Review by Johannes Bronkhorst

Paul Hacker: Grundlagen indischer Dichtung und indischen Denkens. Aus dem Nachlass herausgegeben von Klaus Rüping. [Publications of the De Nobili Research Library 12]. Wien: Institut für Indologie der Universität Wien, Sammlung De Nobili, 1985. Commission agents: E. J. Brill, Leiden -- Gerold & Co., Vienna -- Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi. 148pp.

Paul Hacker died in 1979. This book contains his last lecture (or course of lectures?), held in the summer of 1978. It has been published -- as the editor, Klaus Rüping, points out in his preface -- because it represents in a way the sum of many years' research by Hacker.

The book is divided into two parts: 'Grundlagen der indischen Dichtung' ('Principles of Indian poetry'; pp. 13-38), and 'Grundlagen des indischen Denkens' ('Principles of Indian thought'; pp. 39-141). This review will first reproduce some salient remarks from the first part of the book. It will then review the second part in more detail. In the first part Hacker emphasizes that the boundaries between individual disciplines in cultures which are as far apart as those of Europe and of India, do not always coincide (p. 37); that an account of Indian philosophy in accordance with the European idea of philosophy should also mention Indian aesthetics, and within aesthetics the psychological elements (p. 36); and that much of what we call psychology is in India included in poetics and aesthetics (p. 37).

The second and longest part of the book ('Grundlagen des indischen Denkens') consists of three sections. The first of these ('Was meinen wir, wenn wir das Wort "Philosophie" auf Leistungen des indischen Geistes anwenden?'; pp. 39-62) again addresses the question of the difference between certain concepts in India and in Europe. The term 'philosophy' overlaps with a number of Sanskrit terms -- Hacker discusses **ānvīksikī**, **vidyā**, **śāstra**, **dharmaśāstra**, **darśana** -- but is equivalent to none of them.<1> The lack of a Sanskrit correlate of 'philosophy' should not however mislead us into thinking that India had no philosophy. Sanskrit has no general term for 'religion' either, yet India had and has religions. Moreover, Sanskrit words such as **dharma** have no exact equivalent in Western languages either.

After this introductory discussion Hacker comes in the following Sections 2 and 3 to his main concern, viz., to find schemes of thought that characterize Indian thought ("für das indische Denken bezeichnende Denkschemata", p. 64). Section 2 ('Grundbegriffe des indischen Denkens in den älteren Upaniṣaden'; pp. 62-105) gives for this purpose a classification of the contents of the Upaniṣads (p. 65f.), which is extensively discussed and exemplified. In the course of this discussion a number of schemes of thought make their appearance, which are subsequently listed and enlarged upon in Section 3 ('Die Denkschemata'; pp. 105-141). They are (see p. 139):

1. Anthropological-cosmological parallelism.
2. Substantialism.
3. Opposition of 'subtle' and 'coarse'.
4. Opposition of latency and manifestation.
5. Tendency to identify potency and matter.
6. Enumeration.
7. Gradualism.
   a. Inclusivism.
8. Paradoxes.

What are schemes of thought ('Denkschemata')? The book under review is not very explicit about this. Another lecture, called "Inklusivismus", held in 1977 and also published posthumously (in 1983), provides some elucidation. It states (p. 11): "Es gibt in einem Kulturkreis gewisse Verhaltensweisen des Geistes, Denkformen, Denkschemata, die diesem Kulturkreis eigentümlich sind und deren Eigentümlichkeit sich eben dadurch bekundet, dass sie in diesem Kulturkreis zu finden und nachzuweisen sind, anderswo aber nicht." Is this description valid for the schemes of thought in the present book?

The stipulation that Hacker's schemes of thought are not found outside India has been criticized by W. Halbfass and A. Wezler (both 1983) for the case of 'inclusivism'. In the book under review this stipulation is not mentioned, nor does it appear to be presupposed. On the contrary, while dealing with the eighth scheme of thought -- that of metaphysical or mystical paradoxes -- Hacker makes a comparison with Christian mysticism (p. 135), which suggests that the same or a closely similar scheme of thought existed in the West. And something similar to scheme no. 5 is found in Medieval European thought (pp. 128-129).

Are these schemes of thought common to all Indians, or at least common to all Indian philosophers? Hacker rejects this idea. They rather characterize Sāṃkhya, Yoga and the different forms of 'Vedāntism', which together constitute the 'conservative systems' (p. 105). Hacker emphasizes the contrast which exists between these schemes of thought and the ways of thinking in the schools of Buddhism. Also the Vaiśeṣika system and its derivatives are different (p. 106). But the fact that monistic Vedānta most radically elaborated some of these schemes of thought makes it the most Indian of Indian philosophies ("die indischste der indischen Philosophien"; p. 132). The schemes of thought are apparently looked upon as typically Indian in some sense, even though they are not universally Indian.

Another question related to the schemes of thought is whether the Indians really thought that way or merely found these schemes in the traditional belief systems which they followed. These two alternatives must be strictly kept apart. By way of comparison we may consider that certain Christians believe that bread and wine are the flesh and blood of Christ, without adhering to the general scheme of thought which an outsider might be tempted to see here, viz., that an object is identified with the symbol that represents it. An Indian philosopher, similarly, might accept

a 'scheme of thought' because it is part of the tradition, without using that 'scheme of thought' where he thinks independently.

If the question here raised can be answered at all, then it can only be answered by distinguishing between an author's own thoughts and his traditional beliefs. 'Schemes of thought' found in traditional beliefs only say something about the way of thinking of those who created these beliefs, not about their followers. Hacker does not attempt to make these distinctions. On the contrary, he concentrates on what he calls the 'conservative systems', precisely because they preserve the ways of thinking which are attested already in the oldest surviving literature ("... insofern, als sie viel von den Denkweisen bewahren und weiterentwickeln, die schon in der ältesten erhalten gebliebenen Literatur nachweisbar sind"; p. 105-106). Such an approach could be accused of lacking historical sense.

Ironically, Hacker says a great deal about historical sense ('historisches Bewusstsein'; p. 47). He contrasts it with traditionalism, for which the past is present in the traditions. Historical sense, on the other hand, means that the past is studied as past. This is not however the historical sense which is relevant here. What is at stake here is the awareness that every thinker, and every thought, must be understood in his or its historical situation. Such an understanding may be obtained by studying the history of Indian thought (in as far as this is possible), and by avoiding studying a thinker apart from his historical context. Hacker does not seem to be aware of this. On p. 61 he makes the statement that it is our habit to ask for history in the study of Indian philosophy,<2> as if the history of Indian philosophy is studied to satisfy our **habits**, instead of our need to **understand**.

Hacker justifies his non-historical approach by pointing at (i) the fact that Indian philosophy for a long time remained the same without noticeable developments, and (ii) our lack of knowledge regarding the historical developments (pp. 61-62). Both these points can be appreciated, but they can be no justification for not considering whose schemes of thought are being studied.

Turning now to some of the schemes themselves, it seems obvious that the first one ('anthropological-cosmological parallelism') is neither universally nor typically Indian. Hacker himself admits (p. 107) that as a living category of thought it is restricted to the oldest times. Probably its most important manifestation in the classical philosophical systems, however, is not mentioned by him. This is the Sāmkhya scheme of evolution, which cannot clearly be assigned to either the cosmological or to the anthropological realm, but belongs to both.<3>

Of perhaps more general interest is scheme no. 2, 'substantialism'. 'Substance' is what has existence that is independent in itself ("welches eine Existenz hat, die unabhängig in sich selbst steht"; p. 109).

'Substantialism' means that there is a predominance of the category 'substance' in thought ("Vorherrschaft der Substanz-Kategorie im Denken"; p. 109). An example is

karman, which is conceived of as a substance, sometimes in the form of subtle matter. The **guṇas** of Sāmkhya -- which are qualities and at the same time constituents of original matter -- are another example.

Hacker's 'substantialism' seems a valid and valuable way of characterizing much of Indian thought. It is not however clear why Buddhism and Vaiśeṣika are excluded. Buddhism is called 'radikal anti-substanzialistisch' (p. 123), and Vaiśeṣika 'nicht ausgesprochen substanzialistisch' (p. 114). Yet the most influential school of Hīnayāna Buddhism in India, viz. Sarvāstivāda, accepted as one of its elements of existence (**dharma**) the so-called **avijñapti**, which was classified as **rūpa**, i.e., as 'matter' (see Lamotte, 1936: 156f.). This **avijñapti** is the Buddhist equivalent of the materialized **karman** in Jainism which Hacker describes as the most radical form of substantialism (p. 110). Other elements of the Sarvāstivādins, such as the four **saṃskṛtalakṣanas** -- viz., **jāti**, **sthiti**, **jarā**, **anityatā** -- as separate entities, are the most radical expressions of substantialistic thinking one could imagine, which have no parallel even in Jainism. Hacker might object that 'substance' is stable and implies ongoing existence;<4> most Buddhists, on the other hand, emphasize the momentary nature of what there is. But this objection carries no conviction. It is of course possible to add qualifications to the meaning of 'substance' until this term can only be applied to one's chosen philosophy or philosophies, but this runs counter to the aim of the book to find the principles of Indian thought. Buddhism, and in particular its dharma theory, shares characteristics with the other philosophies of India, and there is no reason to narrow down one's understanding of substance to the point that Buddhism is excluded.

Turning to Vaiśeṣika, this system distinguishes between six, or seven, categories, of which substance (**dravya**) is but one, viz., the first one. But does this mean that Vaiśeṣika is not substantialistic? The different categories of Vaiśeṣika are believed to have separate existence, to be separate 'things'. Does this not entitle them to be considered substances in Hacker's sense? Hacker says no, but his description of what a substance is does not make clear why. It is true that, say, qualities do not occur where there is no substance (in the Vaiśeṣika sense). But can the Sāmkhya **guṇas** exist without **prakṛti**? The matter appears to be more complicated than is clear from Hacker's treatment of it.

The third scheme is the opposition between 'subtle' and 'coarse'. This opposition came to be used, in the conservative systems, to differentiate the mental from the physical. Once the difference between spirit ('Geist') and matter had been clearly understood, Hacker thinks, the opposition between 'subtle' and 'coarse' became more or less superfluous. The fact that it was yet preserved made it possible in Sāmkhya and Vedānta to assign mental processes to the realm of subtle matter, and to understand the spirit as purely transcendental (p. 124).

There may be truth in this, but I think that the emphasis is wrongly put. The spirit in Sāṃkhya and Vedānta did not become transcendental because mental processes were taken care of by subtle matter, but rather the other way round. I

have argued elsewhere (1986: 51f.) that the idea of a transcendental soul, not involved in any physical or mental activity, takes a central position in Sāṃkhya, Vedānta, and its historical precursors. Such being the case, mental processes had to be located elsewhere, and this was and remained a good reason to distinguish between subtle and coarse matter.

The opposition between latency and manifestation -- Hacker's fourth scheme of thought -- finds primarily expression in the doctrine of **satkāryavāda**. Again no Buddhists are mentioned in connection with this scheme of thought, but one may wonder whether the central doctrine of the Sarvāstivādins -- that past, present and future all exist -- does not belong here. These Buddhists hold that the own character (**lakṣaṇa**, **svabhāva**) of an element of existence (**dharma**) is constant; it manifests itself, it 'becomes present', on account of causes and conditions.<5>

Hacker does not confine himself to discussing the above schemes of thought. In passing he touches on many questions, and makes many observations which often are of a rather general nature. Some of these are hard to understand, while others are of a dubious nature.

One of the things repeatedly emphasized is that in India everything, including science and philosophy, must have a purpose: "Was zweckfrei ist, ist zwecklos, und was zwecklos ist, ist sinnlos" (pp. 14, 46). It is also obvious, according to Hacker, that this need for a purpose has hampered the progress of research in science and philosophy in India. In Europe, on the other hand, the situation was quite different. Aristotle already stated that knowledge is for its own sake, and this idea of knowledge has been taken over by the West.<6>

These are high claims, which Hacker himself has to assuage to a considerable extent. Aristotle's view of knowledge for its own sake, we learn on p. 44, has a religious or quasi-religious meaning, for the spiritual faculty called **noûs** is involved in knowledge, and this **noûs** is something divine in man. In other words, knowledge has the **purpose** of activating the highest in man (p. 45). Moreover, Thomas Aquinas, in the European Middle Ages, recognized knowledge for its own sake as a high, or the highest, purpose in life for life on earth (p. 49). In India, furthermore, many aspects of the philosophical systems -- viz., the speculations in the realm of natural philosophy -- seem to have been the result of free investigation (p. 50). Hacker has some doubts regarding this last point; he considers it more probable that these early speculations too served some purpose, right from the beginning.

Hacker's view -- whether he invented it with or without a purpose -- has to be rejected. The suggestion that Western science and philosophy made progress owing to the fact that they had 'no purpose', is not bolstered by any evidence. And the fact that Indian philosophers paid lip-service to some purpose or purposes cannot be held responsible for the presumed lack of progress in India. Many developments in Indian thought -- think, e.g., of the logical refinements of Navya Nyāya -- had no connection whatsoever with the purposes which they were theoretically meant to

serve. And the idea that all important Western scientists and philosophers worked without purpose -- including that of furthering their own career -- is wishful thinking.

At the beginning of the discussion of the principles of Indian thought, Hacker makes some interesting remarks on the points of similarity between certain thoughts in India and in the West (p. 39f.). The view that they are the result of Western influence on India is, I think rightly, rejected. Rather, the Indians have thought out their philosophical questions independently of the West, the reason being that these questions are of general human interest. Hacker goes further and concludes that this tells us something about human nature. Comparison of Indian and European achievements might lead to new knowledge of what Hacker calls an anthropological nature ('anthropologischer Natur'). On p. 55 he repeats the 'methodological principle' that first the characteristics of each culture must be studied. Initially everything will seem to be radically different; but then 'bridges across the abyss' appear, and one notices that human nature has expressed itself in words here in this and there in that way ("dass es die menschliche Natur ist, die sich hier auf diese und dort auf jene Weise im Wort ausgedrückt hat"; p. 55).

It is not easy to understand what exactly Hacker had in mind, but he returns to this question while discussing the concept of **prāṇa** in the Upaniṣads (p. 71f., esp. pp. 73-74). The history of this concept, Hacker states, has a significance for our understanding of man in general; it has anthropological relevance. Words that originally mean breath, later soul, are also found in other cultures. Hacker mentions Latin **spiritus**, Greek **pneûma**, and Hebrew **rūach**. The Upaniṣads are special in that they allow us to follow the development from the old to the new meaning. Hacker does not further specify what knowledge of man in general is to be derived from this. In a way he has already undermined his position on the preceding pages 72 and 73. There he argues that the origin of the speculations on breath is rather easy to explain. No man or animal can live without breath. Breath came to be considered life itself, and the word **prāṇa** acquired a meaning which we might translate as 'soul'. But if this development is so easy to explain, what does it tells us about man in general? Hacker does not provide an answer.

Another of his lectures may help us. It was delivered not long before the lecture on which the book under review is based, viz., in 1976. In that lecture ("Cit and Noûs, or the concept of spirit in Vedāntism and in Neoplatonism", Kleine Schriften pp. 320-337) Hacker points to the similarities which exist, besides differences, between 'Vedāntism' and Neoplatonism. These similarities cannot be explained by historical influences. Towards the end of this lecture, after announcing a conclusion, Hacker makes the following statement: "If theistic metaphysics is to survive, if the doctrine of God is not to degenerate into an ideology ancillary to anthropology, it is indispensible that we should uphold this heritage of Platonism and Neoplatonism" (p. 17/336). In the final paragraph of that same article Hacker concludes that in several respects "the study of Vedāntism and Neoplatonism ... seems to be of great relevance in our time, provided we recognize the value of

great tradition in general and of metaphysics in particular". Note that here Hacker distances himself from 'anthropology' and rather speaks in favour of the preservation of traditional metaphysics. If we can be guided by this, we are led to the conclusion that Hacker's 'new knowledge of an anthropological nature' is really old metaphysical knowledge which is supposed to contain some truth -- presumably on account of the fact that it occurs in more than one culture. Hacker only rarely admits his concern with the truth of the metaphysical doctrines he discusses. On p. 111 he states that the substantialistic scheme of thought (see above), when applied in Vedānta to the absolute, probably contains truth ("sehr wohl eine Wahrheit in sich enthält"). This statement concerns the Vedānta view that **sat**, **cit**, and **ānanda** are no attributes of the absolute, but describe, each of them, the absolute as a whole. On p. 107, moreover, it is stated in parentheses that the anthropological-cosmological parallelism -- which is Hacker's first scheme of thought -- may be based, in the epistemological realm, on a partial truth; this is not further explained, "da ich hier kein spezifisches Philosophiekolleg halte".

A concrete comparison between similar ideas in India and in Europe is again made on p. 59, but here human nature is not invoked. It concerns the similarity between the categories of Vaiśeṣika and those of Aristotle. This time the similarity 'can easily be explained' by the fact that the philosophy which is immanent in the Indo-European languages finds here conceptual expression ("diese Kategorienähnlichkeit im Vaiśeṣika und bei Aristoteles erklärt sich einfach daraus, dass die den indogermanischen Sprachen immanente Philosophie sich hier begrifflich auslegt").

The basic idea here expressed is not new. We find it already in Faddegon's account of the Vaiśeṣika system (1918: 109).<7> But Hacker goes beyond his predecessor in speaking about a philosophy which is **immanent** in the Indo-European languages. What does this mean?

On p. 112 Hacker returns to the same issue, now stating that the three categories substance, quality and action are preformed in the grammatical structure of the Indo-European languages ("Schliesslich sind die drei Kategorien der Substanz, der Eigenschaft und des Handelns schon präformiert in der grammatischen Struktur der indogermanischen Sprachen"). On the next page he adds his impression that a certain ontology lies preformed in the Dravidian languages ("dass eine gewisse Philosophie des Seins insbesondere im Dravidischen ursprünglich präformiert vorliegt"). He explains this by stating his view that one system of languages has more correctly recognized one side of reality, another language family another side of it ("dass das eine Sprachsystem eine Seite der Wirklichkeit genauer erkannt hat, eine andere Sprachfamilie eine andere Seite genauer erkannt hat"). Does this imply that, according to Hacker, the first three categories of Vaiśeṣika are in some way in agreement with reality? The question is neither asked not answered. Hacker does however express his amazement that the other systems of Indian philosophy have not accepted these categories.

On pp. 122f. we learn more about the relationship between language and philosophy. Not only are philosophies 'preformed' in certain languages; new philosophies can also change the structure of a language. The substantialistic scheme of thought, Hacker tends to think, finds expression in the nominal style which came to characterize philosophical Sanskrit more and more as time went by. He admits of course that the same style is also used by schools of thought that were not substantialistic (at least in his opinion), but the predominance of substantialistic thinking must be held responsible for this.

It seems clear that much of what is said by Hacker in this book will not be generally accepted. This may concern the schemes of thought, but even more the many, often completely unsubstantiated claims and hints scattered throughout the book; only some of these could be referred to in this review. But whether or not we agree with all of Hacker's opinions, it remains laudable that he made at least an effort to look beyond the boundaries of Indology. He drew attention to the fact that Indological studies may contribute to larger issues, such as the understanding of man, which not many Indologists seem to be aware of. Even if Hacker did not always draw conclusions which are acceptable to most of us, it may be worthwhile to follow his example in trying to see the relevance of our own discipline for other realms.

N O T E S

<1> Also Halbfass (1981: 296 ff.) deals with this problem.
<2> P. 61: "... wir sind gewohnt, bei einer Untersuchung der indischen Philosophie zunächst nach der Geschichte zu fragen."
<3> Perhaps the most recent attempt to solve this 'problem' is by Rodney J. Parrott, recently in this journal.
<4> P. 129: "Denn die Substanz ist die statischste aller Kategorien. Sie bedeutet bleibendes Sein."
<5> See La Vallée Poussin, 1937: 131-132.
<6> A discussion of this presumed difference between India and Europe, which does not however mention Hacker, is given in Halbfass, 1981: 303f., 180f.
<7> Note that Faddegon bases the categories of Vaiśeṣika and Aristotle "on the properties of the human language" in general, not on Indo-European.

R E F E R E N C E S

Bronkhorst, Johannes (1986): The Two Traditions of Meditation in Ancient India. [Alt- und Neu-Indische Studien 28]. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden.

Faddegon, B. (1918): The Vaiçeṣika-System, Described with the Help of the Oldest Texts. [Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam. Afdeeling Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks, Deel XVIII No. 2]. Amsterdam: Johannes Müller.

Hacker, Paul (1978): Kleine Schriften. Herausgegeben von Lambert Schmithausen. [Glasenapp-Stiftung 15]. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner.

Hacker, Paul (1983): 'Inklusivismus.' (= Oberhammer 1983: 11-28).

Halbfass, Wilhelm (1981): Indien und Europa. Perspektiven ihrer geistigen Begegnung. Basel/Stuttgart: Schwabe & Co.

Halbfass, Wilhelm (1983): '"Inklusivismus" und "Toleranz" im Kontext der indisch-europäischen Begegnung.' (= Oberhammer 1983: 29-60).

Lamotte, Etienne (1936): 'Le traité de l'acte de Vasubandhu Karmasiddhiprakaraṇa.' Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques 4 (1935-1936), 151-263.

La Vallée Poussin, Louis de (1937): 'Documents d'Abhidharma: la controverse du temps.' Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques 5 (1936-1937), 7-158.

Oberhammer, Gerhard (ed.) (1983): Inklusivismus. Eine indische Denkform. Wien: Institut für Indologie der Universität Wien, Sammlung De Nobili. [Publications of the De Nobili Research Library, Occasional Papers 2]. Commission Agents: E. J. Brill, Leiden -- Gerold & Co., Vienna -- Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi.

Parrott, Rodney J. (1986): 'The problem of the Sāṃkhya tattvas as both cosmic and psychological phenomena.' Journal of Indian Philosophy 14 (1986), 55-77.

Wezler, Albrecht (1983): 'Bemerkungen zum Inklusivismus-Begriff Paul Hackers.' (= Oberhammer 1983: 61-91).