Why did Greek philosophy begin in the sixth century BCE? Why did Indian philosophy begin at about the same time? Why did the earliest philosophy take the form that it did? Why was this form so similar in Greece and India? And how do we explain the differences between them? These questions can only be answered by locating the philosophical intellect within its entire societal context, ignoring neither ritual nor economy. The cities of Greece and northern India were in this period distinctive also by virtue of being pervasively monetised. The metaphysics of both cultures is marked by the projection (onto the cosmos) and the introjection (into the inner self) of the abstract, all-pervasive, quasi-omnipotent, impersonal substance embodied in money (especially coinage). And in both cultures this development accompanied the interiorisation of the cosmic rite of passage (in India sacrifice, in Greece mystic initiation).

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THE ORIGINS OF PHILOSOPHY IN ANCIENT GREECE AND ANCIENT INDIA

A Historical Comparison

RICHARD SEAFOORD

University of Exeter
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Preface

This book is for Indologists and Hellenists, but also for non-specialists, including those who appreciated my *Money and the Early Greek Mind* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), the argument of which I here recapitulate, develop and extend. I regard my socio-economic mode of explanation there of the Greek intellectual revolution as vindicated here by its power to explain the striking similarities (and differences) between the Greek and Indian intellectual revolutions. The conclusions of my 2004 book have received attention from anthropologists and historians of religion among others, but relatively little from classical scholars, who are generally uninterested in explaining the preconceptions behind ancient metaphysics. However, even those averse to my socio-economic perspective may, I hope, be stimulated by the numerous interconnections I make between early Indian and early Greek thought to view one or the other of them (or both) in a new light.

My five years of immersion in the rich and complex culture of ancient India, after four decades of writing about ancient Greece, have been an experience beyond compare. Such ambitious interdisciplinarity cannot represent the extent and profuse untidiness of the relevant material, and it risks various kinds of vulnerability. Because my knowledge of Sanskrit (and of the Pali of Buddhist texts) is no more than rudimentary, I devoured the relevant ancient texts in English translation, but subsequently examined the original language of the passages that I quote. For essential help in this often formidable undertaking I am in debt to the linguistic skills of Richard Fynes, and to the Arts and Humanities Research Council, which financed our collaboration. Simon Brodbeck and Christopher Gill have most helpfully read sections of the book. I am grateful also to the anonymous referees for their useful suggestions, and for answers to specific queries to Douglas Berger, Joel Brereton, Jonardon Ganeri, Richard Gombrich, Terry Hardaker, Stephanie Jamison, Joanna Jurewicz, Tim Lubin, Patrick Olivelle, Alexis Pinchard, Chiara Robbiano, Joseph Russo, Jens Schlieter, Shaul Tor, Herman Tull
Preface

and Alex Wynne. Special thanks go to Phiroze Vasunia for organising in London a seminar on an early draft of some chapters, and to all those who participated in the discussion. I have also had the pleasure and benefit of numerous conversations on the subject of India and Greece with Richard Stoneman. By far my greatest debt, as she well knows, is to Laura Casimir.
This book concerns a wide range of ancient texts from Greece and India. The chronology of the Greek texts is much better known than that of the Indian, where throughout the period with which we are mainly concerned (defined in 2§A) the texts were transmitted orally and we have no precise dates for anything whatsoever: for discussion of the approximate chronology of my Indian texts see 2§E and 4§E.

Many of my Indian texts belong to the vast body of religious Sanskrit texts known as the Vedas, which are considered śruti ('heard', i.e. divinely revealed). They are divided into four collections, the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda, each of which contains four major kinds of text: Samhitas (ritual utterances), Aranyakas and Brahmanas (prose commentaries on ritual, sometimes with quasi-philosophical content) and Upanishads, in which philosophical content has largely excluded commentary on ritual.

To some of these texts I give special attention. The earliest Vedic text is the collection of verse hymns contained in the Rigveda. There is rich quasi-philosophical content in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, which is also one of the latest of the Brahmanas and so relatively close in time to the early Upanishads, of which the earliest and most substantial are the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad and the Chāndogya Upaniṣad. I will also use the (non-Vedic) texts of Buddhism and Jainism. In Greece my main focus will be on Homeric epic, presocratic philosophy (especially Herakleitos and Parmenides) and Plato.
Translations

Translations of Greek texts are generally my own. For Indian texts I use translations listed in the bibliography: for the Rigveda Jamison and Brereton, for the Pañcavimśa Brāhmaṇa Caland, for the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa Eggeling, for the Upanishads Olivelle, for the Majjhima Nikāya Bhikkhu Ñanāmoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi, for the Questions of Milinda Rhys Davids.
Anglicisation of Sanskrit

Common personal and place names, and names of castes, sects and common texts are anglicised (without diacritics), as are the following concepts:

- atman (self: meaning discussed at 4§C, 6§D)
- brahman (universal principle or power: 5§C; to be distinguished from the priests called Brahmans or Brahmans)
- karma (derived from Sanskrit *karman*: 7§A)
- loka (world: 6§B)
- prana (breath, inner faculty: 4§C, 6§D)
Abbreviations

A. Aeschylus
AA Aitareya Áranyaka
AB Aitareya Brāhmaṇa
AN Áṅgūṭāra Nikāya
AU Aitareya Upaniṣad
AV Atharvaveda Śaṁhitā
BG Bhagavad Gītā
BU Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad
CU Chāndogya Upaniṣad
DN Dīgha Nikāya
D.L. Diogenes Laertius, Lives of the Philosophers
E. Euripides
EIR ethicised indiscriminate reincarnation (see 2§A)
fr. fragment
Hdt. Herodotos
Hktl. Herakleitos
JB Jāminīya Brāhmaṇa
JUB Jāminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa
KaU Katha Upaniṣad
KB Kauśitaki Brāhmaṇa
KU Kauśitaki Upaniṣad
MaiU Maitrāyaṇiya/Maitri Upaniṣad
MN Majhīma Nikāya
MS Māitrāyaṇi Śaṁhitā
List of Abbreviations

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<td>MU</td>
<td>PB</td>
<td>Pl.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mundaka Upaniṣad</td>
<td>Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa</td>
<td>Plato</td>
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