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THE CONTRADICTION OF SĀṂKHYA:  
ON THE NUMBER AND THE SIZE OF THE DIFFERENT  
TATTVAS

Johannes Bronkhorst, Lausanne

Several scholars have pointed out a peculiar feature of the classical Sāṁkhya system. Eli FRANCO (1991: 123 f.) describes it as follows:

One of the reasons why many of us feel uneasy with the Sāṁkhya philosophy is that we are never quite sure where we stand and whether the ancient teachers were talking psychology or cosmology. Typical psychological and individual terms like cognition, ego, mind, sense organs, and even hands, feet, tongue, anus and penis, become trans-individual and obtain cosmological dimensions.<sup>1</sup>

At another occasion I have presented some reflections on the origin of this peculiar state of affairs.<sup>2</sup> This time I wish to address the question to what extent the classical philosophers of Sāṁkhya themselves knew whether they were talking psychology or cosmology. It should not be forgotten that Sāṁkhya is more than unreflected expression of religious sentiment. Sāṁkhya was, or became, a school that was in constant interaction with other schools of thought in classical India. This interaction took the form of oral or written debates, in which philosophers criticised each other's thoughts, and would not hesitate to attack their weakest sides. The development of Indian philosophy is, at least to some extent, the story of the attempts made to defend one's views against the attacks of others. We know from various sources – e.g., the accounts given by visiting Chinese

1 HULIN (1978: 73) speaks of “le paradoxe d'un Ego ‘cosmique’, producteur des sens et des éléments matériels subtils, et non plus, semble-t-il, forme de la conscience de soi chez un individu concret”. He then continues: “Cependant, aussi objectivé et dépersonnalisé soit-il, l'*ahaṁkāra* n'en conserve pas moins, à l'intérieur du système Sāṁkhya, une face individuelle, subjective, puisqu'on lui associe constamment l'*abhimāna*, cette fonction de sur-estimation (de soi) qui lui sera désormais automatiquement attribuée. Comme on ne saurait évidemment pas se contenter de juxtaposer les deux aspects, cosmique et individuel, le problème se pose immédiatement de concevoir leur mode d'articulation.” PARROTT (1986) makes a brave, but unconvincing, attempt to solve the difficulty.

2 BRONKHORST, forthcoming.

Buddhist pilgrims – that proponents of Sāṃkhya participated actively in these encounters. The question is therefore inescapable to know whether these thinkers really defended a point of view in which psychology and cosmology were somehow confused. Indeed, a priori it is hard to believe that this was the case. Wouldn't the classical thinkers have noticed such an ambiguity? And what is more, wouldn't other thinkers have jumped on this feature of the Sāṃkhya philosophy and shown its weakness?

What reasons are there to think that such confusion actually existed? Most important in this regard is no doubt the Sāṃkhya scheme of evolution. It is presented in the following form in the Sāṃkhya Kārikā, one of our most important sources for classical Sāṃkhya. From *prakṛti* (or *pradhāna*) arises *mahat* (nom. *mahān*) or *buddhi*, from *mahat/buddhi: ahaṃkāra*, from *ahaṃkāra*: the five organs of knowledge (*buddhīndriya*), the five organs of action (*karmendriya*), the mind (*manas*) and the five *tanmātras*. From the five *tanmātras*, finally, arise the five elements (*[mahā] bhūta*).<sup>3</sup> The organs of knowledge and action, as well as the mind, clearly belong to an individual. Yet this evolutionary scheme claims to be more than the coming into being of an individual; it describes the coming into being of the universe at creation. This would imply that it describes the coming into being of numerous organs etc., one set for each individual. Their source (*mūlaprakṛti / pradhāna*) is nonetheless presented as single.

A similar contradiction seems to find expression in Sāṃkhya Kārikā 59:<sup>4</sup> “Just as a dancer withdraws from her dance having shown [herself] to the audience, so *prakṛti* withdraws, having revealed herself to the *puruṣa*.” Since there is only one *prakṛti*, but numerous *puruṣas*, one wonders which *puruṣa* is here being talked about. The verse clearly deals with liberation, but it should not be concluded that, with the liberation of one *puruṣa*, the whole material world comes to an end. Yet this is what the verse suggests. We also know that one thinker of the Sāṃkhya school, Paurika, postulated the existence of as many *pradhānas* as there are *puruṣas*,<sup>5</sup> and this would obviously solve the problem we are dealing with.

3 Cp. SK 22: *prakṛter mahāms tato 'haṃkāras tasmād gaṇas ca ṣoḍaśakah / tasmād api ṣoḍaśakāt pañcabhyaḥ pañca bhūtāni //*

4 SK 59: *raṅgasya darśayitvā nivartate nartakī yathā nṛtyāt / puruṣasya tathātmānaṃ prakāśya vinivartate prakṛtiḥ //*

5 Cp. YD p. 141 l.4-5 (PANDEYA) / p. 262 l.11-14 (WEZLER/MOTEGI): *pratipurūṣam anyat pradhānaṃ śarīrādyarthaṃ karoti / teṣāṃ ca mātmyaśarīrapradhānaṃ yadā pravartate tadetarāṇy api / tannivṛttau ca teṣāṃ api nivṛttir iti paurikah*

I have no doubt that these ideas date from a time when Sāṁkhya, or a precursor, did indeed concern psychology and cosmology at the same time. I find it harder to believe that the classical thinkers of the school still held on to this position in unmodified form. True, they belonged to a tradition and could not reject its traditional positions. But they could interpret, or reinterpret, these positions so as to avoid becoming objects of ridicule at debating encounters. I believe that the commentaries on the Sāṁkhya Kārikā contain some indications – unfortunately far too few – that this is what they did.

We have considered verse 59 above, which compares *prakṛti* to a dancer: both withdraw after having shown themselves. The Yuktidīpikā comments in the following manner:<sup>6</sup>

In this [verse] the collection of men whose castes, natures and knowledge are different, [but] who do wish to see [the dance performance], is called ‘audience’. The dance performance by the dancer pleases the [audience], and aims at many men. If someone were to say “why doesn’t she withdraw having [merely] been seen by the dance master or by the singers?” [the answer is:] that in that situation she does not withdraw because the desire of the whole audience has not been suppressed. Why? Because the aim has not been obtained. *Prakṛti* has come into action in order to fulfil the purposes of *all* the *puruṣas*, which are uneasy because of their connection with the instruments that bring about effects [in the material world]. How could *prakṛti* have obtained its/her aim when one single *puruṣa* is freed from its unease? It follows that it is not correct [to think] that *prakṛti* withdraws having revealed itself/herself to one single *puruṣa*. (my emphasis, JB)

It is clear that the author of this commentary did not interpret the verse in the way we were initially tempted to do so. The world does not come to an end with the liberation of one person.

In a way this is already clear from Sāṁkhya Kārikā 67, which points out that the soul holds on to a body even after the obtainment of liberating

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*sāṁkhyācārya manyate /*

6 YD p. 142 1.26-30 (PANDEYA) / p. 264 1.21- p. 265 1.2 (WEZLER/MOTEGI): *tatra nānāvarṇasvabhāvavijñānānām prekṣārthinām puruṣānām samghāto raṅga ity ucyate / nartakyās ca tadārādhanā nṛttakriyānekapuruṣārthā / yadi vātra kaścid brūyān nṛttācāryeṇa kuśīlavair vā drṣṭaiveyaṃ kasmān na nivartata iti tac cāpy asau kṛtsnasya raṅgasya utsukyānuparamān na nivartate / katham / akṛtārthatvāt / evaṃ sarvapurūṣāṇām kāryakaraṇasambandhenā utsukyavatām nirākāṁkṣīkaraṇārtham pravṛttā prakṛtiḥ katham ekasya puruṣasya utsukyānivrtau kṛtārthā syāt / tasmān naikasya puruṣasyātmānam prakāśya prakṛter nivrṛtir yukteti /*

knowledge, like a potter's wheel, on account of the remaining impetus.<sup>7</sup> Here a single person appears to be talked about. More information is given in the following passage of the *Yuktidīpikā*:<sup>8</sup>

But when the impetus disappears, the body caused by it is cut off. Then, “when the cutting off of the body has been obtained” (SK 68), *dharma* and *adharmā* have attained their purpose and dissolve in their cause, which is the *buddhi*. And the part of the elements that have constituted that [*puruṣa*'s] body [dissolves] in all the elements; the elements [dissolve] in the *tanmātras*; the organs and the *tanmātras* in the *ahaṃkāra*; the *ahaṃkāra* in the *buddhi*; the *buddhi* in the non-manifest. This series of essences (*tattva*), which has arisen out of *pradhāna* for that purpose, dissolves again, when its purpose has been accomplished, into *pradhāna*. *Pradhāna*, in its turn, by force of the purpose [that guides it], makes its bodies in various rebirths. (my emphasis, JB)

The last sentence is not fully clear to me. The passage seems to mean that *pradhāna* makes bodies that dissolve back into *pradhāna* when the person concerned is liberated. Here again one has the impression that the commentator at any rate did not confuse psychology and cosmology.

Elsewhere the *Yuktidīpikā* discusses the beginning of creation when, according to the position adopted by its author, no karmic residues influenced the events which were rather determined by a force called *adhikāra*, which I translate ‘obligation’. Here an opponent raises an objection which is subsequently discarded:<sup>9</sup>

7 The word is *saṃskāra*, which is probably meant to be applicable both to the potter's wheel and to the liberated (and not yet liberated) person. In the case of persons some such translation as ‘mental traces’ is customary.

8 YD p. 143 1.26-31 (PANDEYA) / p. 266 1.11-18 (WEZLER/MOTEGI): *yadā tu saṃskāraḥ śarīrasya bhedaḥ / atah prāpte śarīrabhede (SK 68) dharmādharmau kṛtārthau kāraṇe buddhilakṣaṇe layaṃ gacchataḥ / yaś cāsya bhūtāvayavaḥ śarīrārambhakaḥ sa sarvabhūteṣu, bhūtāni tanmātreṣu, indriyāṇi tanmātrāṇi cāhaṃkāre, ahaṃkāro buddhau, buddhir avyakte/ seyaṃ tattvānupūrvī tadarthaṃ pradhānād utpannā, parisamāpte 'syārthe punaḥ pradhāne pralayaṃ gacchati / pradhānam apy arthavaśād evāsya śarīrāṇi teṣu teṣu jātyantara-parivarteṣu karoti /*

9 YD p. 161 1.7-13 (WEZLER/MOTEGI) / p. 73 1.18-22 (PANDEYA): *sādhāraṇa-vigrahatvaprasaṅga iti cet / syād etat / yady adhikāranimittā śarīrotpattir ādisarge 'bhyupagamyate prāptam ekena śarīreṇa sarvapuruṣāṅgāṃ abhisambandho niyama-hetvabhāvāt / tataś ca śarīrāntarānarthakyaṃ / tenaiva sarveṣāṃ upabhoga-sāmarthyād iti / etad anupapannaṃ / kasmāt? pratyakṣavirodhāt / satyam etad anumānataḥ / pratyakṣatas tu śarīrāṇi pratipurūṣam / tasmān nāyaṃ prasāṅgaḥ /*

[Objection:] It would follow that [all souls] possess a body in common. If it is accepted that a body comes into being at the beginning of creation caused by obligation, it would follow that all souls (*puruṣa*) are connected with one body, because there is no reason why [a separate body] should be linked [to each soul]. As a result other bodies would be superfluous, because all [souls] would be capable of experience through that single [body].

[Reply:] This is not correct, because it is in conflict with perception. It is true according to logic (*anumāna*), but [we know] from perception that there are bodies [one] for each soul. That is why it does not follow [that all souls possess a body in common].

This passage both formulates the problem that occupies us and expresses in no uncertain terms the position of the author of the *Yuktidīpikā*. The Sāṁkhya scheme of evolution would be expected to give rise to but one body, not one for each soul. The opponent and the orthodox Sāṁkhya agree that this does not happen in normal times as a result of karma, which is different for each soul. However, at the beginning of creation karma plays no role, so at that time just one body for all the souls should come into being. Interestingly, the author of the *Yuktidīpikā* agrees that this should be expected to be the case, but points out that we know from perception that it has not happened like that.

Gauḍapāda's commentary introduces the same *kārikā* 67 with a question:<sup>10</sup> "If liberation comes about in a person when knowledge has arisen, then why is it not my liberation that comes about?" The answer is supposed to be given in *kārikā* 67, but neither this *kārikā* nor Gauḍapāda's comments on it answer the question explicitly. The *kārikā* merely seems to talk about the continuing body of the person who has obtained insight, and Gauḍapāda specifies that the *kārikā* is about a yogin, not therefore about all living beings. Yet Gauḍapāda's initial question forces us to conclude that for him the continued existence of other living beings is to be explained along the same lines: they continue to exist even after the liberation of one living being on account of the impetus present in them (*saṁskāraśāt*).

If the thinkers of classical Sāṁkhya did indeed not confuse these two, they must have somewhere drawn a line, in the middle of their evolutionary scheme, to distinguish between cosmological and psychological (or rather: individual) essences (*tattva*). *Mūlaprakṛti* / *pradhāna*, as we know, is single; there is no separate version of it for each individual. At the other

10 Gauḍapādabhāṣya introducing SK 67: *yadi puruṣasyotpanne jñāne mokṣo bhavati tato mama kasmān na bhavati?*

end of the scheme, the organs are clearly different for different individuals. Also the elements are numerous. We must conclude that classical Sāṃkhya was not guilty of the contradiction that has been attributed to it.

This leads us to the next question. What do we know about the intermediate *tattvas*? How many *mahats* (*buddhis*) are there, and how many *ahamkāras*? Unfortunately the texts are very little communicative about this issue. Yet there is at least one interesting remark in the *Yuktidīpikā* to be considered:<sup>11</sup> “The position of the followers of Vārṣagaṇya is that *mahat* is common [to all], because it is *prakṛti*.” This seems to mean that there is no separate *mahat* (*buddhi*) for each individual. It also suggests that this position was disputed: Sāṃkhyas who were not followers of Vārṣagaṇya may have maintained that each person has his or her own *mahat/buddhi*.

Some remarks in Vācaspatimiśra’s commentary on the *Yoga Bhāṣya* suggest that Vācaspati belonged to, or voiced the opinion of, those Sāṃkhyas who maintained that each person has his or her own *mahat/buddhi*. He begins a statement in the following manner:<sup>12</sup> “Even though the connection between each single *mahat* etc. [and the *puruṣa*], though without beginning, is non-eternal ...” This occurs in the middle of a discussion in the *Bhāṣya* about what happens to the visible (*dr̥śya*), i.e. *prakṛti*, when a *puruṣa* becomes *kṛtārtha*, i.e. reaches its aim. The answer is that the visible, even though it gets dissolved with respect to that one *puruṣa*, is not destroyed with respect to other *puruṣas*. Here the *Bhāṣya* cites the following enigmatic phrase:<sup>13</sup> “Because the connection between the characterised [and the *puruṣas*] is without beginning, also the connection between all the characters [and the *puruṣas*] is without beginning.” By itself this quotation allows of various interpretations. Vācaspatimiśra understands the characterised to be the *guṇas*, and ‘all the characters’ to be “*mahat* etc.” Immediately following this he makes the remark quoted above, to the extent that the connection between each single *mahat* etc. [and the *puruṣa*], though without beginning, is non-eternal. In spite of this, he then continues, “[the connection] between all the *mahats* etc. [and the *puruṣas*] is eternal, because [all the *mahats* etc.] are common to other *puruṣas* (which are not

11 YD p. 121 l.23 (PANDEYA) / p. 230 l.19-20 (WEZLER/MOTEGI): *sādhāraṇo hi mahān prakṛitvād iti vārṣagaṇānām pakṣah.*

12 TV 2.22: *ekaikasya mahadādeḥ saṃyogo ’nādir apy anitya eva yady api...*

13 YBh 2.22: *dharmiṇām anādisaṃyogād dharmamātrāṇām apy anādiḥ saṃyoga iti.*

liberated)".<sup>14</sup> It is safe to conclude that for Vācaspatimiśra there are many *mahats*, not just one, and therefore most probably one *mahat* for each *puruṣa*.

The passage from the Yuktidīpikā considered above leaves us with some difficulties, and indeed, the conclusion we have drawn from it is not altogether certain. The reason given for accepting that *mahat* is common to all is "because it is *prakṛti*" (*prakṛtitvāt*). But not only *mahat* is *prakṛti*; the same applies to its evolutes *ahaṃkāra* and the *tanmātras*, for they give rise to ultimate *vikṛtis*, the organs of knowledge and action, the mind, and the elements. If this reason is consequently applied, only the ultimate *vikṛtis* are multiple, one set belonging to each living being.

I know of no evidence that might once and for all decide this issue. I would however like to draw your attention to another issue that may not be altogether unrelated to it, the issue of the size of the various intermediate essences (*tattva*). Consider the following statement of the Yuktidīpikā:<sup>15</sup>

We accept that the *prakṛtis* that are the *tanmātras* have greater size (*vrddhi*) [than their derivatives], for it is our doctrine that a *prakṛti* is larger than its effect.

The passage is, once again, not as clear as we would like it to be. We may have to read it along with another passage from the same text, which explains the name *mahat*, which means "large", by stating that it is large in a spatial and in a temporal sense, larger than everything produced from it.<sup>16</sup> This same opinion is also expressed in the Yoga Bhāṣya on sūtra 2.19. The essences (*tattva*) are here divided into four categories: *viśeṣa*, *aviśeṣa*, *liṅgamātra* and *aliṅga*, and discussed in this order. The final evolutes – i.e. the five elements and the eleven organs – are the *viśeṣas*. Their *aviśeṣas* are the five *tanmātras* and *asmitāmātra* (= *ahaṃkāra*?). These are modifications of *liṅgamātra*, which is described as *mahad ātman* and as mere existence (*sattāmātra*).<sup>17</sup> Then the Bhāṣya states: Residing in this *mahad*

14 TV 2.22: ... *tathāpi sarveṣāṃ mahadādīnāṃ nityaḥ puruṣāntarāṇāṃ sādharānatvā[t]*.

15 YD p. 69 1.11-12 (PANDEYA) / p. 155 1.16-18 (WEZLER/MOTEGI): *vrddhimatyas tanmātralakṣaṇāḥ prakṛtayo 'smābhir abhyupagamyante / kasmāt / svakāryād dhi prathīyasī prakṛtir bhavatīti ca naḥ samayaḥ /*

16 YD p. 91 1.19 (PANDEYA) / p. 187 1.25-26 (WEZLER/MOTEGI): *sa tu deśamahattvāt kālamahattvāc ca mahān / sarvotpādyebhyo mahāparimāṇayuktatvān mahān /*

17 YBh 2.19: *ete sattāmātrasyātmano mahataḥ ṣaḍ aviśeṣapariṇāmāḥ*. This remarkable



*ātman*, in this mere existence, the *aviśeṣas* experience the limit of their growth.<sup>18</sup> Here too the impression is created that *mahat* is larger than all the essences that derive from it.

What can we conclude from this with regard to the size of the evolutes that derive from *mahat*? According to the passage of the *Yuktidīpikā* discussed just now, a *prakṛti* is larger than its effect. The size of *ahaṃkāra* and of the five *tanmātras* should therefore be intermediate between the size of *mahat* and that of the final evolutes, i.e. the eleven faculties and the five elements. In the case of *mahat* we may assume that its size is very large, probably infinite. The size of most elements is limited, and the same, one would be tempted to think, is true of the faculties. However, at least one Sāṃkhya thinker, Vindhyavāsin, considered even the faculties to be omnipresent. As a result he had no need for a subtle body, the existence of which he therefore denied.<sup>19</sup>

Vindhyavāsin's position is intriguing, and perhaps significant. Did he, by attributing omnipresence to the faculties, simply extend an attribute to some of the final evolutes which all Sāṃkhyas accepted as belonging to the pre-final evolutes? In that case those pre-final evolutes must have been looked upon as omnipresent. *Mahat* and *ahaṃkāra*, and perhaps the *tanmātras*, would then have to be thought of as omnipresent. Unfortunately I have come across no evidence to that effect as far as *ahaṃkāra* is concerned.

A few more words about the size of the *tanmātras*. There are indications that the *tanmātras* were at some time conceived of as being

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position, in which the *tanmātras* are directly derived from *mahat*, is attributed to Sāṃkhya by Prajñāvarman's commentary on Udbhaṭasiddhasvāmin's *Viśeṣastava* 48; see SCHNEIDER, 1993: 211 with n. 8. I thank Johannes SCHNEIDER for having drawn my attention to this passage.

18 YBh 2.19: *yat tat param aviśeṣebhyo liṅgamātram mahat tattvaṃ tasminn ete sattāmātre mahaty ātmany avasthāya vivṛddhikāṣṭhām anubhavanti.*

19 YD p. 121 l.12-13 (PANDEYA) / p. 230 l. 6-7 (WEZLER/MOTEGI): *vindhyavāsinas tu vibhutvād indriyāṇām bījadeśe vṛttyā janma / tattyaḅo maraṇam / tasmān nāsti sūkṣmaśarīram /*. It is in this context intriguing to recall that classical Jainism distinguishes five kinds of bodies, from coarse to subtle, and that the subtler a body is, the more spatial points it occupies; the two most subtle bodies can extend to the end of the universe without obstruction (FRAUWALLNER, 1956: 269; *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 2.37-41).

atomic in nature.<sup>20</sup> This is no longer the case in classical Sāṁkhya, as we have seen. Indeed, the *Yuktidīpikā* explicitly rejects this position. The passage concerned occurs in the middle of a discussion regarding the question whether atoms (*paramāṇu*) can be looked upon as the cause of the world, a position which the author of the *Yuktidīpikā* does not accept. The opponent then claims that a connection with atoms can be observed in the manifest world, because of the presence of colours etc.<sup>21</sup> The Sāṁkhya replies that this can be accounted for differently, namely, with the help of the *tanmātras*.<sup>22</sup> A little later the opponent makes the following proposal: what would be wrong in accepting that the *tanmātras* are atoms?<sup>23</sup> The Sāṁkhya rejects this proposal in a few lines that merit careful attention:<sup>24</sup>

The answer is that it is not possible [that the *tanmātras* are atoms]. We accept that the *prakṛtis* that are the *tanmātras* have greater size (*vr̥ddhi*) [than their derivatives], for it is our doctrine that a *prakṛti* is larger than its effect. The great elements earth etc. are of macroscopic size. It follows that their *prakṛti* must exceed them [in size]. Atoms, on the other hand (*ca*), have limited size. It does not therefore follow from the fact that we accept *tanmātras* that we accept those [atoms].

Part of this passage we have already considered above. We now get to know it in its context, which is a discussion rejecting the proposal that *tanmātras* are atoms. Given that earlier sources do seem to present the *tanmātras* as

20 See MOTEGI, 1986; BRONKHORST, in preparation.

21 YD p. 68 1.26 (PANDEYA) / p. 154 1.22 (WEZLER/MOTEGI): *paramāṇvanvayo 'pi hi vyakta upalabhyate rūpādisattvāt.*

22 YD p. 69 1.2-5 (PANDEYA) / p. 155 1.2-6 (WEZLER/MOTEGI) : *yat tu khalv idam ucyate pṛthivyādiṣu rūpādyupalambhād anvayadarśanād aṇūnām sadbhāvaḥ... kalpayitavya ity etad api cānupapannam / kasmāt? anyathāpi tadupapatteḥ / tanmātrapūrvakatve 'pi hi pṛthivyādīnām kalpyamāne rūpādisattvād ato na yuktam etat /.*

23 YD p. 69 1.10 (PANDEYA) / p. 155 1.14-15 (WEZLER/MOTEGI): *āha: yadi punas tanmātrāṇām eva paramāṇutvam abhyupagamyate ka evaṁ sati doṣaḥ syāt?*

24 YD p. 69 1.10-14 (PANDEYA) / p. 155 1.16-21 (WEZLER/MOTEGI): *ucyate: na śakyam evaṁ bhavitum/ kiṁ kāraṇam? vr̥ddhimatyas tanmātralakṣaṇāḥ prakṛtayo 'smābhir abhyupagamyante / kasmāt? svakāryād dhi prathīyasī prakṛtir bhavatīti ca naḥ samayaḥ / mahānti ca pṛthivyādīni mahābhūtāni / tasmāt teṣāṁ tadatiriktayā prakṛtyā bhavitavyam / paricchinnadeśāś ca paramāṇavaḥ / tasmān na tanmātrābhyupagamāt teṣāṁ abhyupagamāḥ /.*

atoms, we cannot but conclude that the concept of the *tanmātra* had profoundly changed.

We return to our original question. Do the above observations help us to answer the criticism voiced by FRANCO and cited at the beginning of this article? FRANCO said: “Typical psychological and individual terms like cognition, ego, mind, sense organs, and even hands, feet, tongue, anus and penis, become trans-individual and obtain cosmological dimensions.” Does this still hold true for the main thinkers of classical Sāṃkhya? As we now know, the answer must be a qualified no. It is true that cognition and ego – i.e. *mahat/buddhi* and *ahaṃkāra* – appear to have been shared, and therefore cosmological, entities for some, though not all Sāṃkhyas. Other elements – in particular mind, sense organs, as well as hands, feet, tongue, anus and penis – were looked upon as only individual, not trans-individual or cosmological entities. The *tanmātras* remain enigmatic, but it is clear that they were not thought of as atomic by the author of the *Yuktidīpikā*.

It is not possible to conclude this paper without casting a short glance at the second flourishing of Sāṃkhya in the second millennium of the common era. The thinkers of that period were evidently not content with the solution offered by the earlier school, for they present an altogether different one. Clearest in this respect is Vijñānabhikṣu’s commentary on Sāṃkhya Sūtra 3.10. The Sāṃkhya Sūtra may date, in its present form, from the fourteenth or fifteenth century. Vijñānabhikṣu himself wrote in the sixteenth century. He speaks in this passage of the single (*eka*) subtle body (*liṅga*) which is formed at creation and is an adjunct (*upādhi*) of Hiranyagarbha. This single subtle body subsequently divides into many (*nānā*) individuals, just as the single subtle body of a father becomes multiple in the form of the subtle bodies of his sons and daughters. This division of the subtle body of Hiranyagarbha is caused by the difference of karma of the individuals.<sup>25</sup> It is true that Vijñānabhikṣu has a tendency to impose his own views on the Sāṃkhya philosophy, in particular the idea of a creator god. But his interpretation of Sāṃkhya Sūtra 3.10 to the extent

25 Vijñānabhikṣu on Sāṃkhya Sūtra 3.10 (p. 190): *nanu liṅgaṃ ced ekaṃ tarhi kathaṃ puruṣabhedena vilakṣaṇā bhogaḥ syus tatrāha: vyaktibheda°/ yady api sargādau hiranyagarbhopādhirūpam ekaṃ eva liṅgam, tathāpi tasya paścād vyaktibhedo vyaktirūpeṇāṃśato nānātvam api bhavati / yathedānīm ekasya pitṛliṅgadehasya nānātvam aṃśato bhavati putrakanyādiliṅgadeharūpeṇa / tatra kāraṇam āha: karmaviśeṣād iti / jīvāntarāṇāṃ bhogahetukarmāder ity arthaḥ /*. Cp. GARBE, 1889: 211.

that one subtle body is subsequently divided into many individuals seems correct.<sup>26</sup>

The threatening lack of coherence of classical Sāṁkhya did not escape the eye of a critic like Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja, who wrote his Śrī Bhāṣya on the Brahma Sūtra in the 12th century, points out that if there is one active material (*prakṛti*) for many inactive souls, all the actions of the former would provide experience to all the souls, or to none at all. He adds that the Sāṁkhya belief according to which the souls are of infinite size even excludes the possibility to answer that one soul is closer to a particular action than another. For this very reason a restriction even of the inner organs etc. to single souls is not possible, based on which there would be assignment of different actions to different souls.<sup>27</sup>

Critics like Rāmānuja may be responsible for the fact that the Sāṁkhya Sūtra and its commentaries have come up with their solution of a single subtle body in the beginning. They may however have missed the fact that classical Sāṁkhya had developed a more sophisticated interpretation of their basic theory, less susceptible to their criticism.

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26 SS 3.9-10: *saptadaśaikam liṅgam / vyaktibhedah karmaviśeṣāt /*. Aniruddha, though explaining SS 3.9 in a somewhat peculiar manner, agrees with this interpretation.

27 Rāmānuja, Śrī Bhāṣya on Brahma Sūtra 2.3.36: *ātmano 'karṛtve prakṛteś ca karṛtve tasyāḥ sarvapuruṣasādhāraṇatvāt sarvāṇi karmāṇi sarveṣāṃ bhogāya syuḥ, naiva vā kasyacit / ātmanām vibhutvābhyupagamāt saṁnidhānam api sarveṣāṃ aviśiṣṭam / ata eva cāntaḥkaraṇādīnām api niyamo nopapadyate, yadāyattā vyavasthā syāt /*.

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## ABBREVIATIONS:

SK	Sāṁkhya Kārikā
SS	Sāṁkhya Sūtra (for the edition, see Vijñānabhikṣu)
TV	Vācaspatimiśra, Tattvavaiśārādī. For the editions, see YBh 1) and 2)
YBh	Yoga Bhāṣya.
YD	Yuktidīpikā
YV	Yogavārttika of Vijñānabhikṣu. Two editions have been used: see YBh 1 and 3.

