It is an anomalous fact that the social sciences in India have developed from Western rather than Indian cultural realities. As a result, Western disciplines often do not recognise and therefore cannot deal with the realities reflected in many Indian social institutions. This volume explores social science ideas which can be developed from the realities known to Indian people. These ideas are drawn from Hindu cultural categories, not merely because they offer coherent and comprehensive systems of thought, but especially because they illuminate variations which escape the notice of conventional social science.

The contributors to this volume are bound by a common purpose: to explore the connections between cultural knowledge and life as it is lived. They synthesise humane and social science learning and transcend one-time distinctions (such as those between textual indology and contextual, on the ground ‘area studies’). In this they share a goal for social science research that was long advocated by Robert Redfield, that was pursued by him and Milton Singer in their thinking about India as a ‘social organisation of traditions’, and which has been realised through the broad multidisciplinarity of civilisational studies at Chicago and elsewhere.

McKim Marriott, Ph.D. in Anthropology (Chicago 1955), is Professor in the Department of Anthropology and in the Social Sciences Collegiate Division of the University of Chicago. He has done fieldwork in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, edited Village India, and authored varied studies of rural social organisation and change. He is concerned with formulating and simulating indigenous sociologies and psychologies in India, Japan, and other cultures.
Contributions to Indian Sociology

OCCASIONAL STUDIES

(Included in this Series are selected numbers of Contributions)


* Out of print.

India through Hindu Categories

Edited by

McKim Marriott

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A.K. Ramanujan, 'Is there an Indian way of thinking?'

p. 47, par. 5, line 9: for 'Manu 7.41' read 'Manu 8.41'

p. 50, par. 2, lines 5-6: read 'where a shark does not have to work for the mango, it falls into his open mouth'

par. 3, line 2: before 'shark' insert 'the'

p. 52, par. 4, line 8: for 'Roland (1979)' read 'Roland (1988)'

p. 58, line 40: for 'ROLAND, ALAN. 1979.' read 'ROLAND, ALAN. 1988.'

Gloria Goodwin Raheja, 'Centrality, mutuality and hierarchy'

p. 94, Figure 1, title: for 'Configuration' read 'Configurations'

Diane Paull Mines, 'Hindu periods of death “impurity”'

p. 112, par. 3, line 11: for 'ranks' read 'rank'

p. 125, par. 2, line 2: for 'suffers' read 'suffer'


Manuel Moreno and McKim Marriott, 'Humoral transactions in two south Indian cults'

p. 156, line 11: for 'Beck 1969' read 'Beck 1972'

Melinda A. Moore, 'The Kerala house as a Hindu cosmos'

p. 190, Figure 5: for ‘975: 23’ read ‘1975: 23’

p. 196, par. 6, line 8: for 'not labelled' read 'not inappropriately labelled'

p. 201, line 9, Das, Veena, for '1977' read '1982'


The early 1950s saw a surge of interest in India among American anthropologists. Where David Mandelbaum and Murray Emeen had been ploughing rather lonely though adjacent furrows in the earlier decade of the social science research council and the American Council of Learned Societies, organised and chaired a panel on ethnography at the 1983 meetings of the American Anthropological Association. I knew from my contact with David Szanton that SSRC had resolved in 1976 to encourage the development of South Asian conceptual systems in all fields of the humanities and social sciences, and many scholars, notably McKim Marriott and A.K. Ramanujan, had been involved in this enterprise.

Moffatt again organised a workshop on the same subject at the Annual Conference on South Asia at Madison, Wisconsin, in November 1984. I happened to be at the Conference, though not at the workshop, and heard from Moffatt about the discussions and of his hope eventually to produce a volume of papers on the ethnography of India. Being interested, I kept in touch and things were moving, though very slowly. In 1987 I agreed, after some correspondence with Susan Wadley, to propose to the editors of Contributions to publish some of the resultant papers in the journal. This was done in a special number of Contributions (vol. 23, no. 1, January-June 1989). The present volume is a reprint of the same with some additional materials, namely an introduction by McKim Marriott, an index, revised notes on contributors, and errata.

I would like to point out here that the present collection of papers is of
Introduction

This volume is about some ideas that are useful for understanding the social behaviour of people of South Asian and possibly other civilisations. Ideas are drawn here from Hindu cultural categories, not simply because these categories offer coherent and comprehensive systems of thought, but especially because they illuminate the more exact and dynamic perceptions available in the region's implicit social science.

To explore the connections between cultural knowledge and life as it is lived is a commitment shared by all the South Asianists who write herein. They would synthesise humane and social science learning, transcending the dualism of the academy in the discipline or subject of study. The subject is much too large to pursue by him and Milton Singer (1972) in their thinking about South Asia as a 'social organisation of traditions', and that has been realised through the broad multidisciplinarity of civilisational studies at Chicago (R.H. Davis 1985: 29-64) and elsewhere.

The present authors could have addressed their topics as broadly at any of the other centres where such a commitment is honoured—Delhi, London, New York, Paris, Seattle, or elsewhere. But each of their essays happens to have taken shape partly or wholly at Chicago, and in its critical awareness of its terms of analysis. Each is also typically (if not uniquely) Chicagoan. A demand that anthropology both use and ask questions of the concepts of other disciplines was articulated there from the 1920s onward by Redfield (1955, 1962); later by others such as Clifford Geertz (1966, 1976) and David M. Schneider (1968, 1976); it is currently urged and extended by Paul Friedrich (1988) and many others.

From linguistic structuralism social-cultural anthropology during the 1960s borrowed an interest in relationships. Field studies in rural South Asia were simultaneously beginning to notice that units such as kin (Inden 1976; Inden and Nicholas 1977; Yalman 1967) and castes (Marriott 1968, 1976; Silverberg 1970) are treated not as fixed, but as transformable through certain transactions of substantive properties among them. Summarising such studies, Marriott and Inden (1974, 1977; Marriott 1977) proposed that South Asian research be rethought overall to take account of the more exact and dynamic perceptions available in the region's implicit 'ethnosociology', which is profoundly relational.

The force of their proposal was strengthened by a number of other analytically indigenising South Asianist dissertations and books which were completed about the same time. Arjun Appadurai (1981), Kenneth A. David (1977), Marvin G. Davis (1983), Murray J. Leaf (1972), Michael
Moffatt (1979), Sherry B. Ortner (1979), Akos Ostor (1980), Susan S. Wadley (1975), and Norman Zieger (1973) all showed some advantages to be gained from attention to the processes cited in native exegesis. Four long-term visitors to Chicago emphasised some of the same points in their exemplary monographs—Lawrence A. Babb (1975), Brenda E.F. Beck (1972), R.S. Khare (1976a, 1976b), and Veena Das (1977).

With the goal of expanding world conceptual resources by similar means, the Joint Committee on South Asia of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council resolved in 1976 to encourage the development of South Asian analytic ideas for all fields of the humanities and the social sciences (Santan 1976). Researchers trained in the region's cultural thought and also in the relevant Western theoretical and empirical disciplines were then (and are still) very few, but under the guidance of David L. Sontan of the SSRC, the Joint Committee reconstituted itself of scholars from many disciplines and universities who at least shared that ethnoscientific goal. These at first included Stanley Heginbothan from political science, Michelle MacAlpin from economics, McKim Marriott from anthropology, Barbara D. Metcalf from history, Karl H. Potter from philosophy, and A.K. Ramanujan from folklore and linguistics.

Thus constituted, the Joint Committee on South Asia until 1981 provided the impetus for many studies like those presented here. It deputed McKim Marriott to explore and develop South Asian concepts of 'person and interpersonal relations' that might expand the behavioural sciences of psychology and sociology. It deputed A.K. Ramanujan to develop studies of South Asian folklore and to articulate its categories for wider use. These two conceived their present essays separately or in combination conducted numerous Joint Committee-sponsored workshops. In these workshops more than fifty researchers, most of them newly developing scholars, were invited to formulate South Asian social and psychological thought and practice in specialised areas such as astrology, biography, geography, kinship, medicine, oneirics, psychopathology, psychotherapy, and ritual. Folklore was also extensively explored through a series of workshops, and other scholars were deputed to investigate the workings of karma (Keyes and Daniel 1983; O'Flaherty 1980), the uses of Muslim moral ideologies (Ewing 1988; Metcalf 1984), South Asian notions in dealing with political economy (Desai et al. 1984), and other topics.


With the Joint Committee's further encouragement, Michael Moffatt empanelled ten ethnosociological researchers (of whom four write in the present volume) at the 1983 Chicago meetings of the American Anthropological Association. There and in a further workshop and panel at the 1984 Wisconsin Conference on South Asia, he asked them whether their analyses went 'beyond purity and pollution', referring to the narrower model of Indian society constructed with some Western categories by Louis Dumont (1957, 1970). After reformulating Moffatt's question in the more variable terms of their wider Hindu universes, all those researchers who reply below do so in the affirmative.

One peculiarity of the present papers is that they do not posit any single South Asian value or social configuration (such as Dumont's 'purity' or 'hierarchy') toward which all relations must tend. In not positing such uniformity, they diverge from one-dimensional normative analysis, and also from several refined versions of structuralism. Another peculiarity of the papers is that they do not assume (as social anthropologists often do) the invariance of units like caste, house, and person. They privilege neither the 'forces of production' from which a simpler class analysis usually proceeds, nor the free-floating conceptual categories which are often the only given of an older philological indology or cognitive anthropology.

Rather than bind themselves by any of these familiar humanistic or social science conventions, the present researchers locate themselves in the many-layered, many-dimensioned contexts of Hindu life. There they analyse behavioural variation by reasoning in terms derived from the civilisation's own recognised systems of categories. They work with and from the elements, humours, strands, or divergent aims of action that are taken as axiomatic in South Asian exegesis.

The often surprising variations explored in these papers—differentiated dependencies among castes and kin, varied periods of healing after death, diverse imputations of cause, distinct kinds of political power, contrasting transactions with the gods, specialisations of domestic space—can be interpreted by Hindus as paradigms repeatedly generated through combinations and permutations of known components. Like the diverse fabrics that can be woven of the same threads, or the diverse utterances that can be spoken in one language, the varied people of the Hindu world can themselves also be seen as composite and contingent outcomes of that world's multivariate processes.

That such variabilities are assumed to be potential in and around all beings may be sufficient reason for Hindus variously to embrace flux, to make some counterassumptions of constancy (as in postulating the categories themselves), and to attempt counterpolicies, such as constraint,
opposition, and disengagement (which are misunderstood in characterisations of Hindu culture as generally static or otherworldly). The history, politics, and developmental psychology of the Hindu categories are not deeply discussed here, but some of the active human logics and dialectics commonly operating within that categorically multidimensional and dynamic South Asian social world are made uncommonly evident in the present book.

The authors are collectively indebted to David L. Sarton for his early initiatives and to the Social Science Research Council for its financial support; to the Lichtstern Fund of the University of Chicago for further support; to Susan S. Wadley for arranging the original appearance of these authors and to Bernard S. Cohn for their cooperation and good counsel.

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If their efforts help in developing at least one non-Western social science (many more are desirable), the authors may well contribute to a third purpose: assisting social scientists working in a Western, Indian, or any other tradition to become conscious of their presuppositions—their cultural biases and blindspots. What a culture presupposes may, like a language’s grammar, remain unconscious just because it seems to be universally accepted, to have no alternative. An Indian ethnosophology could offer a conscious alternative. It could offer a second lens through which all could look, a second language in which all could speak.5

Preoccupied with answering questions about the kinds of entities, relationships, media, and states of being that others of his common sense or limited professional culture take to be real, the social scientist of any tradition may be unaware that the traditional categories of sociological questioning themselves impose a culture upon respondents. Whether aware or not, however, the investigator who seeks ways of asking in rural India about equivalents of Western ‘individuals’, ‘social structures’, ‘kinship’, ‘classes’, ‘statuses’, ‘rules’, ‘oppositions’, ‘solidarities’, ‘hierarchies’, ‘authority’, ‘values’, ‘ideology’, ‘religion’, ‘purity’, etc., risks imposing an alien ontology and an alien epistemology on those who attempt to answer.

Such terms of questioning are precipitates of Western social, intellectual, and particularly academic history. Many of them also remain as commonplaces of Western popular thought. But they rarely fit Indian definitions of reality. For example, Marx’s distinction between a ‘material’ base and an ‘ideological’ superstructure, like Lévi-Strauss’s distinction between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’, is commonsensical in the West, but is overridden by Hindu notions that natural matter, actions, words and thoughts are all substances and all imbued with relational properties: by Hindu definitions there are no insignificant material facts, no nonmaterial ideas (E.g., Ramanujan 1967: 105–08). Similarly, Durkheim’s (1915) definition of ‘religion’ as a separation of ‘profane’ things from ‘sacred’ things, like the

common Western definition of ‘purity’ as ‘spontaneous’ from which ‘flesh’ has been separated, has little useful applicability to the dharma of Hindus, which is principally concerned with the ways in which all such categories are connected (Mines 1989; Waghorne and Teller 1985). Weber’s (1968: 924–40) social differentiations by ‘class’ and economic position and by ‘status’ or style of life are obviously helpful concepts in the West, but cannot separately or together define the transactional ways in which Hindu institutions order castes or persons (Marriott 1968, 1976). The ‘solidarity’ that Durkheim (1933) presumes as a normal, healthy social state in the Western world may be extraordinary or pathological for the inhabitants of a Hindu world which ‘moves’ (jagai) or ‘flows together’ (samsāra); for them, ‘fluidarity’ may be preferable. Justifying behaviour by citing precedents and rules—the issue of ‘legitimation’ on which Weber focuses his famous typology of traditional and bureaucratic authority—is irrelevant to Indian concerns with continual flux and with the dhārmya consequences of material and power relations, such as feeding and violence (E.g., Chakravarti 1975: 10–20; Heginbotham 1975). The ‘means-end’ and ‘actor-action’ dichotomies with which Parsons and Shils (1952) accurately summarise many of the above Western theoretical distinctions and concerns may seem like universal and unexceptionable notions, yet they are overridden by Hindu notions of karma, according to which ends inhere in means and actors are products of actions (Potter 1980).

Are Indian perceptions of a variable and interactive world then of interest largely as negations of all Western distinctions, and of value only as refutations of the Western ethnosophical sciences’ claim to analytic universality? Do Indian institutions presume a single, undifferentiated cosmos—one which is impregnable to analysis, and therefore unlikely to produce an analytic system? The authors of this volume think otherwise; they find that Indian joinings of what the West would split open often point to alternative, especially transactional concepts of integrative value. Their papers also tell of Indian perceptions and kinds of analytic relations (other than dichotomous distinctions) that are ignored by Western social science conventions (including those of structuralism) to the detriment of all.

Thus, a positive impetus for this volume comes from the hope that more fully developed Indian ethnosophical sciences may take their place beside the Western ethnosophical sciences. Together with the ethnosophies of other lands they may provide better bases for the future claim of an expanded, multicultural set of sciences to have that ‘universal significance and value’ which Weber in 1904 (1952: 13) prematurely reserved for rational social thought in the West.

Developing indigenous sciences How can Indian ethnosophical sciences develop today? Potentialities have
long existed, both in learned thought and in the perceptual and cognitive categories of everyday Indian life and discourse. These potentialities have been neglected for some centuries as other intellectual technologies were imported from the West. Increasingly since Independence, however, some researchers in every Western discipline have noted that their imported concepts do not fit Indian perceptions and meanings (Mukerji 1986). Many are now seeking to incorporate indigenous definitions of the underlying realities in their discovery procedures (Szanton 1976).

The imperial style of Western ethnosocial science excludes competing definitions of reality from its published reports. A more cosmopolitan, self-critical Western style of 'comparative sociology' allows the reporting of non-Western phenomena (such as varna and āśrama) which can be described by permutations of authoritative Western notions (e.g., Dumont 1970); but its results tend to include a patchwork of negations and unresolved paradoxes. The more humanistic style of ethnography called 'cultural' takes care to report local social concepts that have no ready translations into Western natural languages or existing social science jargons; but its results tend to be richly idiographic, rather than adding to any systematic general model of the culture studied. A 'cultural interpretation' or 'a cultural account' goes further toward systematising: it takes indigenous words and concepts around Dilthey's 'hermeneutic circle' of meaning, building evocatively from smaller local details to more general concepts, and then using the general to inform and enlighten the particulars (Geertz 1983).

Constructing a theoretical social science for a culture requires somewhat more than providing a meaningful cultural account: it requires building from the culture's natural categories a general system of concepts that can be formally defined in relation to each other; it requires developing words and measures that can be used rigorously for description, analysis and explanation within that culture; and it especially requires developing deductive strategies that can generate hypotheses for empirical tests in order that the science may criticise itself and grow. It requires doing all this in terms that will be analytically powerful enough to define all the major parameters of living in that culture without violating the culture's ontology, its presuppositions, or its epistemology.

Talcott Parsons and his many collaborators exemplify some success toward meeting these requirements for the West in their syntheses of the Western social sciences as a 'system of action' (Parsons and Shils 1952). They build on the shared categories of major European and American theorists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (psychologists, sociologists, economists, anthropologists) who use categories like 'personality', 'society', 'biology', 'culture', etc. Behind these categories, they infer metacategories, such as the 'actor-action' and 'means-end' dichotomies. They take these dichotomies as the axioms—the smallest possible set of basic ideas—from whose combinations and replications the major institutional forms and dilemmas of modern Western life can be deduced. Among common dilemmas, they deduce and define are five 'pattern variables': affectivity versus affective neutrality, 'self-orientation' versus 'collectivist orientation', 'particularism' versus 'universalism', 'qualities' versus 'performance', and 'functional differness' versus 'functional specificity' in all interactions among persons.

The Parsonian synthesis has been influential and productive in research on Western society, where its general theoretical system has been used to generate hypotheses for studies of kinship systems, social stratification, occupational role structures, politics, etc. As with other Western theories, its resulting hypotheses, rather than its method for developing a general theoretical system, have been applied also to non-Western societies. Investigators working in this applied manner assume the universality of the Western axioms; they would research the Western cultural categories among people of different cultures (e.g., Damle [1965] for India). A common result of such applications has been to fault the non-West for failing to recognise the Western categories or for failing to resolve the Western dilemmas in the 'modern' manner (Kapp 1963; Parsons 1966, 1971; Shils 1961). Rarer but theoretically more constructive results have included the discovery that non-Western societies may presuppose other categories and have other questions to deal with—questions demanding answers in terms of alternative percepts and concepts which may not now exist in the Western social sciences (e.g., for Japan, Lebra [1976], for India, McClelland [1975: 123–68]).

None appears yet to have attempted what is proposed here—following the Parsons and Shils method all the way to constructing an alternative general theoretical system for the social sciences of a non-Western civilisation, using that civilisation's own categories. Some anthropologists have developed theoretical accounts from folk notions of Western institutions (e.g., Schneider [1968] on American kinship). Many have formulated parts of general theoretical systems from the categories presented by the institutions of smaller, more homogeneous non-Western communities, where the materials for synthesis have been relatively few and largely ethnographic (e.g., Fernandez 1982; Geertz 1966; Leaf 1972; Meggitt 1972; Rosaldo 1980). Sociologists who have set out to systematise the categories of Indian social theory have limited themselves to summarising existing dharmasāstra (e.g., Motwani 1934), or to selecting just those features of it that seem to have Western analogues or contraries (e.g., Saksena 1965: 4). The task envisaged here for social scientists is a broader one—to synthesise a theoretical general system accommodating the realities known to Hindus, using both India's multiple textual sources and the evidence of its highly varied social life.
This task should not be begun without taking cognisance of Piatgorsky’s (1985) admonition (addressed to researchers on Indian religion) that an investigation needs to work out metaconceptual categories and descriptive terms which are (i) congruent with the indigenously cognised features of the phenomena under study, and which also (ii) facilitate comparison with other phenomena (here the Western social sciences) having different features. Since vedic Hindus see their society as based directly upon understandings of nature (Dumont 1961: 36-37), the metaconcepts and terms employed here are largely drawn from the natural sciences. The perfect natural science for Hindu India has long been linguistics, this paper and the papers by Ramanujan and Raheja in this volume all illustrate the usefulness of some concepts drawn from that science. But the ideal natural science for the West has long been geometry, and the mathematical concepts also employed in this essay as translations, while partly shared between India and the West, no doubt involve some shifting of Indian meanings in a Western direction. The present results are thus inevitably compromises—equitable ones, it is hoped.

Materials for Hindu ethnosocial sciences

Comprehensive abstract categorisations suggestive of a general theoretical system are plentiful in Hindu thought; they are in fact so many and so variously labelled as to raise doubts about the possibility of their successful synthesis into one scheme. There are widely known classical lists of three “strands” (guṇas), three “humours” (doṣas), three + one “human aims” (puruṣārthas), four “classes” (varṇas), four “stages” (āśramas), five “elements” (bhūtas), five “senses” (indrīyas), five “sheaths” (kośas), six “savours” (rasas), eight + one “sentiments” (rasas), eight + one “feelings” (bhāvas), and so on. Lists bearing such titles respectively suggest specialised metaphysical, biological, moral, economic, developmental, physical, psychological, and aesthetic subject matters whose historical and analytic differences in the modern West would locate them in widely separated academic departments and exclude any expectations of a common conceptual framework. Yet all these lists and more have been maintained simultaneously over some centuries by large numbers of learned but unspecialised Indians. If Pugh (1984: 88-95), Raheja (1976: 45-47) and Trawick (1974) are right, these lists describe what are felt to be concentric domains: they are understood as differently labelled, but approximately congruent overlays on a common underlying set of processes whose complexity is less than its many surface appearances would suggest.

The multiple layering of conceptualisations is not less in daily life. Foods are regionally varied, yet the modes of classification in different regions seem mutually consistent: they imply similar variables and the same sort of layered complexity that appears in the above-mentioned, more abstract

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<td>goodness</td>
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<td>darkness</td>
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The contents of these lists at first appear heterogeneous, yet certain resemblances among them are also striking. That physical phenomena like “fire” and “darkness” appear in them as well as do human moral qualities like “attachment” and “goodness” is itself one striking fact: it suggests that such categories may be seen as somehow of one genre. The implication that moral and physical are mutually translatable replicates the sāṃkhya

Lists (Ferro Luzzi 1977, 1978, Khare 1976, Nichter 1980, Rizvi 1986). The dozens of modes of healing (dietary, medicinal, religious, magical, astrological) applied to one ailment, through which suppositions much like those of the food classification can again be read, are sometimes called ‘pluralistic’ by observers applying the Western distinctions (Beals 1976), yet an Indian patient may try all modes, feeling them to involve mutually implicated levels of reality—such are the field and clinical reports of many anthropologists (Amarasingham 1980; Egner 1983; Pugh 1984; Weiss et al 1986).

The implicit congruences and lived-in mutualities among the many layers—“sheaths” (kośas), “bodies” (sārīras), or on the larger scale, “spheres” (lokas)—of Hindu reality are such that no learned text or ethnographer’s informant seems to have felt the need to either deny any of them or provide a definitive ordering or articulation of them all. Different lists or layers are often compared, usually only two at a time, and then variously, according to the purpose at hand (S.B. Daniel 1983; Ramanujan 1989; Trawick 1988a). An explicit analysis of the common properties, if any, of these layers is thus an urgent task, preliminary to constructing a general theoretical system for the Indian social sciences.

The general nature of the compatibilities and partial congruences among the layers, whether of learned or popular formulation, should be evident from any group of lists like the above, but may be easier to see among the shorter ones. Four of these—classical and still widely repeated lists of “elements” (bhūtas), “humours” (doṣas), “strands” (guṇas), and “human aims” (puruṣārthas)—are taken together below as possible bases for a general theoretical system. Each list is given in the order in which it is conventionally recited.

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postulate that the world and everything in it comes into being through a merger of “pure consciousness” (purusa) and “materiality” (prakrti) (Larson 1987: 23, 43). It recalls the observation by Potter (n.d.) that in Sanskrit karma is not just a ‘doing’, but also a ‘making’ of something substantial, and the observation by Inden (1976: 21) that “substance” (dhātu) and “code” (dharma) are of one etymology (dhr) and need not be dichotomised in the world of constituted things. Inden’s observation is documented in his account of medieval Bengali social theories and social histories. It is illustrated in other analyses and ethnographic reports connecting substantive qualities with actions, such as those by Babb (1970, 1981, 1983); E.V. Daniel (1984); Davis (1983); Inden and Nicholas (1977); Marriott (1976); and Marriott and Inden (1974). If physical, biological and social things do have common conceptual denominators, those denominators must be of rather abstract, metaconceptual kinds, like ‘relationships’ or ‘processes’.

That none of these lists contains less than three items is a second striking commonality, contrasting especially with the insistent dualising of the Western typologies: three appears to be the irreducible number of properties or components with which Hindus will comfortably think about human affairs. Thinking about constituted things in dualities is often condemned. At least three terms are always present, always combined. Leaving aside the aim of “release”, which is an all-or-nothing event, the incidence of each other item is said to be variable. This is a third striking common fact. Each element and humour is said to be more or less strongly present in every food or bodily tissue, each strand more or less predominant in every action, each human aim more or less prominent in any person’s motivation. Learned texts display few type-entities illustrating just one item taken in isolation. Thus binary, all-or-nothing measures of an item’s incidence of each other item is said to be variable. This is a third striking

Mathematical conventions of graphing would not leave any kind of independent variables in a one-dimensional column, as each appears in Table 1; they would instead depict each variable as a numbered line turned at right angles where it intersects the other two, thus creating a three-dimensional property-space. Hindu conventions might prefer to draw three such variables as the petals of a flowering lotus, emerging from a centre at various angles in open space, and such a representation might in fact serve quite well. But a rectangular cube with the familiar properties of breadth, height and depth can make three-dimensional relations easier to specify and compare (e.g., Mitchell 1980), at least for scholars used to living in and with such structures. Cubes are therefore offered here provisionally as geometric metaphors and mnemonics for Indian spaces within which everything must be rated along at least three different dimensions. Of course, a cubic graph’s right angles should be altered by evidence that the variables are not wholly independent (as exemplified in Hiebert’s [1971: 66-67] graphing of relations between personal and caste rank); and the cube’s sides, arbitrarily made of equal length, should be altered by evidence that the variables’ scales are not commensurate.

Each column of Table 1 (corresponding to columns [a] through [d] of Table 2) has a corresponding cube in Figure 1 on which the numbered variables (and their contraries, if any) are written. Thus, from Table 2, column (d), “advantage” (artha) is shown as opposite to “disadvantage” (anartha) and so on, in the “human aims” cube of Figure 1. In the other cubes, variables for whose contrary no one Sanskrit word is commonly used are shown opposite to unlabelled sides; the named variable is meant to be present there too, although less so.

Since the cubes are not intended to imply static substance or impenetrability, they are drawn as transparent. Indeed, the variables being graphed by the cubes are said to be anything but static; elements and humours are all

1 Against this mutual translatability of substance and action or code, McGilvray (1982a: 90-94) objects that the Mukkuvar-dominated order of castes in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka, is explained by informants as resulting from a historical imposition of rules, and not from transactions in any medium that he would recognise as a ‘substance’. If commands or statements of rules along with other words, gestures and signs are admitted (as previously proposed) to the analytic category ‘substance’, then McGilvray’s objection would seem to dissolve.

His data, like the reports in this volume by Dirks and Raheja, do however raise important questions about the political circumstances in which different media are foregrounded and regarded as definitive of social relations: actional media may be most prominent among maximal transactors, such as Gujars, Kallars, Mukkuvars and Buddhists, while substantial media are more prominent in defining relations among minimal transactors, such as many Jains and Vaisnavas; translatability may be most typical of transactors of middle type, such as Brahmins and most others. Until this possible range of variation can be more systematically investigated, formulatons of the middle range continue to seem worth stating. The

1 It appears to be Western dualistic structuralism, rather than indigenous thinking, that leads to reconceiving Hindu triads as dichotomies mediated by a third term.
Constituents

Fig. 1 Derivation of the Hindu Constituent Cube

constituents

human aims (puruṣārthas)
release
world
strands (gunaśas)
stranded
strangless
strands

edges

ether
water
fire

elements (bhūtas)

conjunction

ether spaces

humors (doṣas)

release

stranded

subtle

gross

passion
darkness
goodness

body

body

Fig. 1 Derivation of the Hindu Constituent Cube

Described as multiple substances, while strands and aims are transient relations or processes. All cubes are more or less open to movements between their internal and external spaces, and none is intended to provide an exhaustive accounting of the sphere that it depicts.

Three-dimensional graphing opens the possibility that differing points of view may explain the differing conventional orders for listing the faces of what may still be a single underlying shape. Thus, when “ether” or “sky” (akāśa) as the most inclusive element is named first while “earth” (prthvī) as the most included is named last, the viewing and starting point seems to be well beyond the earth (outside the cube), looking earthward inward. This ordering also asserts a process of devolution (explicit in sāṃkhya doctrine) from relatively imperceptible or “subtle” (stūṣyam) to relatively perceptible or “gross” (sthāla) substance (Larson 1987: 50–52). The humours of Hindu biology are conventionally listed starting from the lower backside of Figure 1 “elements” cube with “wind” (vāyu) first and with “phlegm” (kapha) last, possibly because some physicians think wind is the most troublesome humour and phlegm the least (Caraka 1983: 20.10). Strands are listed in the Bhagavad Gītā, perhaps as they are seen by Lord Kṛṣṇa from the heavens directly above, with “goodness” (sattva) first and “darkness” (tamas) last. The list of three worldly “human aims” in dharmaśāstra usually begins with “coherence” (dharma) and ends with “attachment” (kāma); this series is read from the upper front of the cube, where the Brahman authors of such books reside, to the lower rear, where their social opposites do. A cube’s six sides have no inherent taxonomy, nor do they decree any one, fixed ‘value hierarchy’, and this fact permits a variety of equally valid but different ordinal readings.

The six sides of a cube can help to visualise the ‘revolving hierarchy’ that Malamoud (1982) sees as typical in learned debates on “human aims”. As the cube is turned by different debaters, different faces come into the foreground, where the items written on them are given broader definitions, while items written on other faces are backgrounded and given narrower definitions. The foregrounding capacity of the cube also facilitates understanding of any relationship among persons which has ‘shifting’ aspects, like the analytically distinct ‘central’, ‘mutual’, and ‘hierarchical’ aspects of inter-caste relations which Raheja (1989) finds in Pahansu village. Even the ‘central conundrum of Indian social ideology’, which Trautmann (1981: 285–88) finds in differently ordered transactions between priest and king, may cease to confound when a three-dimensional semantic space is presupposed, for such a space allows different, equally true orderings of the same two persons. Three-dimensional representation further helps to clarify the elaborately ‘faceted’ or aspectual reasoning of Hindu biology and astrology; these sciences both deal with relationships whose angles shift through several planes, rather than with fixed, linear oppositions (Kemper 1977; Zimmermann 1987: 116–24, 143–48). Three dimensions offer
resolutions to many other problems of diversity within unity, such as the problem of henotheism, by which, without a sense of contradiction, different deities are exalted at different times. Three-dimensional graphing is obviously congenial also to sculptural representations and to the plural faces and other attributes of one god that appear in Hindu iconography. It accommodates the simultaneous existence of six orthodox "views" (darṣanas) within Hindu philosophy, and can be expanded, if necessary, to a manifold of many more dimensions (Thurston and Weeks 1984).

**Merging the triads**

If the four differently labelled cubes drawn in Figure 1 are understood as overlays of a single underlying structure (a simplifying assumption that may be essential for communication and social functioning), then the general meanings of that structure, if any, might be discovered by merging the meanings of the four overlays. Merging requires first orienting the four cubes so that the faces which are most alike are aligned. It also requires construing each item in its broadest significance.

The mutual orientations of the cubes shown in Figure 1 and the alignments of items in the rows of Table 2 are not supplied by the usual orders of the items' recitation. For example, arranging the four cubes so that all of the items numbered 1 face the same way or occupy the same row would group together "ether", "wind", and "goodness"—a set of items that no Indian usage seems to endow with a common meaning.

The more generally felt resemblances can, however, be determined through many other textual and ethnographic evidences. The homology or metonymy shown in columns (a) and (b) between elemental "fire" and humoral "bile", elemental "water" and humoral "phlegm", and elemental "air" and humoral "wind", is explicit in āyurveda (e.g., Caraka 1983 Sū. 12.11-12). The correspondence between these humours and the respective strands "darkness", "passion", and "goodness" (column [c]) is also explicit in those sections of āyurveda which deal with psychological health (Caraka 1983 Sū. 1.57, 1985 Sū. 4.34-36). Similar world qualities are assumed by the Hindu set of four "human aims" or concerns (purāṇārthas), which work sometimes with those qualities, sometimes against them. The aims are shown in column (d) with their opposites in additional rows of the same column. These are sought in varying combinations by all living beings, but by different persons at different times. Thus, seeking and maintaining "attachment" (kāma) may be desirable for many, especially in earlier phases of life, yet developing nonattachment may be desirable for some.

* Ambiguous exegesis may be equally essential to communication and social functioning in a system that is assumed to have a single structure (Trawick 1988a).

* Merging the four cubes in order to find possible shared meanings among them is not intended to eliminate consideration of their other, more distinctive meanings.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements (mahabhutas) (a)</th>
<th>Humours (doṣas) (b)</th>
<th>Strands (gunaś) (c)</th>
<th>Human Aims (purusārthas) (d)</th>
<th>Fundamental Properties (e)</th>
<th>Set Theory Operations (f)</th>
<th>FIVE PROCESSES POSTULATED (and further defined) (g)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>/ reflectivity</td>
<td></td>
<td>UNMARKING self (outranking, pervading other, neutralising self), marking self (being outranked, being prevented)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>/ transitivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Air (vāyu)</td>
<td>1. Wind (vāīa)</td>
<td>3. Darkness (tamás)</td>
<td></td>
<td>incoherence (adharma)</td>
<td>Disjunction</td>
<td>UNMARKING (negating, separating, matching, unifying)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>/ transitivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Earth ( górvi)</td>
<td>[gross body]</td>
<td>[depends on]</td>
<td></td>
<td>[birth, life, (janma)]</td>
<td>Complementation</td>
<td>GROSSENING (materialising, localising, synthesising)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(sthāla sārira)</td>
<td>more rajas, less saiva, less tamas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Ether, sky (ākāśa)</td>
<td>[subtle body]</td>
<td>[depends on]</td>
<td></td>
<td>[death, (mr̥thyu)]</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>SUBTRACTION (subtracting, removing, subtracting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(sukṣma sārira)</td>
<td>less rajas, more saiva, more tamas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0. none (brahman)</td>
<td>[soul]</td>
<td>No strand (nirguna)</td>
<td></td>
<td>[none]</td>
<td>Empty set</td>
<td>CONSCIOUSNESS (nonrelative).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(ātman)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
medium of spirit possession, a kind of “play”-filled communication that deals with incoherent states (e.g., Gold 1988: 105, 182). Humoral “wind” is characterised by unrestrainable motion (Caraka 1983: Śā 12.8; Manu 12.120), as are the strand of darkness (Das 1985: 187) and the negative aim of adharma (Selwyn 1982). Water fails from above—from places of advantage and influence—while phlegm has “unctuousness” (sneha) is another way of referring to the love that descends from caring superiors, such as gods and parents (Inden and Nicholas 1977: 87).

Figure 1 (in its top cube) and Table 2 (in its final column) summarise the above linkages and give each metonymic set a new, generalised name intended to indicate some shared meanings and uses of the Sanskrit-named categories that it summarises. ‘Unmarking’ appears on the top side of the cube and in the same row with “advantage” and with other superior items like “goodness”, “phlegm” and “water”; it contrasts with ‘marking’, which falls in the place of “disadvantage” below it. ‘Mixing’ appears with “attachment” on the “fire”, “bile” and “passion” (cube right) side and row; it contrasts with ‘unmixing’ on the left. ‘Unmatching’ appears with “incoherence” on the “dark”, “airy”, and “windy” backside and row, contrasting with ‘matching’, which joins (bright, anaerobic, calm) “coherence” on the front.

Each row of items, each set of similarly oriented cubic sides is incorporated in one of the general processual constituents that is postulated—mixing, unmarking and unmatching. These incorporations are possible because of mutual homologies or metonymies among the items. ‘Metonymy’ and ‘homology’ do not refer to a complete identity of meaning between “fire” and “bile”, for example, but do indicate partial identities—sharings of some properties—which justify substituting one of these words for the other in many contexts. Thus, ‘mixing’ is intended to stand for what any two of these items—“fire”, “bile”, “passion”, “attachment”—have in common. ‘Fire’, “bile”, and “attachment” are of one metonymic set, yet also belong to separable, partly differing layers or spheres: they may at times be felt as conflicting—as partly unmatched with each other—perhaps especially because they are otherwise presumed to be metonymous. Das (1976) gives many examples of the anguish experienced in Hindu families when personal feelings conflict with other definitions of members’ relatedness.

What the layered cube postulates is that anything in the Hindu world which partakes of “substance” (dravya, dhātu, prakṛti)—an atom, an organism, a group, a time, a place, a relationship, a feeling, etc.—requires characterisation along at least the three processual dimensions of variation that such a cube represents; and then that this construct may be viewed from many angles.

The relarions among items in these rows are of the kind that Wittgenstein (1958: 17) has called ‘family resemblances’.

### Antiequivalence relations

If the above alignments of variables are accepted as common and meaningful, then a highly systematic set of further analogues comes into view: the metonymic sets of variables summarised as ‘mixing’, ‘unmarking’ and ‘unmatching’ point respectively to notions that concern three of the fundamental relational properties of mathematics and symbolic logic: reflexivity, symmetry and transitivity (column c). They also point to partly corresponding operations of set theory—intersection, inclusion and union (column f).

Their names are less abstract, yet the Hindu variables (especially the strands) are used in ways that approximate the wide range (the analytic ‘power’) of the three fundamental relational properties. These three relational properties are defined by logicians (such as Langer 1967: 246-49) as potentialities, respectively, of the numbers one, two, and three. They function as axioms for all formal structural analyses. As such, they have been applied to studies of marriage (beginning with Weil in Lévi-Strauss 1949: 278–85), group dynamics (Lindsey and Borgatta 1954), and social relations generally (Doreian 1971: 15–20; Harary et al. 1965: 7–9; Kennedy et al. 1966: 385–406). They have been successfully used to design models of many cultural systems (Hage and Harary 1983).

The Hindu variables revise the standard Western version of the fundamental relational properties called ‘equivalence relations’. Equivalence relations have tended to be assumed in recent Western popular thought and social science as essential to the organisation of human personality and society. Thus, persons and many other entities are postulated as being normally self-reflexive (‘individuals’, having identity with and being sufficient to themselves), and as symmetrical (equal) and transitive (consistent) in their relations with each other. ‘Individuals’ are indivisible, integrated, self-developing units, not normally subject to disjunction or reconstitution. Given such units, interpersonal influences, inequalities, and changes have to be brought in as external factors or pathologies. Other Western examples of equivalence thinking are a Euclidean plane and solid geometry, an Aristotelian syllogistic logic, and notions of legislation as fixed and uniformly applicable to all.

The Hindu postulations of mixing, unmarking and unmatching instead assert that persons are in various degrees nonreflexive (not necessarily identical with or otherwise related only to themselves), nonsymmetrical (not necessarily equal), and nontransitive (not necessarily consistent) in their relations. They emphasise that persons are composite and divisible (what one might better call ‘individuals’) and that interpersonal relations in the world are generally irregular and fluid, if not entirely chaotic. Such Hindu postulations in effect constitute the universe as a set of ‘anti-equivalence relations’.
Antiequivalence relations are necessarily variable, since while they deny perfect reflexivity, symmetry and transitivity, they do not postulate the dichotomous opposites of these—absolute irreflexivity, asymmetry and intransitivity. Instead, they assert that various imperfect and inconstant intermediate states are to be expected, and thus that processes and intermediate states, rather than any fixed or polarised structures, are basic. Yet, since antiequivalence relations are understood by Hindus to inhere also in matter, they may appropriately be called ‘substances’ as well as ‘processes’.

Matter that is subject to such variations may well be called ‘fluid’, and indeed Hindus generally refer to the world they must live in as “[that which is] moving” (jagat) and as a “flowing together” (samsāra). Such a world has its channels, basins and pools—even its temporary dams and dikes—but knows no absolute or enduring partitions (Zimmermann 1979). It and its inhabitants are generated by, and constituted of, more or less malleable substance that is continually moving in and out of them and also moving, like other features of the hydrosphere, under the variable influences of heat, gravity, currents and wind. As a people who are etymologically “riverine”, it is serendipitous that Hindus should have a set of sciences that respond so well to hydraulic metaphors.

The approximations of any abstract, analytic axioms—even antiequivalence axioms—to Hindu constituents would seem to be limited by Hindu presuppositions of a wholly substantial and fluid world. Unlike any ideal and universalising logic, Hindu social formations inhere always in substantial agencies which necessarily differ in particulars (Ramanujan 1989). Unlike points in a Euclidean geometric space, imperfectly bounded fluid entities can never be presumed to be fixed, discrete, or absolutely measurable. Modellings of Hindu phenomena thus seem to require algorithms more like those used in the sciences of oceanography or meteorology. Meanwhile, for starting to think about Hindu social realities, several simple and relatively precise techniques of relational modelling and measuring based on irreflexive and asymmetrical axioms are already available, as mentioned below.

**Mixing, unmarking and unmatched**

‘Mixing’ is the nonreflexive (intersective, externalising, expanding) process implied in common Hindu assertions that the substantial universe with all its human and other contents is more or less “fluid”, being made up of “fire” (agni) or “bile” (putra), moved by “passion” (rajas) and “attachment” (karma), and affected by temporal “conjunctions” (paravans), spatial “crossings” (trillus), a logic of “combinations” (yukta), etc.

To say that ‘mixing’ (rather than unmixing) is a general property of the Hindu world is to assert the rarity of reflexivity, the improbability that any entity in that world can relate only to itself, even by a relationship of equality or identity. Mixing thus suggests the probability that any entity will be found nonself-sufficient, incompletely related to itself, not even equivalent to itself—being to a greater or lesser degree open and dependent for its qualities and processes upon exchanges with others.” Mixing’s nonreflexivity and its rajasik nature are both suggested in the figures by use of the slashed ‘R’ symbol for the incidence of this variable.

The mixing variable is illustrated by David’s (1974, 1977) ethnographies from Jaffna. Its formulation as ‘maximal’ and ‘minimal transacting’ is available in Marriott’s (1976) unconventional matrix analysis of inter-caste and other relations in seven villages, a formulation which is replicated and critically examined in a single Tamil village by Levinson (1982). Mixing is particularly well analysed through the graph-theoretical procedures of Harary et al. (1965), which are further developed and applied in Hage and Harary (1983).

‘Unmarking’ (out-ranking, pervading others, neutralising self) is the nonsymmetrical process implied by Hindu postulations of “water” (äpah), “phlegm” (kapha), and “goodness” (sattva) as universal constituents. All of these have a property of initial altitude and a directional tendency to descend, like rain and rivers, from “origin” to “end”, “wet” to “dry”, “pure” to “impure”, “subtle” to “gross”, “essence” to “residue”, etc. Gravitational orientations and movements of substance are expected everywhere—in ancestry, birth, alimentation, top-down bathing, ranked feeding, deference, tutelage, obedience to commands, speaking and listening, and worship. A sattvik person is one who faces into the prevailing gravitational direction of flow and successfully swims upstream.

Transfers of any entity’s constituent properties are also understood to occur by transactions, such as those from gods to humans through natal “headwriting” (talai eruttu) (S.B. Daniel 1983: 28–40), and by the carefully matched personal “polishings” or “markings” called samskaras. The subtle karmic “traces” (vāsūndās) left by personal action are markings that continue to affect future life (Potter 1980).

As the only reliable, directional force, unmarking-marking is what seems to Hindus to give continuity and relative stability to social relations. Its
realism is affirmed by Hindu attention to relative “advantage” (artha), to
priority in time sequence, and to evaluative preferences. In the figures, the
non-Symmetrical (and anti-sattvika) direction of marking is suggested by use
of a slashed ‘S’ as its abbreviation. Measures of relative marking as evalua­
tions and as transactions among castes and persons are readily available
(Freed 1970; Garbett 1980; Hiebert 1971: 54-67; Mahar 1959; Marriott 1968,
1976).

Calling this process ‘marking’ is here meant to evoke the image of a
substance (such as a sediment or pigment) moving from a marker to a
marked object, one-way, as some property (tangible or intangible) is so
often felt to do in Hindu interpersonal relations. Animal behaviourists use
the term ‘marking’ in this way for the scents that animals use to claim
territories. ‘Marking’ is also meant to evoke uses of this word for partly
similar phenomena by linguists. Hindu marking shares with linguistic
marking the notion that unmarked (neutral) or less marked entities are
more inclusive (in substantial terms, more ‘pervasive’) and thus taxonomi­
cally ‘higher’ than are the more marked and specialised entities included
under (that is, pervaded by) them. The term ‘marking’ was first used for
Hindu phenomena by Wadley (1975: 56) in analysing a local ‘hierarchy’ of
deities, arranged by the scope of their powers. Substantial marking in the
Hindu world particularly resembles morphological marking in linguistics
(as in the comparison of ‘man’ and ‘woman’), but does not so closely
resemble nomenclatural, semantic marking, which may occur without
the addition of sound features (as in different meanings of the word ‘man’).
The substantialistic Hindu notion that entities become ‘unmarked’ or
neutralised by transferring markings to others distinguishes Hindu marking
from both linguistic and animal marking.

‘Unmatching’ (which could alternatively be called ‘messing’ or ‘nixing’) is
the nontransitive (reversing, negating, separating) constituent process.
A slashed ‘T’, referring to nonTransitivity, is used as its abbreviated sign in
the two figures. It summarises the fluctuating movement, sometimes the
disorder which is anticipated in Hindu postulations that “air” or “wind”
(vāyu, vāta) is an element and a “fault” or “humour” (doṣa) of all life (as are
also “bile” and “phlegm”), and that “darkness” (tāmas) and “incoherence”
(adharma) are expectable constituents of the universe generally. Inaction
when action is needed, chaotic action when controlled action is needed
(Das 1985: 204, fn. 5); separating when unity is needed, joining when
separation is needed—are all examples of unmatching. Hindu notions of
“inappropriateness” (pratiloma, asāmya, etc.), “unwisdom” (avidya), and
“uncertainty” (adṛśa) are other examples of the richly developed Hindu
notions of unmatching—the approximating statistical concepts of

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*Others (such as Allen 1985: 22-25) note that Dumont’s uses of the term ‘hierarchy’ are
often synonymous with linguistic ‘marking’.*

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negative correlation and ‘error’, respectively. That orderings of entities
not much more inconsistent than those of Hindu society may be realised by
dechers (who lack any axiom of transitivity) has been shown by Chase
(1981), giving credence to the less extreme characterisation of Hindu
society as nontransitive in its axioms.

Unmatchings occur continually through the permutations of astral ‘time’
(kāla), through spatial dislocations, and through “impure” (asaubha, avāra)
and “inauspicious” (asaubha) events (Mead 1987: 50-58). Unmatching is a secular trend of the universe as it devolves through
increasingly corrupt “ages” (yugas) and falls into states of “emergency”
(apad). ‘Ritual’—“coherent action” (dharmakārva)—the principal means
of rematching (which may itself involve negations, reversals and separa­
tions), is the ubiquitous but not wholly effective Hindu antidote to all sorts of
disorder.

**Earth, ether and consciousness**

Hindu thought generally, following the ancient ideas of sāṁkhya, assumes
at least two other elements, “ether” (ākāsa) and “earth” (prthvi) as variable
constituents of the material universe. Ether and earth are respectively
understood in sāṁkhya and elsewhere as upper and lower points of a
devolving, increasingly marked, self-depleting series of elements running
from a relatively “subtle” (sūkṣma) or ethereal and inclusive source to a
sink of “gross” (sthula) materiality, the included remainder of the other
elements (Larson 1987: 51-52). Accordingly, they are here tentatively
treated as one variable, titled in Table 2 as ‘Grossening and subtilising’.

Following no sāṁkhya text, but using the sāṁkhya-influenced semantic
space defined above, one could plot the idea of a subtle-gross continuum as
the diameter shown in the cube of “strands” (gunas) in Figure 1. This
diameter runs from the far, upper corner where things are particulate­
small (unmixed) and loose (unmatched) but pervasive (unmarked)—to the
opposite near, lower corner, where things are large (mixed), unified
(matched), and pervaded (marked). Table 2, column c, defines the same,
grossening diameter in guna terms.

In the texts of Hindu biology, the constituents “sky” or “ether” (ākāsa)
and “earth” (prthvi, kṣīrt) are in the background and are discussed much
less fully than are “air”, “fire”, and “water”. They seem to function mostly
as temporary containers for other elements, actions and processes. Ether
supplies cavities or empty spaces—for movements outside, through, and
within substances—while earth constitutes the limits of loci—defined
places, tangible shapes, partial boundaries, routes with termini (Manu
12.120; Caraka 1985 Sā. 7.16). Given the bulk and motility of the other
Hindu elements, such localising containers seem indispensable, and Hindu
discourse accordingly postulates many sorts of “channels” (srotas).
"vessels" (patras), places of "rest" (āśramas), "wombs" (yons), "bodies" (śārīras), "genera" (jātis), "fields" (ksetras), and "spheres" (lokas). "Earth" and "ether" thus together provide temporary loci for birth, aggregation, death, rebirth, and all else that passes among people. In the figures in this essay, such loci are represented by cubes, cubes within cubes, and arrows.

Affected by what flows through them, much as any karmic agent is understood to be affected by its actions, these containers of earth and ether appear to be partly dependent on variations in the three more motile constituents. Earth can evidently be reshaped by sun, wind and irrigation, while ether is expandable and contractable. The temporary "incapacities" of human bodies during death and birth are the subject of Mines' (1989) study, which confirms that repairs to these containers are affected by the other variables. Table 2 therefore excludes earth and ether from the list of independent variables.

Generally also, earth and ether appear to be in mutually complementary distribution—where one is strong the other is weak (Caraka 1983 Sū. 26.40)—supporting the interpretation that these two elements are opposed poles of a single variable. They are so listed in Table 2. As containers of terminal but contrary kinds, their functions seem to be to transform—to recombine, reproduce and reissue what they receive, earth in relatively gross, ether in relatively subtle forms.

The Hindu sciences also generally postulate one nonelement and anti-aim—the omnipresent, reflexive, nonmaterial, constant process(es) commonly glossed as "self" or "soul" (brahman, ātmā). or "consciousness" (purusa). Its function of total, passive consciousness is normally available to humans only on release from the stranded, substantial and fluctuating world. Only through a released consciousness, conceivable as the empty and static complement of the universal set (of the foregoing particulars), does a sense of wholeness ordinarily arise. By conceptually aggregating all points of view (those of all differently situated, embodied souls) on a fluid world, and interactions (as in Table 3), would occupy four sides of the cube, two at the more matched front, two further back. The four āsramas, if characterised by the three strands as Davis (1983: 51) found them to be in a Bengal village, occupy the two upper front and two lower rear corners of that cubic "sphere". The year can be shown to rotate counter-clockwise through the same plane of the cube which is described by the āsramas, since it follows the six seasons, whose "savours" (rasas) are similarly located by the humours and elements (as in Caraka 1983 Sū. 6 and elsewhere). If characterised by their predominant constituents and effects (tabulated by

Other spheres, other cubes: homologies and deductions

Up to this point, this essay has been concerned with defining the general semantic property-space in which Hindus conceptually and perceptually

16 As an alternative to descriptive, field testing, such as the present papers provide, assessment of the processual variables' adequacy may be made through the experimental game "SAMŚĀRA" (Marriott 1987). Reborn into a game world in which the above five variables are postulated, un instructed players regularly generate institutions that resemble jātis, āsramas, karmic philosophies, etc.

17 Zimmermann (1980, 1987: 146-48) offers two-dimensional, triangular and hexagonal analyses of this plane that might more easily be accommodated in a cube of three humoral dimensions.
Table 3

Some Social Examples of Three Processual Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Processual Variables</th>
<th>Classic Categories (Mines)</th>
<th>Transactional Strategies (Marriott, Raheja)</th>
<th>Prestational Values (Raheja)</th>
<th>Political Issues (Dirks)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MIXING</td>
<td>vā́raṇas (Davis)</td>
<td>maximal</td>
<td>mutuality</td>
<td>territory wider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unmixing</td>
<td>asramaś</td>
<td>minimal</td>
<td></td>
<td>territory narrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMARKING</td>
<td>householder/</td>
<td>optimal</td>
<td>hierarchy</td>
<td>command, honour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marking</td>
<td>renouncer</td>
<td>pessimal</td>
<td></td>
<td>obey, defer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMATCHING</td>
<td>forest-dweller/</td>
<td>peripheral</td>
<td>central</td>
<td>violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matching</td>
<td>student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>constraint</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Processual Variables</th>
<th>Impurity (Mines, Moore)</th>
<th>karma Operation (Wadley and Derr)</th>
<th>Effects of Action, Social and Personal (various authors)</th>
<th>Worship Offerings (Moreno)</th>
<th>Cosmic Orientations (Moore)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MIXING</td>
<td>mixed</td>
<td>large network</td>
<td>external power</td>
<td>hot (sugar)</td>
<td>east/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unmixing</td>
<td>moderate</td>
<td>small unit</td>
<td>internal power</td>
<td>cold (water)</td>
<td>west</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMARKING</td>
<td>less</td>
<td>high agent</td>
<td>superiority</td>
<td>wet (milk)</td>
<td>up, source:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>marking</td>
<td>more</td>
<td>low patient</td>
<td>inferiority</td>
<td>dry (shoes)</td>
<td>down, sink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNMATCHING</td>
<td>more</td>
<td>unmerited</td>
<td>sin, inauspiciousness</td>
<td>killi (burn, impale)</td>
<td>north/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>matching</td>
<td>less</td>
<td>marited</td>
<td>merit, auspiciousness</td>
<td>marry</td>
<td>south/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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![Diagram](attachment:diagram.png)
within the repertoire of any sophisticated speaker. Returning to the human sphere of local social organisation, the Right- and Left-hand divisions as well as five occupational castes, all characterised by their humoral reputations (Moreno and Marriott 1989), can be located in a cube representing the Tamil town of Palani (Figure 2, lower left).\(^\text{a}\)

How are entities themselves to be defined as social units? The three dimensions of the Hindu property-space are again at issue, as here illustrated in Wadley and Derr's (1989) record of debates on the causes of the Karimpur fire. Is agency to be assigned to smaller, single-person units, as some declare, and/or to larger family, lineage, or caste networks (where the incidence of the mixing variable is greater)? Is agency to be ascribed only to the sufferers who are present and living, or is it to be ascribed also or instead to those above them—to family heads, leaders, ancestors, or to still higher, more pervasive, divine markers? Does suffering adhere to sinners only (however their units are defined), or does it fragment and diffuse to others without regard to previous connections and thus without regard to a matching of sin with suffering?\(^{1}\) Whatever their hypotheses, villagers seem determined to argue over the size, antecedents and coherence of any entities.

The media of social transactions (foods, bodies, words, blows, etc.) are as subject as entities to characterisation by the processual variables. "Hot" jaggery and "cooling" water, wet milk and dry shoes, impalement and burning, respectively, represent the three variables among the humoral transactions detailed by Moreno and Marriott in this volume. In Mines' analysis, the earth-and-ether, gross-and-subtle, containing elements of the person are the media most distinctly at issue in the separative, container-breaking "incapacities" that result from birth or death (śāsāca, sātaka); the other, motile elements—air, fire and water (which are contents of those containers)—are the media involved in the three dimensions of general "impurity" (śūddha), whose degrees ('more' and 'less' in Table 3) affect the highly differentiated distribution and duration of these incapacities.

The qualities of actions listed in Table 3 are not graphed here in detail comparable with the data of any of the papers in this volume, yet means of doing so are suggested by Raheja's sociograms of 'mutuality' (mixing), 'hierarchic' (ranking), and 'centrality' (matching), adapted here to a cube (in Figure 2, lower right). Matrices and computer programmes for multi-variate scaling and graphing may be used to illuminate the much fuller depictions that will be required for rigorous and detailed studies of such actions. For these, previous efforts (Higgs and Harary 1984; Levinson 1983; Marriott 1968, 1976; Mitchell 1980) are only beginnings.

The differentiated Hindu property-space presents problems and opportunities for action to be not merely typed, but also either mixed or unmixed with (intensifying or reducing), marked or unmarked by (influencing or influencing), and matched or unmatched to (conforming with or opposing) the properties of its locus. When palani Farmers heat themselves by cooling an overheated goddess (Moreno and Marriott 1989), when Kallar bandits cool themselves by evoking a deceased spirit (Mines 1989), they all counteract the varying world presents. Kerala householders (in Moore 1989) locate some of their activities (cooking, entertaining, conserving, menstruating) at similarly proportioned places within the cube they inhabit, but they also exploit the house's contrasting properties by moving hot sexual activities to cool places, and disorderly death to orderly places; they even counteract the house's properties by putting light into the darkest region and by recycling life-sustenance through what would otherwise be the most polluted and inauspicious corner.

The processual variables are found in other spheres of action, such as time, that may at first seem remote from the human world of variable substance. In astrology, for example, (i) combinatory relations (mixing), (ii) ascendant relations (marking), and (iii) permutive relations (unmixing) spatio-temporal relations are among the most prominent variables of its interpretive logic (Kemper 1977, 1980; Pugh 1983a, 1983b). The shifting relations of seasonal time are as much "substance" (dravya) to Hindu biological thought (Caraka 1983 Sū. 6 and 11.42; Zimmermann 1980) as the other physical elements of which human and celestial bodies are constituted (Pugh 1984).

So it is also with human events. If one rephrases past Pudukkotai politics (Dirks 1987, 1989) in Hindu space-time terms (rather than splitting 'history' as dynamics apart from 'cultural' statics, Western-style), one deals with three analogous variable processes of time-space: (i) coincidence (intensities of mixing in the territorial concentration, distribution, and confrontation of clans); (ii) precedence (marking, emphasised in the sequential narratives of genealogy, settlement, and temple-founding); and (iii) cycling (unmixing or reversal—here the transformation of violent Kallar bandits into dharmik kings) (Dirks 1982; Shulman 1980). These three temporal vectors are diagrammed spatially in Figure 2 (upper right) as the powers of larger "territory", higher "honour" or "command", and greater "constraint", respectively; their higher scores on all three of these scales thrust some Kallars into the royal corner of the cube.
Temporal processes are similarly categorised in the sphere of karmic calculation, where in Wadley and Derr’s account of a recent disaster, villagers debate the relative causal weights of (i) simultaneous and immediate intersections of circumstances (mixtures), (ii) prior and pre-determined qualities (karmic markings), and (iii) unpredictable, unconnected (unmatched) factors. All three sorts of time are involved, and villagers’ several particular explanatory resolutions of the debate are products of their various combinations. Rhodes (1984) has reported just such a triad of kinds of time in Sinhalese medical treatment.

Once the data (on entities, actions, or processes) within any sphere are mapped in a three-dimensional property-space, both Hindus and social scientists thinking with Hindu concepts may exploit the adjacent layers’ meanings. By metonymic deduction, one may hypothesise, for example, that a group acknowledged to be of the āśvāniya varṇa (whose strands are imagined in Bengal as much passion and goodness, but little darkness [Davis 1983: 51]) will have a humoral profile of much bile and phlegm, but little wind; will be much concerned with their attachments, advantages and coherence; and will generally evidence processes of mixing, unmarking and matching in their lives. Following the layer-to-layer analogical reasoning so richly developed in all the Hindu sciences, one may go much further in hypothesising their social organisation, diet and temperament, as well as compatible and incompatible times, spaces, directions, flavours, colours, textures, powers, styles of action, etc. The extent to which they disconfirm such hypotheses will indicate problems for further, meaningful investigation. The authors of most of the following papers have used such reasoning many times in constructing their interpretations. The empirical proofs or disproofs of their hypotheses lead them, and should lead others, to more accurate articulations of the dynamics and dialectics of Hindu life.

Layering seems intrinsic to the overlapping, homologous systems explored in these papers, as three-dimensional conceptions are replicated in sphere after sphere, providing similar orientations in each. Layers are explicit in widespread Hindu theories of homology between the inner and outer minds (Raheja 1976); they are supported by yogic doctrine, which posits five outer and inner bodily “sheaths”—a mixing-to-unmixing sort of variation—and by the devolutionary orders of sāṁkhya, which generally devolve “gross”, outer substance from “subtle”, inner substance (Larson 1987: 49–65). In astrological interpretation a different, possibly contrary ordering of layers prevails in which the divine, celestial sphere marks, all the layers contained within it (community, family, body, psyche). But the four inner layers interpenetrate and have no fixed order among them (Pugh 1984). Layers of expansion (mixing) and of danger (unmatching) both appear intermingled as physical features in planning house-to-land ratios in Kerala (Moore 1989). Castes living away from the centre are generally more marked and more unmatched both in themselves and in their relations with other castes (Hiebert 1971: 59–67; Pfaffenberger 1982; Raheja 1988a, 1988b, 1989). Such “others” residing in peripheral layers are appropriate recipients of unmatchedness (a kind of unmatching) in the āśvāniya varṇas of Kerala and of the communities of the Tamil ritual complexes detailed elsewhere by Shulman (1985) and by Raheja (1988a, 1988b, 1989) and also by Moreno and Marriott (1989). Thus it appears that the orderings and meanings of layers differ, following all of the three regnant variables, much as any ordering of aspects or entities depends on the focus of the viewer. Layering is nevertheless a recurrent consequence of dealing with a world whose every sphere replicates a similar underlying relational structure.

Moore (1989) discovers the special importance of the innermost layer—the middle of a cube—where the atrium of Kerala houses is conceived to be. This is the point where conventional Western graphing would put its zeros, but where Hindu calculation finds all of its substantial variables present and in a perfect state of matching, or balance. (They would be numbered 5, 5, 5 on the scales of 1 to 9 that are favoured by the Kerala building manuals.) Being a place of matching, and being protected from the dangerously unmatched outer layers, it is a good place for carefully matched rituals. An equipoise of physical elements, humours and strands is similarly Tamil villagers’ idea of the divine original state (E.V. Daniel 1984: 3–5). The person whose humours are so balanced is free of disease, according to āyurveda (Caraka Sū. 7. 39–40). The ideally all-competent Śikh yeoman would command his world from such a balanced middle locus, needing none of the Hindu varṇas’ division of labour (Überoi 1967: 100). The many Western theorists who, following Durkheim (1915: 47), suppose that sacred things must be set apart may be surprised to come upon this most perfect spot in the middle of life. The “sacred” (śrī) “middle” of the Kerala house is, like the “heart-mind” (manas), a divinely illuminated special locus where humans can cultivate the fifth and constant process—pure consciousness.

Diametric concepts: ‘purity’, ‘dominance’ and ‘hierarchy’

Three-dimensional analysis can provide perspectives on two pairs of Hindu concepts that have been much debated among researchers on caste in India—‘pure-impure’ and ‘great-small’ (the last more often called ‘dominance’ by social scientists of Western type). These are rarely defined concepts, essentially contested among Hindus, with which social scientists have nevertheless often attempted to analyse Indian materials, usually with ambiguous results. ‘Hierarchy’ is a disagreed dimension that partakes of the difficulties of both ‘purity’ and ‘dominance’.

Like the “subtle-gross” continuum plotted above and also like the “violent-nonviolent” distinction which is not much discussed in this volume, “purity” (śuddha with its synonyms) and “dominance” (adhikāra, etc.) are
potentially three-dimensional ideas that can generally be interpreted as lines running diametrically from corner to corner of the constituent cube. While the cube can be correctly labelled with these words, and while it could even be redefined by these four main diameters—by its corner-to-corner axes, rather than its face-to-face axes—to do so would be to open theory to the claims of rival ideologies and contentions. The three rectangular dimensions actually used are preferable because of their parsimony and their neutrality. They are less contested as presuppositions.

The ambiguities of the diametric concepts are illustrated by some of the many meanings of "purity" diagrammed in the first cube of Figure 2. "Purity" as used by Hindus may refer to being relatively unmixed (e.g., "cool", non-rājasīk), unmarked (e.g., "virtuous", sāttvik), and matched (e.g., "coherent", dhārmik); or to any two of these properties, but not the third; or to any one of these properties, but not the other two; or to none of these properties (Carman 1985). Only the last, socially peripheral Hindu usage approximates the usual Western meanings of 'spirit without flesh', or 'rule without deviation'. Analytic clarity requires specifying which of these eight meanings is intended. In this volume, the papers of Mines and Moore especially achieve and illustrate such clarity.

The alien term 'hierarchy' seems to have suffered because of its naively one-dimensional participation in the three-dimensional Hindu semantic space. The word is given at least three meanings in the descriptive papers of this volume: (i) the 'purity' diameter of the first cube in Figure 2 (cited by Dirks, criticising this Brahman-oriented usage by Dumont); in the next cube, (ii) the 'dominance' or 'power' diameter (from 'King' to the hidden back, bottom corner—the meaning that best suits Pudukkottai kingship in its political context, though Pudukkottai is of no great social importance); and (iii) any chord moving through the vertical dimension of the constituent cube. The last is Raheja's usage, depicted by the dark arrow in the cube of inter-caste relations in Figure 2, and is formally equivalent to what is here called 'marking'.

'Hierarchy' is strongly identified with 'purity' in Dumont's usage. He translates Hindu 'purity' into a Western ideal—the separation of spirit from 'biological' or 'organic life'—even though, paradoxically, he notes that Hindu thought generally ignores or denies such a typically Western 'rift between man and nature' (Dumont 1970: 59, 61). His analytical application of this alien ideal locates the apogee of 'purity' at what he sees as the most 'encapsulating' (englobant) end of a partly asymmetrical series of operations that he calls 'hierarchy'.

'Encapsulating' is not a canonical operation of set theory, but is Dumont's condensation of a complex model of two mutually excluding 'hierarchies' called 'inclusion-exclusion' by its inventor, Raymond Apthorpe (1984). Apthorpe devised 'inclusion-exclusion' in 1956 to describe the unresolved contention between the Tutsi and Hutu tribes for inclusive dominance over the state of Rwanda in Africa, a territory from which each tribe would exclude the other. As used by Dumont, 'to encompass' shows the same irresolution, for it means 'to include' as when an orientation to purity impurity is said to encompass the whole of society; and also means 'to surround, but not include', as when the purity orientation is said to be ignored by Kṣatriyas and other 'power-oriented groups, who are alleged to occupy a disordered 'middle' region—separated but surrounded. 'Encapsulating' is thus an oxymoron: it asserts that Hindu society is both split and not split, both ranked and not ranked. Dumont (1979: 809) defends such a characterisation of Hindu society as necessary, but admits that such self-contradictory usages of 'encapsulating', or 'hierarchy', create a 'logical scandal'.

The present model avoids such scandal. It postulates 'marking' as a dimension of its entire property-space, and thus returns to noncontradictory relations more like those that set theory calls 'inclusion' and linguistics calls 'taxonomic hierarchy'. It adds two other variable dimensions (which approximate the set-theory terms 'intersection' and 'union') to its presupposed property-space. It conceives the top of this space not as narrowing to a point on a single line, but as a broad and deep rectangular region capable enough to accommodate Kṣatriyas, gods, bandits, and others as well as Brahmans. Brahman and Kṣatriya varnas are both controlling elites, each of them relatively unmarked (pervasive or inclusive in their scope) and strongly matching (nondisjunctive, capable of union); they differ mostly along the one dimension of mixing (intersection), popularly known as "cold" and "hot". The "purity" and "dominance" diameters which they respectively head intersect with each other: they are alternative lines across the same diagonal (top front to bottom rear) plane of the cube. As a cube or a plane may be viewed in more than one way, the orderings of the marked or backgrounded entities will be seen to vary, depending on whether the angle of vision is that of king, thief, priest, village jajmān, or some other. Diversity of ranking is an intrinsic potentiality of such a model.

After reading Raheja's evidence (1989; also 1988a and 1988b) for the actuality of such diverse and shifting three-dimensional views, and Beck's (1972: 154–81) and Marriott’s (1976) similar reports of diverse rankings from elsewhere, one might hope that the supposition of a single-dimensional space will henceforth be abandoned. After seeing Moore's evidence (1989, Figures 4 and 6) for a Hindu consciousness of many diagonal "slopes", one might hope that the utility of a multidimensional model will be clear. One might hope also that the oxymoronic term 'encapsulating' will be dropped and the now heavily overburdened word 'hierarchy' will be either restored to its unambiguous meaning of an order of inclusions, or else given a rest.
Other possible Indian social sciences

The foregoing constructs by no means form a complete ethnosociology, nor do they exhaust the materials from which Indian social sciences may be developed. They leave untouched the Hindu systems of "senses", "savours", "sentiments" and "feelings"—materials for concentric indigenous psychologies. The model outlined above is undoubtedly biased in the direction of its sources, which are mostly Hindu, more north Indian than southern, more learned than popular, more of sāṃkhya-yoga than of any other dārsana, more ayurvedic than astrological, more orthodox than devotional, more high caste than low, and more male than female.

The different general theoretical systems that could develop from other, one- or two-dimensional humoral schemes have yet to be fully imagined. Suggestive examples are the Tamil humoral notions described by McGilvray (1982b) and E.V. Daniel (1984) (noted by Moreno and Marriott in this volume), and the highly developed fire- and water-based, but windless Greco-Muslim humoral scheme reflected in the notions of Muslim farmers of Panjab and Sindh (Kurin 1981).

Ether and earth have been interpreted above as secondary if necessary elements, providing containers and recycling for the world's otherwise highly motile substances. But earth as regenerative mother and other as spirit or feeling might become central understandings of these categories if a general theoretical system were built from Tamil women's views of the world (Egnor 1978, 1984). Sky and earth would also play far larger and very different roles in a science developed from the theories of Muslim farmers in Bangladesh (Thorpe 1982), for whom the analogous god and man are the principal duality of the universe, and for whom other elements (fire, water) are mere media or qualifiers.

Differences of aspect or point of view on the cubic structure have been noted repeatedly above. The cube has been pictured so far from just one angle. The differences of aspect stressed in the papers by Moreno and Marriott, Raheja, and Dirks result from shifts only among the elites who occupy the edge joining its top and forward (unmarking and matching) faces. Views from along this edge may well be the most influential and occupy the edge joining its top and forward (unmarking and matching) faces. Views from along this edge may well be the most influential and occupy the edge joining its top and forward (unmarking and matching) faces.

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The possibility of irrelevance or anachronism appears remote, however, since liquid, antiequivalent Hindu presuppositions, while old, are nonetheless resonant with a great body of living Indian literature and with the findings of much recent ethnography. These presuppositions are in many ways also compatible with the findings of current linguistics, of molecular and atomic physics, of ecological biology, and of social systems theory (Buckley 1967; Capra 1975; Marriott 1977; Prigogine and Stengers 1984). They are more compatible than are the presuppositions of Western theology, law, or common sense which generally underlie the concepts of conventional Western social science. In other words, the constructs explored here may be as much for the present and future as for past Hindu and wider worlds.

Breaking with some aspects of the established Western ethnosocial sciences and cultivating other-regional rivals may also raise fears of parochialism and relativism. But the processual relativism that the Hindu ethnosocial sciences would indulge is potentially the least parochial, the most ecumenical of urges. Hindu ontology and epistemology, whether labelled as fire, water, and air, or as more learned notions of strands and
humours, can be said to deal more directly with some ideas of greater universality—the fundamental relational axioms of mathematics, or the fact of universal flux, for example—than conventional Western social science does with its parochial, equivalence-based ideas of discrete, static and uniform entities. One cannot in fact avoid parochialism in the present state of the social sciences. If Indian sciences are developed, however, one may at least be able to choose whether to practise with alien and often inapposite concepts or with indigenous, appropriate ones.

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