost earlier text is the Kāṇḍaṇī, whose author may have been a certain Rāvaṇa. The Kāṇḍaṇī was a commentary on the Vaiśeṣika Sūtra, and was itself commented upon in a Tiṭṭā by the same Praśāsta who also composed the Paññāragama. This commentary by Praśāsta, too, is now lost, but fragments of this text, too, have been preserved. Information about the Kāṇḍaṇī and Praśāsta’s Tiṭṭā can be derived from critical discussions in the works of Mallāvādī and Sinhāṣṭrī, as well as from the works of the Vedāntin Śāṅkara. The Kāṇḍaṇī appears to be more recent than the Sāṣṭānta: though older than Dignāga, its treatment of fallacious reasons indicates that it is more recent than Vasubandhu the author of the Vādāvīdhi and Vādāvīdhana.

The Vaiśeṣika of the Kāṇḍaṇī was not in all respects identical with that of the Paññāragama and its commentaries. A particularly important difference is the acceptance of a creator god in the latter where the former had no place for one. A relatively minor, yet theoretically important, difference concerns the question how many atoms there are in a specch of dust: six in classical Vaiśeṣika, three in the Kāṇḍaṇī (Bronkhorst 1993a, forthcoming-b).

In order to find out more about Vaiśeṣika from the period before the Kāṇḍaṇī, our most important source of information is, of course, the Vaiśeṣika Sūtra. Unfortunately this text has reached us in a number of differing versions. What is worse, we know that this text had already undergone changes at an early age. The full extent of those changes can no longer be determined, but the evidence of some early authors—among them Bharṭṛhari, Dignāga, Jīnabhadrā, and Praśāsta himself—permits us to conclude that certain portions have been added to the original text. We know, for example, that the original Vaiśeṣika Sūtra did not look upon sound as a quality, but rather as a substance, a form of wind (Bronkhorst 1993b, 1994b).

Since there are serious doubts about the form of the original Vaiśeṣika Sūtra, it is difficult to determine its date. Quite independent of the Vaiśeṣika Sūtra, however, there is evidence to show that Vaiśeṣika did exist during the early centuries of the Common Era. A Vaiśeṣika position is criticized in the Spītā manuscript, which presumably dates from the third century at the latest (Franco 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2001). The voluminous Sarvāstivādī Mahāvibhāṣā shows acquaintance with Vaiśeṣika (and with Sāṃkhya), as does perhaps Śāṅghaṭa, the author of the Buddhacarita. All this shows that Vaiśeṣika and Sāṃkhya existed in some form from

---

1 See Motegi 1986; Bronkhorst 1994a, forthcoming-c, and the Appendix at the end of this chapter.
at least the first centuries of the Common Era onward. There is, on the other hand, no evidence known to me that would allow us to conclude that these schools existed already before that period. The earlier Buddhist texts do not mention them, and not even Patañjali’s voluminous Vyākaraṇa-Mahābāṣya contains any trace of awareness of them; being a Brahminical text, it might have been expected to do so (Bronkhorst forthcoming-d).

As stated above, a number of Buddhist philosophical texts have been preserved, and we do not therefore depend on textual archeology to find out what Buddhist thinkers thought. There is, on the other hand, a fair amount of uncertainty regarding the exact dates of many of those texts. We know that systematic thinking started early, first of all it seems in Sarvāstivāda Buddhism. We have Chinese translations of systematizing texts that date from the first centuries c.e. A manuscript dating from the first century has been found which, as Collett Cox informs me, contains a polemical Abhidharma text which criticizes the Sarvāstivādains. 2 All this shows that systematic philosophizing among the Sarvāstivādains began early, probably well before the beginning of the Common Era. Further reflections about the period at which it began will be found below.

Jainism came to contribute to the philosophical debate at a rather late stage. This religious movement—or rather one major branch of it: the Śvetāmbaras—has left us what it considers the original canon of Jainism. The authenticity of this canon is not accepted by other Jainas. Even the Śvetāmbaras agree that part of their canon got irrevocably lost, and that what survived did not reach its final form until the fifth century of the Common Era; there are clear indications that at least some of its texts are not very old. What is more, there is nothing that one might call systematic philosophy in the Tattvārtha Śūtra, a text which may belong to the third or fourth century c.e. (Dundas 1992: 61ff., 74; 2002: 70ff., 86; Bronkhorst 1985).

THE EARLY HISTORY OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY IN OUTLINE

In spite of the limited source material at our disposal, a number of indications suggest that the period from the beginning of Indian systematic philosophy up to the time of the Gupta Empire can be divided into two distinct eras. During these two eras those who were intellectually active had altogether different preoccupations, and were driven by different fundamental assumptions about the nature of the world. This is true to the extent that it may be useful to borrow a concept from the French thinker Michel Foucault. In his book The Order of Things he introduces the concept of episteme. An episteme, as Foucault uses the term, is the structure of thought that defines an era. In the recent history of Europe, for example, the Renaissance could be defined by its assumption of the resemblance between words and things. Following periods—the classical age or Enlightenment, then the modern age—are characterized differently:

2 Collett Cox has provided further information about this manuscript in a paper (“Reconsidering the Early Sarvāstivāda in the Light of a Gāndhāri Abhidharma Fragment”) presented at the Thirteenth Conference of the International Association of Buddhist Studies held in Bangkok, December 2002.
which inspired philosophers to develop most of the fundamental doctrines that were to accompany and even define the different schools of thought for centuries to come.

Since time and space do not permit me to argue each of the following points in detail, I will limit myself to a short presentation based on research published elsewhere.

The First Episteme

Sarvāstivāda

The Sarvāstivādins may have been the first systematic philosophers in India. It seems likely that these Buddhists created, in a short time span, a coherent system of thought out of traditional material. This traditional material consisted primarily of lists of so-called dharmas. For present purposes it will not be necessary to provide a detailed description of these dharmas. The lists of dharmas were revised, new dharmas were introduced, and an altogether different categorization was imposed upon them (the so-called Pañcavastuka). All these changes did have consequences that had more than mere scholastic interest. Or rather: these changes were the scholastic expression of a changed and systematized way of understanding the world, of an ontology that had not so far been part of the Buddhist tradition.

The ontology which Sarvāstivāda imposed upon its Buddhist heritage is thoroughly atomistic in its nature. It denies the existence of composite things. Existence, it is maintained, only belongs to their ultimate parts. These ultimate parts are the dharmas.

These dharmas are not to be identified with material atoms. Most of the dharmas which the Sarvāstivādins inherited from the preceding Buddhist tradition concern mental states, and even those few that do concern the material world are not themselves material atoms. This does not mean that the existence of material atoms is rejected. Their existence is accepted, but they are conceived of as conglomerations of certain dharmas, among them the qualities form, odor, taste, and touch. Material atoms in Sarvāstivāda are not therefore the ultimate constituents of matter.

The same atomistic attitude which postulates that only the dharmas really exist is applied to things extended in time: all that exists is momentary, so that strictly speaking only momentary dharmas exist.

The world, seen in this way, consists of series of momentary dharmas that succeed each other. This succession is clearly not haphazard: the world is a relatively stable and to some extent predictable place. This is due to the fact that a causal mechanism is responsible for the orderly continuation of things. This causal mechanism, which receives due attention in the Sarvāstivāda texts, sees to it that each succeeding moment is determined by the immediately preceding one.

This model of the world, in which all things and processes are presented as “trains” of momentary entities, and in which the earlier entities are proximate causes that “push” the later ones forward, applies also, and especially so, to mental processes. Recall that most dharmas are mental by nature. Indeed, the canonical source inspiring much of the thought about causality—the doctrine of pratyaya samutpāda, “origination in dependence,” see below—primarily concerns the causal interrelationship between mental factors.

In explaining mental processes, the Sarvāstivādins were confronted with difficulties which had to be dealt with. They were of the opinion that two mental events cannot simultaneously occur in one person. This leads to difficulties in the case of some such mental event as the observation of one's own desire. This involves two mental events: the desire and the observation of which it is the object. The desire, being the cause of its own observation, has to precede the observation. Since mental events are momentary, and the desire is therefore no longer present when it is observed, this would imply that one observes a nonpresent event. Confronted with this dilemma, the Sarvāstivādins concluded that something nonpresent exists. Future and past things all exist: sarvam asti. This peculiar belief gave the Sarvāstivādins their name.

The vision which the Sarvāstivādin systematizers imposed upon the world is very different from the common sense perception of the world. These Buddhist thinkers were confronted with the task of explaining how it is that such a thoroughly atomistic world appears to us as if it consists of objects that are extended both in space and in time. They provided an answer by bringing in the words of language. Composite objects—such as chariots, houses, and indeed persons—do not really exist, but are believed to exist because there is a word for them. These things derive their pseudo-existence from the words of language. This implies of course that the world of our experience (which does not really exist) has a close and intrinsic connection with the words of language (Bronkhorst 2000a: 76–127, esp. 94ff.).

Other Buddhist Schools

The interpretation of reality first elaborated by the Sarvāstivādins spread to other Buddhist schools in continental India, not without being adapted and modified in the process. Soon all continental Indian Buddhists shared notions such as the momentariness of all that exists, and the fundamental nonexistence of composite objects. Even the schools that adhered to the so-called pudgala-vāda tried to define the pudgala—whose existence they supposedly accepted—in terms that owed much to the scholastic efforts of the Sarvāstivādins and related schools. That is to say, the fundamentally atomistic understanding of reality became common property of all those continental schools that have left us traces of their intellectual labor.

Vaiśeṣika

The same basic understanding of reality also spread further, beyond Buddhism. We have seen that very little documentary evidence regarding the earliest form of Vaiśeṣika has survived, but the texts that have survived allow us to conclude that Vaiśeṣika, probably from its beginning, is pervaded by the same atomistic vision of the world which we associate with Sarvāstivāda and other Buddhist schools of that period. In the case of Vaiśeṣika, this is all the more striking since it obviously made a point of rejecting Sarvāstivāda and of replacing their positions with different ones of their own. Vaiśeṣika did not accept that only ultimate constituents exist; this does not change the fact that it postulated the existence of ultimate constituents, atoms, which it then granted existence beside composite objects. Vaiśeṣika was not willing to deny the existence of things extending in time, either; yet its analysis of mental and related
processes (which includes their ideas about number) reveals a succession of momentary steps; indeed, it has been said to be expressive of an “atomistic mode of thinking.” Even the acceptance of common sense reality, which distinguished Vaiśeṣika from Saṅsvētivāda, led to a position which is very close to the one rejected. The common sense world of our experience is unreal and intimately connected with the words of language, according to Saṅsvētivāda. This same common sense world is real according to Vaiśeṣika, but still intimately connected with the words of language.

In order to create a coherent vision out of the elements just mentioned, Vaiśeṣika had to introduce a number of notions which in themselves were very different from what we find in contemporary Buddhist philosophy. This easily obsures the fact that both worked on the basis of an atomistic understanding of the world (both spatially and temporally) in which only proximate causality was allowed to “push” the next moments forward (Lysenko 1994; Bronkhorst 1992).

Jainism

The Sāśāṛaṣṭa (Skt. Sāṛrakṛṣṭha), one of the oldest texts of the Jaina canon, is acquainted with the Buddhist doctrine of momentariness. More interesting for our present purpose is that younger texts of the Jaina canon themselves adopt atomistic notions: the moment (samaṇa), the smallest unit of space (pradesa), the atom (paramāṇu). All these are stated to be single, indivisible, indestructible in the Thā̄pa (Skt. Thā̄ṇha). The Vīyākapannati (Bhāgavati) adds that “the atom and the objects that occupy one unit of space last one unit of time.” Other canonical passages show that the Jainas side with the Vaiśeṣikas in accepting composite objects as separate and individual things (Jaini 1979: 98ff.; Bronkhorst 2000c).

Grammar

The new atomistic way of thinking exerted an influence not just outside Buddhism but outside religio-philosophical thought as well. There is reason to think that it exerted an influence on the discipline of grammar. This would then account for the conceptual gap which is known to exist between Pāṇini and his commentator Patañjali.

The commentator Patañjali imposes a form of linearity on grammatical derivations which is not taught in Pāṇini’s grammar. S. D. Joshi and Paul Kiparsky have recently shown that many Pāṇiniyan derivations make use of (and have to make use of) “lookahead.” Patañjali tries to arrive at the correct result without it. Only one example will be given here to illustrate the difference. In the derivation of dadhāi “they put,” the third person plural ending is not anti, as usual, but anti. In Pāṇiniyan terminology this means that the suffix jhi in the initial situation dha-hi is not replaced by anti, but by anti. However, the general rule (P. 7.1.3: jho ‘not’) prescribes substitution by anti, while the special rule (P. 7.1.4: ad abhyasāt) prescribes anti only for the special case of reduplication. But at the initial stage there is no reduplication as yet; this does not come about until after some intermediate steps. Lookahead takes this future development into account, and does not replace jhi by anti until reduplication has taken place. Patañjali, and following him all later commentators, did not like lookahead, and tried to avoid it wherever possible. He goes through much trouble to formulate special principles and ad hoc rules that are meant to secure that each step in a derivation be determined by the elements in place, not by elements that have not yet appeared.

Derivations as envisaged by Patañjali cannot use preceding information, either. Only the elements in place at a particular stage determine the next operation.

This linear scheme characterizes processes in the first episteme: they consist of distinct stages, each of which is wholly determined by the immediately preceding one. It seems reasonable to assume that Patañjali thought of a grammatical derivation as some kind of process. Whether he thought of it as a mental process is less clear. For our present purposes this does not matter. Patañjali treated derivations as processes, and expected them to behave the way his episteme told him processes should behave.

It is of some importance to note that Kātyāyana’s, whose Vārttikas are incorporated into Patañjali’s Mahābhāṣya, does not yet adhere to Patañjali’s vision of a grammatical derivation in which each stage is completed and exclusively determined by the elements in place (Bronkhorst forthcoming-c).

Sāṃkhya

Sāṃkhya systematic thought looks at first sight like the odd man out in this enumeration of intellectual currents affected by the atomistic episteme. At first sight it seems indeed that the systematizers of this philosophy were not affected by it. Philosophical Sāṃkhya as known to us from its classical texts does not postulate the existence of atoms, nor does it divide processes into momentary units. Sāṃkhya causal thinking is poles apart from the idea of momentary proximate causes that push processes forward.

There is yet evidence concerning early systematic Sāṃkhya that suggests that the situation was not quite like that during the centuries preceding the Sāṃkhya Kārikā, the earliest surviving text. A variety of early testimonies indicate that the Sāṃkhya that found expression in Vārṣaṇya’s Saṅśītantra and before included the view that the five qualities sound, touch, color, taste, and odor were the ultimate constituents of all material objects. This point of view is of course similar to that of the Saṅsvētivāda, who in addition thought that these qualities were essential ingredients of material atoms (Bronkhorst 1994a).

A number of indications furthermore suggest that early systematic Sāṃkhya did have the idea of atoms that were constituted of more elementary parts. These more elementary parts are often called tanmātras, and contain among themselves (or are simply identified with) the five qualities.3

As has been pointed out above, the Sāṃkhya that we find in the surviving texts is not in all details identical with the earlier form which interests us most at present, but information about which can only be obtained through more or less direct references and quotations in other works. We will see below that the second episteme may be responsible for the modifications subsequently introduced into school doctrine.

3 See the Appendix, below, and Bronkhorst forthcoming-c.
Other Sciences

The scarcity of surviving textual material from the centuries around the beginning of the Common Era does not allow us to fathom the extent to which the atomistic vision of the world affected other sciences of that time. One might think that sciences such as medicine would be unlikely to be influenced by it. It is therefore all the more noteworthy that the Caraka Samhita mentions atoms (paramāṇu; Sūrīrāṣṭrā 7.17), and accepts momentariness in the following words, which it puts in the mouth of Ārya Puṇarvasu (Sūrīrāṣṭrā 16.33): “Because it passes so rapidly; a thing perishes the moment it has come into being. There is no cause of its disappearance, nor does it undergo modification.” It would be imprudent to conclude more from this last passage than that the idea of momentariness was widespread enough to find expression in this isolated passage of the Caraka Samhita (Meulenbeld 1999: IA: 110f.; Bronkhorst 2002c). Isolated remarks in other texts, such as the Manusmṛti’s observation (1.27) that the world comes about with (sārdham) the impermanent atomic particles of the five elements (āṇgyo mātrā vināśīno dasārdhānām), have to be treated with equal caution. Commentators (Medhātithi, Kullūka, etc.), be it noted, interpret these impermanent atomic particles as being the Sāṃkhya tannātras.

Conclusions

This short presentation of the way in which the first episteme finds expression in Indian intellectual life during the centuries around the beginning of the common era allows us to draw some tentative conclusions about chronological and related issues. It seems hard to deny that this particular way of visualizing the world started within a school of Buddhism. Several traditional Buddhist elements easily lent themselves to a new interpretation that is in conformity with the newly propounded vision of the world. The problematic anātman doctrine of traditional Buddhism lent itself to an interpretation in which no composite person is believed to exist beside its components, the dharmas. Statements about the impermanence of things could be taken as a confirmation of the momentariness of all that is. The incomprehensible doctrine of “origination in dependence” (pratītyasamutpāda) could be interpreted as a causal theory in which earlier dharmas determine succeeding ones (”that being, this comes to be; from the arising of that, this arises; that being absent, this is not; from the cessation of that, this ceases”). These aspects of traditional Buddhism could be interpreted so as to fit the new ontology, and they were.

There are strong reasons to believe that this vision was first launched in the Sarvāstivāda school of Buddhism in particular. The complete revision of Abhidharma undertaken by the Sarvāstivādins has already left clear traces in their Abhidharma Pīṭaka, which is in these respects totally different from the other surviving Abhidharma Pīṭaka, that of the Therāvādins. Early noncanonical texts of the same school provide us with further information. It seems probable that all the new ideas that we associate with the new episteme were introduced more or less simultaneously

with the new categorization known by the name Pañca śāstra. The fact that the Sarvāstivāda revision of Abhidharma has determined the content of at least a number of canonical Abhidharma texts suggests that it must have taken place at a rather early date. The Sarvāstivāda texts themselves do not however allow us to make a precise estimate.

It is here that the interpretation of Pāṇini’s grammar by Pātañjali may be of help. We have seen that this commentator imposes upon the grammar processes of the kind characteristic of the first episteme. This suggests that he had been infected by ideas that started with the Sarvāstivādins; he may therefore postdate the Pañca śāstra. This would agree with the fact that there are various other indications supporting the view that Pātañjali was acquainted with Buddhist literature, and with Sarvāstivāda ideas in particular (Bronkhorst 1987, 1995, 2002d). This would then justify the conclusion that the conceptual revolution that took place in Sarvāstivāda must be dated before Pātañjali the author of the Mahābhāṣya. Pātañjali is supposed to have lived around or soon after 150 BCE, in the Northwest of the subcontinent.5 The Sarvāstivādins are commonly accepted to have belonged to that region. Their intellectual revolution may therefore have taken place before 150 BCE.

The fact that already parts of the Śvetāmbara Jaina canon have yielded to the atomistic vision of the world does not permit us to draw chronological conclusions of much importance. The chronology of this mass of texts is notoriously uncertain; the only reliable information seems to be that the texts reached their present forms in the fifth century of the Common Era. This does not imply that all parts of the canon are equally young, but the fact that the Sūryapañcāla (= Sūrīrāṣṭrā), which is normally considered one of its oldest parts, already associates Buddhists with momentariness, suggests a relatively late date for the Jaina canonical texts that have adopted momentariness and general atomism themselves. (It may of course also be taken to argue for an early date for the Pañca śāstra.)

The Second Episteme

At four different places of the Mahābhāṣya we find the following passage: 6

Someone says to some weaver: “weave a cloth out of this thread.” He (i.e., the weaver) thinks: if it is (already) a cloth, it is not (still) to be woven. But if it is (still) to be woven, it is not a cloth. (To say,) it is (still) to be woven and it is a cloth becomes contradictory. Certainly, what he means is a designation (viz., “cloth”) yet to come (bhāvinī samjñā). That, I think, is to be woven, which, when woven, becomes the (thing called) cloth.

Pātañjali draws from it a simple conclusion about the use of words: a word can be used

4 Tr. Wujastyk 2003: 398: “The parts of the body cannot, however, be counted because they are divided into tiny atoms (paramāṇu), and these are too numerous, too minute, and beyond perception.”

5 Note that several scholars (among them Frauwallner 1960) propose a more recent date for the Mahābhāṣya.

6 VMBH I p. 112 l. 10–13 (on P. 1.1.45 Vt. 3); I p. 275 l. 6–8 (on P. 1.3.12 Vt. 2); I p. 394 l. 13–16 (on P. 2.1.51 Vt. 4); II p. 113 l. 18–21 (on P. 3.2.102 Vt. 2): tad yathā kaścit kaṃcit tantavādaya dha l asya śūtrasā ājñākam vayeti | sa pafyati yadi śākak na vātuṣṇv ra[v]a vātuṣṇa na śākakāḥ śākakā[ḥ vātuṣṇy ca] ricit vipratijāyādham | bhāvinī kha[la] asya samjñāḥbhīpṛetā sa maty vātuṣṇa yasmin u śākaka ity etad bhavatī || Tr. Joshi and Roodbergen 1971: 35–36.
to designate something that is not yet there. Most, if not all, thinkers belonging to the era characterized by the second episteme[7] draw very different conclusions from very similar statements: conclusions not about the use of words but about the nature of the world. The reason is that those later thinkers all shared a presupposition which clearly was not yet part of Patañjali's intellectual baggage.[8]

The shared presupposition which came to steer the subsequent development of Indian philosophy is the correspondence principle. Those who, explicitly or implicitly, accept the correspondence principle accept that there is a close relationship between statements and the situations described by those statements, or more precisely: between the words of the statement and the things that make up the situation described. A possible example is the statement “John reads a book,” it describes a situation where there is John, a book, and the activity of reading. A similar analysis is possible in the case of numerous other statements.

Severe problems arise in the case of statements that describe the production of something, or its coming into being. The statement “the weaver weaves a cloth” can illustrate this. It describes a situation in which there is a weaver, the activity of weaving, but no cloth. Patañjali the grammarian (and his weaver) had already realized this, but had not been particularly puzzled by it because they did not yet accept, implicitly or explicitly, the correspondence principle. They had not yet fallen victim to the second episteme, which characterizes the next era.

It is difficult to understand how and why this major conceptual change had to take place, some time after Patañjali. For him and no doubt for most of his contemporaries, a simple statement like “the weaver weaves a cloth” was not disturbing in any manner, and might at best tell us something about the way in which actual practice words are used. This same simple statement, on the other hand, confronted all thinkers of the succeeding era with profound ontological questions of the kind: where is the cloth? All of them were convinced that the word “cloth” had to refer to something present in the situation described. Since common sense sees no cloth here, many were ready to discard common sense and replace it with a vision of reality in which there is something in the situation described corresponding to the word “cloth.”

Nāgārjuna

The first episteme appears to have entered Indian intellectual history through Buddhist thinkers; the same may be true of the second one. It is possible, though not certain, that Nāgārjuna was among the first to draw attention to the internal contradictions marring commonsense statements of the kind “the weaver weaves a cloth” or “the cloth comes into being.” Indeed, contradictions do not just mar such commonsense statements, they also mar many statements describing reality as conceived of by the Buddhist Abhidharma specialists, among them the Sarvāstivādins. The statement “the cloth comes into being” is problematic because there is no cloth in the situation described (if there were, it would not need to come into being); the same difficulty attaches to statements describing that a dharma comes into being. Nāgārjuna concludes that in reality nothing exists. This position is known by the name sānyāvāda.

One verse from the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā will here be cited because it clearly illustrates Nāgārjuna’s procedure.[9]

If any unproduced entity is found anywhere it could be produced. Since that entity does not exist, what is produced?

What, indeed, is produced? Nāgārjuna’s answer is: nothing, for nothing really exists.[10]

Sāmkhya

Denying that anything exists is not the only possible way of dealing with the problem. Another solution would be to maintain that, contrary to appearances, the cloth is present in the situation described by “the weaver weaves a cloth.” It could be held to be present in the thread from which the cloth is being woven. This is the position that is known by the name satkāryavāda, and which systematic Sāmkhya chose in order to deal with the problem.

In an attempt to make this counter-intuitive position plausible, Sāmkhya henceforth emphasizes the continuity of the material cause that remains present before, during, and after the production of a particular object: the thread precedes the cloth, clay precedes the pot, gold precedes the ornaments made of it. However, this emphasis on the continuously existing material cause is difficult to reconcile with the early notion that substances are mere collections of qualities. This may be the reason why this earlier notion was abandoned and is no longer present in the surviving texts of philosophical Sāmkhya. In other words, under the influence of the second episteme Sāmkhya abandoned the few links it had had with the first episteme.

Sarvāstivāda

The Sarvāstivāda Buddhists were better equipped than most to deal with the problems connected with the production of things. As a matter of fact, they already had a solution before the problem made its appearance. We have seen that this school of thought had introduced the notion that the past and future exist in order to solve the problem connected with the perception of one’s own mental states. This same notion could now solve the new problem. Since the future cloth exists, each of the terms in the sentence “the weaver weaves a cloth” denotes an existing thing. (Strictly speaking all this must of course be translated into terms of the dharma theory, for dharmas are the only things that really exist.) The sarvāstivāda, though not created in order to solve the difficulties connected with the second episteme, provided a solution which in essence coincides with that provided by the satkāryavāda.

[9] MadhK(deJ) 7.17: yadi kaścid anutpanno bhāvaḥ saṃvidyate kva c c etat iti

Ajātivāda

There is a third way to make sense of the statement “the weaver weaves a cloth.” Nāgārjuna had concluded that no cloth exists. The satkāravyādins maintained that no cloth can be produced because it is already there. The third solution would be to hold that no production can take place. This is the ajātivāda. We find it most notably in Gaudapāda’s Āgamasāstra, a text claimed by later Advaita Vedānta as its own, but also in the Mokṣopāya, which was to become the kernel of the later Yogavaisiṣṭha (Bronkhorst 2001b).

Vaiśeṣika

The two schools of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika become, toward the end of our period, the most important representatives of a position known as asatkāravyāda, which is the opposite of satkāravyāda. However, textual archeology reveals that, before reaching this point, Vaiśeṣika underwent a development during which its position was close to the satkāravyāda. Exploiting the possibility offered by the system to the extent that something may be existing without possessing existence, Vaiśeṣika could maintain that something could exist while being produced.

Jainism

Jaina canonical and postcanonical sources show that the attraction of a variant of satkāravyāda was great here, too. However, Jainism gave this solution a special twist of its own. Jīnabhadrā’s position, for example, finds expression in the following words: “a pot is being produced having been produced in the form of clay etc., because it is made of that. That same [pot] is being produced not having been produced concerning its particular shape, because that was not there before.” This way of speaking is, of course, typical of the so-called anekānātavāda that characterizes Jaina classical thought. What is more, the earliest canonical passages expressive of the anekānātavāda all occur in a context dealing with the difficulty of production. In other words, anekānātavāda appears to be the way in which Jainism responded and gave expression to the second “episteme” (Bronkhorst forthcoming-a).

Asatkāravyāda

All the thinkers considered so far were willing to draw drastic and often counter-intuitive conclusions from the perceived difficulties linked to statements describing the production of things. The Nyāya school of thought—soon to be followed by Vaiśeṣika—was not willing to do so. These thinkers rightly saw that the fundamental problem was related to the problem of referring. In “the weaver weaves a cloth,” the word “cloth” presumably had to refer to something that is present in the situation described. As long as we assume that the word “cloth” has to refer to the individual cloth that is being produced, there are difficulties. However, do words only refer to individual things?

The ontology accepted by Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika allowed of another solution. In this ontology there are not only individual things but also universals. Beside countless individual cloths there is the universal that inhere in all of them. Individual cloths have a limited life span; the universal that inhere in all of them is eternal: it has no beginning and no end. That is to say, this universal is there at the time at which the cloth is produced. Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika therefore accepted that words do not only refer to their corresponding individuals but to the related universals as well. This allowed them to solve the problem connected with the second “episteme” without straying too far from common sense.

Aphahavāda

A word must here be said about a development that took place after the end of our period. It must be mentioned because it is, if not the logical consequence of what happened before, the solution found to a problem that had occupied Buddhist thinkers for a long time. Buddhist thinkers were in no position to follow the example of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika. Their ontology had no place for such things as universals. However, the sixth-century thinker Dignāga—whom we know had been preoccupied with the problem of production—found an elegant solution, based on his analysis of the process of referring. He introduced the aphahavāda, which implies that words do not directly denote, but exclude. The technical details of this solution cannot be dealt with here, but the consequence was clear: since referring is not based on a one to one relation between words and things, the correspondence principle cannot hold either. There does not have to be a cloth in the situation described by the statement “the weaver weaves a cloth,” because referring does not work like that (Bronkhorst 1999c).

Bhartṛhari

Bhartṛhari follows Patañjali in matters grammatical. But where Patañjali saw no fundamental difficulties in statement like “the weaver weaves a cloth,” Bhartṛhari did. He offers no fewer than four different solutions, some of which coincide with the ones already discussed. New is his suggestion that the objects referred to may have metaphorical, rather than real existence. Equally interesting is his proposal to attribute mental existence to those objects.

The Persistence of the First Episteme

It will be clear from the preceding sections that the first and the second episteme do not behave like “real” epistemes as thought of by Foucault. The second episteme does not fully replace the first one in all cases: a number of thinkers held on to features of the first episteme even while looking for solutions for the problems posed by the second one. Most Buddhist Abhidharma schools as well as Brahmanical Vaiśeṣika fall into this category. These schools remain thoroughly atomistic in character and stick to the earlier understanding of causality. This last feature confronted them with major difficulties.

Recall that in causality as conceived of in the first episteme each succeeding moment is determined by the immediately preceding one. This conception is not problematic in itself, but makes it difficult to visualize by what mechanism karmic retribution takes place. In order for karmic retribution to function, causal mechanisms must extend over long time spans: a present causal situation must determine right
down to the last detail a future event that may be one or many lifetimes away. How is it possible without the interference of numerous other causal “trains”? Is such a long-term causal mechanism really conceivable without outside supervision?

A school like Śaṅkhya was not much bothered by such questions. It seems likely that Śaṅkhya had never adopted the causal mechanism of the first epistem to begin with; its surviving texts shamelessly resort to teleological explanations. Buddhist Sarvāstivāda was not much concerned either: its specific doctrine, to the extent that the past exists in the future, allowed for the possibility of direct intervention at the right moment. But other Abhidharma schools and the Brahmanical school of Vaiśeṣika were deeply affected by this difficulty. Some of their thinkers took drastic steps to remove it.

According to tradition Vasubandhu, the author of the Abhidharmakośa and -bhāsha, converted later in life to become a Yogicāra vijñānavāda. He was not the first Buddhist idealist, but his reasons for adopting this position are clearly set out in his Viṃśatikā, in the following words (commentary to verse 7): “The impression (vāsanā) of a deed enters into the series (sāntuṣa) of consciousness, nowhere else. Why don’t you accept that the fruition [comes about] right there where the impression is, and is [therefore] a corresponding modification of consciousness? What is the reason that you imagine the fruition of an impression [to come about] there, where the impression is not?” Vasubandhu considers all these three—a deed, the impression it leaves, and its future result—mental events. The causal connection between a deed and its karmic retribution much later—being different mental events in the one long concatenation of mental events that make up a person and her reincarnations—looses in this way most of its mystery. Karmic retribution seen like this is no more difficult to explain than an agreeable or disagreeable dream.

Vaiśeṣika was, once again, not inclined to abandon the commonsense view of reality. It did not therefore opt for idealism, and made a determined effort to discover the mechanism of karmic retribution. This effort did not succeed, and by the time of Praśasta the school turned to the one remaining option: it introduced the notion of a creator god, whose primary task it was to supervise karmic retribution (Bronkhorst 2000b).

Summary and Implications

The preceding sections indicate how a number of what may appear at first sight unrelated positions that find expression in classical Indian philosophy—such as satkāryavāda, asatkāryavāda, sānyavāda, ajātiavāda, anekāntavāda, apokavāda, vijñānavāda, Ītvaravāda—to mention but these—are to be understood against the background of the two epistemologies specified above. This in turn implies that the history of Indian philosophy, even in its early phases, is more than the story of a number of unrelated schools of thought. Quite on the contrary, it consists of a web of interrelated developments, in which thinkers participated who, even though from different backgrounds and without much sympathy for each other, shared several presuppositions and questions. It is also clear that many of these thinkers were aware of each others’ ideas, even across the boundaries of school, religion and, we may assume, geography.

All this raises questions. How did these early thinkers communicate with each other? and above all: why did they bother? The answer to these kinds of questions will not come from a mere analysis of doctrines. The very existence of shared epistemes takes us to the sociopolitical background of early Indian philosophy.

**SOCIOPOLITICAL FACTORS**

Philosophical ideas do not grow on trees, nor do they find their origin in some Platonic heaven, isolated from the realities of life. This does not imply that the inner logic of philosophical developments can be ignored. It does however call for reflection on the circumstances which allow philosophies to develop in accordance with their “inner logic.” What do we know about these circumstances in early India?

The testimonies of Buddhist pilgrims from China as well as a multitude of legends preserved in India itself inform us that philosophical debates frequently took place, often at royal courts. Exponents of different positions would confront each other and try to show the superiority of their own views over those of their opponents. Winning such a debate could bring great advantages, and losing one could have catastrophic consequences not only for the debater but for his group as a whole. The outcome of debates was often decided by the king and his advisers, but this should not make us conclude that the art of debating played no role. The Chinese pilgrim Xuangang tells us of a public discussion in which Dharmapāla, a Buddhist, had gained a great victory over non-Buddhists. Yet this discussion had been organized by a king who wished to destroy Buddhism in the country. This shows that other factors than political power could play a decisive role in these discussions (Watters 1904-05: 372–373).

There is every reason to believe that debates of this kind were already a feature of the period that concerns us at present. One clear indication is that debating manuals were being composed during this period. One early surviving manual of this kind has been preserved as part of the Caraka Samhitā, a treatise on medicine (dāyurveda).11 Part of the Nyāya Sūtra also counts as a debating manual. Nāgārjuna may have composed one (Kajiyama 1991). Debating, as is clear from the numerous more recent testimonies referred to above, was not a leisure occupation for scholars in ivory towers, but a matter of life and death, sometimes literally so. The obligation to defend one’s positions against decidedly unfriendly critics obliged all actual and potential participants to thoroughly think and rethink their positions, and revise them where they had reason to fear that they might look less than totally coherent to an outsider. What is more, debates encouraged potential participants not only to rethink their own positions but also to get to know the details of the positions of their opponents in the hope of finding weaknesses in them. The inevitable result was that ideas traveled quickly and easily from one group to the next, and were also studied by those who were not inclined to accept them.12

11 Prets 2000. The Caraka Samhitā also “records” debates, as does Kautalya’s Arthashastra; see Wessels 1993.

12 Caraka Samhitā, Vīmānavasthāna 8.15; Vidyabhūsana 1920; Solomon 1976, 1978; Bronkhorst 2002e.
These considerations anchor the development of Indian philosophy into the firm ground of the sociopolitical reality of its time. Ideas did not follow their logical developments for some abstract logical reasons, but because the philosophers concerned were under pressure to improve their own positions and find weaknesses in those of others. They were under such pressure because they might be called upon to defend their points of view. Seen in this way, the development of Indian philosophy during the period under consideration was in no small measure due to a particular custom that had installed itself at the royal courts and perhaps elsewhere: the custom to organize debates between scholars representing altogether different currents of thought.

Once such a custom has become part of tradition, it may continue even without political pressure. That is to say, scholars may go on critically redefining their own positions and continue to show an interest in positions with which they disagree even when there is no king around who may oblige them to participate in a debate. Indeed, debating traditions may persist even in times when the stakes are less high. This does not change the fact that few people, and this includes scholars, will be keen to have their most sacredly held beliefs questioned in public if they are not obliged to submit to such an ordeal. In the Indian situation, it appears, they were obliged to do so.

The question therefore presents itself: Why did kings play this role? How did the custom of organizing debates establish itself in India? And which are the reasons that it maintained itself there for many centuries?

These are difficult questions which cannot be answered by merely studying the philosophical arguments presented in the texts. Quite on the contrary, an answer to these questions may help us understand why those arguments were presented to begin with. It is by no means self-evident that arguments are important, or indeed that they have to be considered at all. In India itself voices were heard against the "dry reasoning" which was going on in the philosophical schools. These voices became particularly strong when Buddhism declined as a force in society in the second half of the first millennium. It is certainly no coincidence that precisely at that time ritual Mimamsa and the Vedanta philosophy became important, both of which claimed to base themselves on the Veda, which is essentially beyond discussion.

Let us return to our period. I have suggested in another publication that the confrontation in debate with representatives of totally different points of view may have begun in the parts of northwestern India ruled by Bactrian Greeks. This hypothesis accounts for an important number of known facts. It seems to me the most plausible explanation so far for the appearance of the debate tradition in India.13 This does not change the fact that the presence in India of two strong religious traditions one beside the other—viz., Buddhism and Brahmanism—could not but facilitate the confrontation of opinions. The circumstance that during this so-called "dark period" of Indian history many rulers appear to have been of foreign origin, and perhaps for this reason less exclusively linked to any one religious tradition, may have played a role as well.

Another factor that may have been of some importance is that this new tradition of critical debate could easily be assimilated to older practices that already existed in India. Names like those of King Janaka are famous in late-Vedic literature, as are the debates which he is supposed to have organized in those early days. The debates recorded in the Upanisads are, to be sure, totally different from the ones that characterize classical Indian philosophy, and can by no means be looked upon as earlier manifestations of the same thing (Bronkhorst 2002b). But it is at least conceivable that the very memory of kings like Janaka may have encouraged later kings with Brahmanical sympathies, too, to organize debates. The result would not be an Upanisadic debate, but the organizing king would not know. Buddhism, too, preserved the memory of debates, usually between the Buddha and someone else. Being representatives of a missionary religion, Buddhist preachers could hardly avoid engaging in debates, following in this the example of their founder.

I do not think that these historical antecedents alone fully explain why debates subsequently became institutionalized. It seems yet likely that without such institutionalized debates systematic philosophy might have never arisen in India.

APPENDIX

ON THE ATOMIC NATURE OF THE SÄMKHYA TANMĀTRAS

Classical Sāmkhya as we get to know it through its most important text, the Yuktidipika, does not look upon the tanmātras as being atomic (Bronkhorst 1999d: 686ff.). However, by rejecting this position it indicates that it is aware of it.

The idea of tanmātras as being atomic is found in a variety of texts, both early and late. Shējūj Motegi (1986) has drawn attention to the Chinese translation of this term which is more often used to translate anu (see further Imanishi 1961, 1968).

Very important evidence is provided by the Yoga Bhāga.14 Here we read:15 "The tanmātra is the cause of the element. The single part of the [latter] is an atom (paramāṇu) which is itself a collection of different component parts which do not exist separately, consisting of a sāmānya and a viṣeṣa. All tanmātras are like this."16 This seems to mean that the tanmātra is an atom, the single part of an element (bhūta). All, or some, elements may be composed of various tanmātras; the Yoga Bhāga is not however clear about this. It does not look upon the tanmātra as a single quality, but as a collection of a sāmānya and a viṣeṣa. The viṣeṣas are the normal five qualities, sound etc. The sāmānyas are the five elements, but conceived of as generic qualities; they are corporeality (mūrī; which is earth), viscosity (sneha; which is water), heat (uṣṇīṣa;...

14 See Dasgupta 1924: 66ff., where also some relevant passages from Vijñāna Bhikṣu's Yogavārttika are referred to.
15 Ybh 3.44: tanmātraṁ bhūta-kāraṇam 1 tasyaiko "vayavahaḥ paramāṇaḥ sāmānyavaṁśeṣām" yuyadidhāvayavahedānugataḥ samudāya ity evam sarvavāmāṭrān[1].
16 The translation "consisting of a sāmānya and a viṣeṣa" for sāmānyavāṁṣeṣām, rather than "consisting of sāmānyas and viṣeṣas" or the like, seems confirmed by Ybh 3.47: sāmānyavāṁṣeṣaḥ ahuśadhihavahabhedanugataḥ samāho dravyam indriyam "the sense-organ is the substance which is an aggregate whose parts do not exist separately, of a sāmānya and a viṣeṣa"; here the singular number of sāmānya and viṣeṣa is guaranteed by the dual ending of their compound.
which is fire), moving forward (pranamitā; which is wind), going everywhere (sarvatogati; which is ether). In introducing these generic qualities the Yoga Bhāṣya deviates from other sources on Sāṁkhya. The fact that the Yoga Bhāṣya, in spite of this difference, preserves the idea of the tannātra as an atom is no doubt significant.

Another passage in the Yoga Bhāṣya can be interpreted along the same lines: "The single modification as sound-tannātra of the constituents of nature (guna), which here take the form of something to be grasped (grāhyā), is sound as object. A single modification of sound etc. they are of the same kind as corporeality (mūrti) is the earth-atom, which is constituted of tannātras. A single modification of those [atoms] is such a thing as the earth, a cow, a tree, a mountain. Also in the case of the other elements, by taking up viscosity (sneha), heat (aṇya), moving forward (pranamitā) or giving space (avakāśādāna) as generic quality, a single modification is to be produced." The crucial word tannātraśayanavat must, in view of the context which speaks of ever more composite entities, be understood as a bahuvihari compound: "the parts of which are tannātras." A passage from the Maitrāyaṇi Upaniṣad (3.2; perhaps one of the first in which the term tannātra is used) easily lends itself to an interpretation in which it means atoms or something of the kind: "The explanation of (bhuṣita) is this: the word bhūta designates the five tannātras. The word bhūta also designates the five principal elements. The aggregate of these is called body." A peculiar passage in Vyomaśiva’s Vyomaśivati—the earliest known commentary on the Paddārthādhyarsa-agra which is better known by the name Pārastapādaśāya—confirms the idea that the tannātras were at one point the ultimate constituents of the molecules of matter. This passage discusses and explains the Vaiśeṣika position according to which a body is made up either of earth, or of water, or of fire, or of wind, but not of any combination of these elements. The

---

17 See Bronkhorst 1994a: 319. YBh 3.47 (sāṁkhyaviśeṣānā śabdādīr grāhyaḥ i viṣayaḥ) seems to suggest that the tannātras have the same names as the qualities, also in the opinion of the author of the Yoga Bhāṣya.

18 The parallelism between the position of the Yoga Bhāṣya and that of the Abhidharmakosa Bhāṣya—here as elsewhere—is striking; see Abhidhā-ka-bh (P) p. 8 l. 21–22; p. 53 l. 9–10. Note also that the Yuktīpiṭaka under Sk 38 enumerates (in ālokā) a great number of characteristics of the five elements, which includes the ones given in the Yoga Bhāṣya, though sometimes different expressions are used (TD p. 225 l. 24 ff.).

19 YBh 4.14: grāhyāmākādāna (gandānā) sābdattanātragrabhāvaśiaśaḥ pariṇāmaḥ śabdā viṣaya iti śabdāśabdaḥ mūrtisamājñātāydo māyakā paryāśaḥ pṛthiviparamāṇaṃ tannātraśayanavaḥ i teṣām cauḥ pariṇāmaḥ pṛthivi gaur vṛkaḥ parvata ity evamādo bhuṣitaśaḥ aśe śnehaśayapaśaṇādīvākāśādānādy upādāya sāṁkhyam ekavairādhbhakṣaṃ samdhiṣayā i.

20 Hattori (1968: 154 n. 5.31) concludes from this passage that "[t]he Sāṁkhya holds that the five kinds of tannātras are composed of their respective atoms." This interpretation may have to be revised.


---

objection is raised that bodies might consist of various elements at the same time. In this connection the following passage occurs:22

But if you accept the following: The constitution of a part, too, [can take place] with various elements. For example, a vyuyakta is constituted of an atom of earth and an atom of water, or again of an atom of water and an atom of fire, or of an atom of fire and an atom of wind. In the same way it [can be constituted] of wind and the tannātra of sound. These vyuyakta, once arisen, constitute, passing through [the stages] tryaṇuṣaka etc., a body.

This passage presents a position that is not accepted by Vyomaśiva, who points out that according to Vaiśeṣika doctrine the resulting tryaṇuṣaka and more complex entities cannot possess the qualities inhering in the constituent atoms. All this does not concern us at this moment. What does concern us is that the sābdattanātra—the tannātra of sound, or the tannātra which is sound—is here presented as a constituent of a potential vyuyakta, and therefore as some kind of atom, besides the atoms of earth, water, fire, and wind. It takes the place of what should be the atom of ether; but obviously, either being one and omnipresent, there can be no atom of ether in Vaiśeṣika.

This passage is enigmatic, because it is not quite clear who the opponent is. One may however guess that Vyomaśiva took this discussion, and therefore the position of the opponent, from an earlier work. Indeed, the same portion of the Vyomaśivati ends with a long citation from a work which is identified as asya śūrasya bhāṣyam "The Bhāṣya on this śūtra." The śūtra concerned (bhūvatvād rasavatvādī) cannot be identified with certainty, but appears to have belonged to the Vaiśeṣika Śūtra.23 The Bhāṣya on the Vaiśeṣika Śūtra was not, of course, the Pārastapādaśāya, but the Kaṇḍanti, probably composed after Vasubandhu but before Dignāga; this we have seen. It is therefore possible, or even likely, that the discussion about vyuyakta constituted of wind and sābdattanātra occurred already in this earlier text, which may, in its turn, have been acquainted with an earlier work of Sāṁkhya, in which tannātra was still known in the sense of "constituent of a molecule." It seems, however, clear that the position described by Vyomaśiva—and probably taken by him from the Kaṇḍanti—represents some hybrid between Sāṁkhya and Vaiśeṣika: whereas the notion of tannātra appears to be Sāṁkhya, that of vyuyakta and weṣa is decidedly Vaiśeṣika.

22 VY. I p. 81 l. 13–21: atihāvayasyaśaḥ anekabhūtair ārambhāḥ i tathāḥ, pārthivābhāvāḥ paramāṇabhāvāḥ vyuyaktaṃ, punar āpātyājāyāḥ, tathā tajjasvāvadyābhāvāḥ ārambhām it i evam vyuyasādadattanātragrabhāyām i eti vyuyaktyā upeśaṃ tryaṇuṣakādiprakramena śārīram ārthastā ity abhyuṣāgame i.

23 VY. I p. 82 l. 20ff. Two slightly different śūtras with their Bhāṣyas are cited VY. I p. 851 l. 17ff. (bhūvatvād rasavatvāc ca rasopājhane prakṛtiḥ kīramaḥ teṣām) and I p. 90 l. 4ff. (bhūvatvād sparśavatvāc ca sparsojāhane prakṛtvit vuyāk.)
A very late testimony to the atomic nature of the tannātras is a remark by Nāgęśa, in his subcommentary on the Mahābhāsya on P. 1.4.29. Nāgęśa explains that, according to some, atoms such as the ones that are the śabdatanaṁśtras are the word.24

If the material presented in this appendix is a bit higgledy-piggledy, it does show that the notion of tannātra has been associated with atoms from an early date onward, and until recently. The circumstance in particular that the tannātra is atomic in the classical texts on Yoga justifies us to surmise that is was like that in preclassical Sāṃkhya.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


24 Nāgęśa on Kālaṇṭa on P. 1.4.29 Vt. 2: paramāṇūṇāṁ śabdātmanātrādirūpāṇam kaiṣcit . . . śabdātman iṣyate.
In Jainism and Buddhism in the Indian Cultural Context. Volume in honor of Padmanabha S. Jaini.


