IV. SPURIOUS GREEK SOURCES

In the preceding chapter we discussed those more or less real and clear accounts of India we can find in early Greek literature. Now it is time to turn to such cases where the connection with India is only conjectural. The main purpose of these two chapters is to define the extent to which materials can be used in order to find out something more solid than mere hypotheses. Therefore we must now turn out attention to Homer and early Greek philosophy for a while, before we dismiss them altogether. A couple of generations ago I should have also included Aesop, but at least it has now become clear that no direct link between India and Greece is needed in order to explain the early history of fable.[1]

1. Homer and India

Too often it has been stated, even in recent publications, that apparently there was already some "vague knowledge" of India in the Homeric epics. This persistent error goes back to Lassen,[2] who proposed a cautious hypothesis of a possible, perhaps only an indirect knowledge of India in Homer.[3] Schwanbeck, McCrindle and Rawlinson[4] took over Lassen's hypothesis – but not necessarily his reservations – and through the latter two it

[1] See e.g. Sedlar 1980, 99ff. (though she takes a somewhat too optimistic view of a possible Indian origin).

[2] Lassen 1847, 239 and 313–315, again in Lassen 1852, 628f. Schwanbeck (1846, 1f.) is only seemingly older, because Lassen 1847 was originally published in fascicles beginning already in 1843. Of course Lassen was not the inventor of the idea either, but he was the first to form a real hypothesis of it. Some older authors wisely began their discussion of early accounts of India with Herodotus (e.g. Mannert 1829, 1).

[3] Perhaps it must be emphasized that I take no stand on the Homeric question when I speak of Homer. Probably there never was such a person, if by Homer we mean one common author for both *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. But this is unimportant for our present purpose, as both epics clearly have their origin in archaic oral poetry, and were probably written down at the end of the archaic period. It is the period itself – be it called archaic or epic – and the great improbability of any contact with or knowledge of India during it, that I am presently discussing, and the name Homer is used as a convenient way to speak about both epics. As all evidence is shown to be negative or wholly unconclusive, it is somewhat irrelevant whether it comes from the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*.

[4] Schwanbeck 1846, 1f., McCrindle 1877, 3f. and Rawlinson 1926, 13f. and 18.

was carried even to some recent, especially Indological literature.[5] Here we again have a good example of the dangers involved in using much used, but nevertheless antiquated and often uncritical authorities without asking oneself if all is really as it seemed to be a century ago. In a review of the first edition of Rawlinson's book Kennedy[6] showed how weak the evidence really was, but few seem to have noticed the review and Rawlinson changed nothing in his second edition.

There are no new arguments for this Homeric "knowledge" – as vague as it may have been – and none of Lassen's traditional arguments hold. But as the error is perpetrated again and again, I would like to discuss them again and collect the contrary evidence which is scattered in many places. It is high time to get rid of the myth of a Homeric knowledge of India. Therefore let it be said again: it is very unlikely – to say the least – that the Greek words ἐλέφας and κασσίτερος – Lassen's most important arguments – could be derived from Sanskrit *ibha* and *kastīra*. This was already pointed out as doubtful by Reese[7] and has since then been confirmed beyond doubt, partly with new and important evidence as we shall soon see.

We should not be too hard on Lassen, however. He was cautious and left the case more or less open. And for him it was much easier to believe in a connection between Homeric Greece and India. When he wrote his book, it was a common belief that the Sanskrit word for "Greek", *yavana*, necessarily contained the Greek *digamma* (ϝ). As the digamma fell into disuse as early as 800 B.C. in the Ionic dialect, India had already gained the word earlier and therefore there must have been some contact even before Homer.[8] Unfortunately the Sanskrit *v* is most probably the result of an Indian development[9] and if not, it is perhaps derived from the Semitic *yawan*.[10] Similarly, it was commonly thought that Hiram's ships brought Indian products to Solomon from Ophir. In chapter II.2. we saw that this is very unlikely. Thus, a Homeric contact, too, becomes automatically more improbable. One of the points discussed then was the name for elephant (or ivory), and now it is time to take it up once again.

The Greek word ἐλέφας is already attested in Mycenaean, in Linear B orthography *e-re-pa, e-re-pa-to/te*.[11] Excavations have confirmed that ivory (although probably not the elephant) was well known in the Mycenaean culture.[12] The Hittite word for elephant – *laḫpa* – is probably related to the Greek word.[13] It was already known in the time of

[5] In addition to several Indian historians McCrindle is referred to by Sedlar (1980, 9) as her only authority on the question. Conger (1952, 103 and 110) and Nilakanta Sastri (1959, 42) go back to Rawlinson. Fortunately, there are many general surveys (like Lamotte 1953, Schwarz 1966, Jong 1973 and Tola & Dragonetti 1986) which ignore Homer.

[6] Kennedy 1916, 850.

[7] Reese 1914, 38.

[8] Thus stated still in Rawlinson 1926, 20.

[9] See chapter II, 8.

[10] Mayrhofer s.v.

[11] Frisk s.v. ἐλέφας.

[12] See Dunbabin 1957, 38f. and Schachermeyr 1967, *passim* (see Sachregister s.v. *Elefantenzahn* and *Elfenbein*).

[13] Frisk Suppl. s.v. ἐλέφας (with references).

Lassen and his followers that there is a related word in Ancient Egyptian too, in the 19th century orthography written *ebu*, nowadays something like *3bw* (**3ẽbaw*).[14] The relationship between ἐλέφας and the Egyptian word has already been pointed out by Champollion, and in the case of Coptic *ϵβ(o)υ* it was known even earlier.[15]

The old etymology for elephant (Greek ἐλέφας) was originally proposed by Benary[16] and approved by many[17] 19th century scholars.[18] Benary analysed the word as ἐλ-έφας and explained it as a combination of the Semitic article *el* and Sanskrit *ibha*. But the Greek ἐλ may be due to Hamitic *eḷu* 'elephant',[19] or some other linguistic development. In any case it cannot be the Arabic article *al* (as Benary thought)[20] as it is not met with in any other Semitic language, and is attested only from the period after Christ.[21] As far as *ibha* is concerned, it may be related to ἐλέφας, not in origin but as a derivation from the same ultimate common source.[22] Yet the similarity of the words may well be only accidental, as it seems that 'elephant' is only the secondary meaning for *ibha*.[23] If so, it is the last blow to any derivation of ἐλέφας from Sanskrit *ibha*. When we think how much nearer Egypt is to Greece, and how there has been contact between the two countries from the Minoan period onward,[24] it is very difficult to understand how the word for ivory, a material imported from Africa, could have been derived from distant India. The Egyptian word is at least as near to ἐλέφας as *ibha*.

It has been even attempted to derive the Egyptian word from India. There is some slight possibility of a contact between ancient Egypt and India, but the total lack of evidence makes it rather unlikely (see chapter II.2.). And certainly there was no reason for the Egyptians to borrow their word for elephant from a country as distant as India. Wild elephants still existed in Egypt during the first dynasties, and the Syrian elephant is attested both in Egyptian and in Mesopotamian sources.[25] And of course the Egyptians, even when these early populations became extinct, could (and did) find elephants enough in Sudan and Ethiopia without going all the way to India.

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[14] Mayrhofer s.v. *ibha* (see also Nachträge), Frisk s.v. ἐλέφας reads *ābʰ(u)*. Latin *ebur* is related too.

[15] References in Pott 1842, 13.

[16] Benary 1831, 761ff.

[17] There was another theory deriving ἐλέφας from Semitic *aleph hind* 'Indian ox' put forward by Pott (1842, 12ff.) and subscribed to e.g. by Weber (1857, 74).

[18] It is subscribed to – often without mentioning the source (Benary 1831) – e.g. by Bopp (1840, s.v.), Benfey (1839, 46 and 1840, 26ff.) and Lassen (1847, 314f.). More than a century later (1968), and despite the Egyptian evidence, it is still mentioned approvingly by Chantraine (s.v. ἐλέφας).

[19] It is explained thus by Frisk, s.v. ἐλέφας.

[20] Oppert (1875, *lxxf.*) had already noted that the way *al* is used as a definite article in Arabic makes it rather unlikely to be found in such borrowings as ἐλέφας.

[21] See e.g. W. Müller in Fischer 1982, 32ff.

[22] This was the opinion of Mayrhofer (s.v. *ibha)* in the fifties, but in his *Nachträge* (1976) he denied any connection.

[23] Mayrhofer *ibid.* See also Mayrhofer (New) s.v. *ibha.*

[24] See e.g. Schachermeyr 1967, 21, 27 and *passim.*

[25] Brentjes 1961, 22 (Egypt) and 14ff. (Syria). Cf. chapter II.4.

Lassen's second argument for a possible link between epic Greece and India is the Greek word for 'tin', κασσίτερος.[26] This time the (unmentioned) primary source was Schlegel, though Benary, too, mentioned it in his review of Schlegel's study.[27] Afterwards, the supposed derivation of κασσίτερος from Sanskrit *kastīra* 'tin' is mentioned in several works as certain,[28] and for a while few seemed to take notice of Weber's remark that the relation may well be the opposite, i.e. that Sanskrit *kastīra* is derived from Greek κασσίτερος.[29] In fact the Indian word is met with only in a late period.[30] Thus it is probably a loan word borrowed from the west, and perhaps not even borrowed directly from the Greek.[31]

Actually, the whole idea of the West borrowing the name for tin from India is really far-fetched. Lassen himself would hardly have suggested it had he had the evidence we now have. In addition to late and rare *kastīra,* there is a common name for tin in Sanskrit – *trapu* – well attested already in the Vedic period.[32] But the metal itself is very rare in India and probably always has been. In early times it was imported, probably from Iran.[33] Later it had an important place in the Roman trade with India, and it is mentioned several times as exported to India.[34] As to the Greeks, in early times they imported tin from the far west, not from the east.[35] When Lassen wrote in the 1840s he did not know much about Vedic literature and had too optimistic an idea about Indian tin resources. But the idea of the Indian derivation of Greek κασσίτερος seems to linger still in the literature, sometimes due to sheer ignorance of the relevant facts, sometimes to a curious and obstinate attachment to the old theory.[36] It is true that the etymology of Greek κασσίτερος is still a matter of controversy,[37] but Sanskrit at least is clearly out of the question.

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[26] Lassen 1847, 239.

[27] Schlegel 1829, 8 and Benary 1831, 760.

[28] Thus e.g. Bopp 1840, s.v., and Benfey 1840, 28f., without mentioning Schlegel and Benary. After the immense evolution of comparative linguistics since Benfey, his arguments sound rather strange. Thus, according to Benfey κασσίτερος cannot have any Greek derivation, because the author himself could not find any. Consequently, the argument continued, it must have been borrowed from India, and this is proved by the "fact" that ἐλέφας is also derived from Sanskrit. These and many more arguments are provided, but none of them are particularly convincing.

[29] Weber 1857, 75 and 89, again 1871, 619.

[30] According to Kern (1908, 208) only in an 11th century dictionary.

[31] So Mayrhofer, *Nachträge* s.v. *kastīra.*

[32] Rau 1974, 24, note 19.

[33] Rau 1974, 20.

[34] See e.g. Warmington 1928, 269 and 387 (note 21 referring to *Periplus* 49 and 56).

[35] Cf. Hdt 3, 115: οὔτε νήσους οἶδα Κασσιτερίδας ἐούσας, ἐκ τῶν ὁ κασσίτερος ἡμῖν φοιτᾷ ... ἐξ ἐσχάτης (scil. τῆς Εὐρώπης) δ' ὧν ὅ τε κασσίτερος ἡμῖν φοιτᾷ καὶ τὸ ἤλεκτρον.

[36] Rawlinson (1926, 13) knew very well that tin ore was scarce in India and that Sanskrit *kastīra* is just a late ἅπαξ. However, he apparently had so much respect for Lassen or for the idea of a Homeric knowledge of India, commonly accepted in his youth, that he was unable to draw the obvious conclusions. He did not even know what Kern (1908) had said about *kastīra.*

[37] See Frisk s.v.

Thus Homer had nothing to do with India or Indian products when he spoke of ivory[38] and tin.[39] Lassen's third argument was no more happy than these two, and again it seems to have been derived from earlier authors, who he leaves unmentioned. First to my knowledge to have mentioned it was the notorious Wilford,[40] who concluded that India was known to the Greeks as Eastern Ethiopia in the Homeric age. However, the idea did not win approval then,[41] and only became popular through Schwanbeck and Lassen, who seems this time to have followed his pupil.[42] In the *Odyssey*[43] there is a passage describing the Eastern Ethiopians living in the eastern end of the world.[44] According to Herodotus they were indeed living somewhere near India,[45] so why not in India? So it was stated by Lassen and others, and the idea has even gained supporters recently.[46] But Herodotus (fifth century) belongs to a much later period. Everything points to a much more limited sphere of geographical knowledge in the times of the Homeric epics, so limited that any knowledge of India, however vague, seems to be impossible.[47] Even the eastern shores of the Mediterranean were distant, and the inner parts of Asia Minor as well as the Black Sea were hardly known at all. Homeric Ethiopians – both of them – are quite fabulous.[48] It is probably a waste of time to try and search for them on a map, and in any case what the authors from Herodotus onwards had to say about them has no relevance to the case of Homer.[49] The well-known confusion between India and Ethiopia is also of later origin,[50] though here a misguided interpretation of Homer was involved.

The correct conclusion, it seems, was made two millennia ago.[51] We cannot do

[38] *Iliad* 5, 583 ἠνία λεύκ' ἐλέφαντι. The animal itself was not known in archaic Greece (and apparently was still more or less unknown to Herodotus).

[39] *Iliad* 11, 25; 18, 613; 23, 503 etc. (see Liddell & Scott & Jones, s.v.).

[40] Wilford 1799, 139.

[41] E.g. Ukert (1814, 44ff.) concluded wisely that the Homeric Ethiopians were "entweder die südlich von Aegypten wohnenden ... oder, man liess Aethiopen an einen Theil der Küsten des Mittelmeers wohnen, worauf mehreres hindeutet."

[42] Schwanbeck 1846, 1ff. and Lassen 1852, 628. There is even a reference to Schwanbeck in Lassen.

[43] The passages dealing with Ethiopians in general in Homer are collected in Reese 1914, 36

[44] *Od.* 1, 22-25:

> Ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν Αἰθίοπας μετεκίαθε τηλόθ' ἐόντας,
> Αἰθίοπας, τοὶ διχθὰ δεδαίαται, ἔσχατοι ἀνδρῶν,
> οἱ μὲν δυσομένου Ὑπερίονος, οἱ δ'ἀνιόντος,
> ἀντιόων ταύρων τε καὶ ἀρνειῶν ἑκατόμβης.

[45] I will have more to say about Herodotus' account in chapter V.3.

[46] Neiman 1980.

[47] For Homeric geography and its limits see e.g. Thomson 1948, 19ff. and Reese 1914, 36ff. The possibility of Mycenaean reminiscences in Homer does not concern us here as there is no kind of evidence for any knowledge of India or of any country as far away as India in the Mycenaean Age.

[48] Thomson 1948, 24.

[49] This is the mistake of e.g. Neiman (1980).

[50] On this see Dihle 1962 and Arora 1982a.

[51] So was the wrong one too. According to Eustathius and *Scholia* on the *Odyssey*, the philologian Crates of Mallus (2nd century B.C.) suggested that the Ἐρεμβοί of Homer (*Od.* 4, 84) were Indians. Aristarchus made them Arabians, which may be correct, but they have also been located somewhere on the

better than quote it directly from Strabo: Τὴν μὲν οὖν Ἰνδικὴν οὐκ οἶδεν Ὅμηρος· εἰδὼς δὲ ἐμέμνητο ἄν.[52]

2. *Greek Philosophy and India*

"The philosophers like Pythagoras, Democritus, Plato, Apollonius of Tyana, Lycurgus, and Demetrius of Sounium were reported to have derived their knowledge from India and it was claimed as the original home of philosophy."[53] In studies about Graeco-Indian questions we often meet statements like this. Such claims were indeed made by several authors of the Roman period (and later) such as Diogenes Laertius, Philostratus, Aelianus, Plutarchus and Lucianus.[54] Ever since then there have been scholars fostering these kinds of ideas, ranging from a cool reflection of possibilities[55] to uncritical and obstinate attempts to show India as the home of all wisdom.[56] It is thus old tradition, but not old enough. During the late antiquity and early Middle Ages the *gymnosophists*, the naked ascetics of India, originating in the histories of Alexander, became a very popular literary theme, and secured India's fame as the country of wisdom.[57] They taught higher moral values to the warrior Alexander and developed themselves from a Cynic ideal[58] into a model of Christian monastic and anchoretic tendencies.[59]

When Indian culture and philosophy became known in the West in the 19th century, a search for doctrinal convergencies began. And all too frequently they were found. But there was also another side to the picture. Classical scholars have not been particularly interested in this kind of comparison, instead there has often been a marked tendency to

coasts of the eastern Mediterranean. See Reese 1914, 35 and Tkač 1909, also Strabo 1, 2, 34f. C. 41f. In *Scholia on Od.* 4, 84 it is said: Ἐρεμβοὺς] Ἀρίσταρχος Ἐρεμβοὺς τοὺς Ἄραβας ἀκούει... οἱ δὲ τοὺς Ἰνδοὺς παρὰ τὸ ἔρεβος, μέλανες γὰρ, ὅθεν καὶ Κράτης τοὺς Ἐρεμνοὺς γράφει. There were other theories too.

52 Strabo 1, 2, 32, c. 39, also given by Jacoby as *FGrH* 721 F 4a. Perhaps originally from Eratosthenes.

53 Arora 1982b, 482.

54 For references see Arora l. c.

55 E.g. West 1971 and Sedlar 1980. See further Halbfass 1988, 2ff.

56 E.g. Lomperis 1984 (see also my criticism in Karttunen 1986a, 81f.). Especially in India even scholars of good reputation are often led to consider the hypothesis of Indian inspiration even in the earliest Greek philosophy as completely proven, see e.g. Nilakanta Sastri 1959, 45ff. and Dandekar 1969, 68.

57 See Sedlar 1980, 68ff.

58 They were given a Cynic stamp already by Onesicritus, who was himself a pupil of Diogenes, the founder of the Cynic school. See Brown 1949, 24ff.

59 Sedlar 1980, 71ff.

see the whole classical culture as something that was isolated and not influenced by others.[60] Many Indologists, however, have eagerly compared classical and Indian sources and put forward theories of influence and borrowing in both directions. Unfortunately, the results have frequently been unconvincing, all the more so when the early period is concerned. In Greece as well as in India various thinkers produced a remarkable variety of different ideas and theories. With much enthusiasm and little criticism occasional similarities are easy enough to find. A modern compilator lists no less than eleven early Greek philosophers who supposedly have ideas in common with the Indians: Thales, Pythagoras, Xenophanes, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Plato, Hesiodus, Aristoteles and Democritus.[61] I will not proceed to analyse them one by one – it would hardly be necessary with such thinkers as Parmenides, who despite an epistemological theory about the opposition between actual unreality and eternal reality is a wholly different kind of thinker than the authors of the Upaniṣads.[62] But we can also consider the question in a more general way.

The whole question of possible intellectual contacts between India and Greece reflected in the religion and philosophy of Greece[63] has been a source of much uncritical and unmethodical writing. In a way, it makes even the total denial of any such link seem tempting. Although there are also a number of sound discussions on the question,[64] a really competent and critical study would clear the air considerably. It is not my intention to do it here, but some further discussion is needed even for our present subject.

Graeco-Indian relations are very clearly divided into two periods: before Alexander's Indian campaign and after it. Before, India was a remote and fabulous country on the edge of the known world. Few had ever seen it. Afterwards, it had at least to some extent become familiar. People travelled there, even lived there, there were times of flourishing commerce with India, and occasionally Indians did also travel in the West.[65] Thus the possibility for any kind of contact even in the sphere of religion and philosophy[66] was greatly increased, although direct evidence is often much less than one might expect.[67]

[60] In this respect West (1971) is a pleasant exception, although one must be careful with some of his ideas. But such a fundamental work as the great monograph of Guthrie (1962, 1965, 1969, 1975 and 1978) serves well as an example. Though I shall myself deny that there is any Indian influence in Plato, I find it astonishing that India is not mentioned at all in the indexes of his two volumes on Plato (Guthrie 1975 and 1978), and the whole question of a possible oriental inspiration in Plato's thinking is put aside with a few references to earlier studies (Guthrie 1975, 557).

[61] Chapekar 1977, 73ff.

[62] On Parmenides see Guthrie 1965, 1ff. (for India note 1 in page 53). With the reduced chronology for the Buddha, the Upaniṣads are our only possible reference in India in the early period.

[63] The question of the possibility of Greek inspiration influencing Indian thinking does not interest us in the present context. At least in the period we are presently discussing it was hardly worth mentioning.

[64] Conger 1952 and the relevant chapters (IV – VII) in Sedlar 1980 can be mentioned as examples.

[65] In addition to older evidence (for which see e.g. Karttunen 1986b) there are many Tamil graffiti found in the excavations at Quseir al-Qadim on the Egyptian Red Sea coast (see Sidebotham 1986, 56, with further references).

[66] An exceptionally good example is Mani who, himself an Iranian, combined Eastern (including Indian) and Western elements in his syncretic doctrine.

[67] See the discussion in Sedlar's (1980) relevant chapters. Even the often mentioned case of Indian

But here we are interested in the early period, and at that time there were several difficult barriers which reduced the possibility of any direct influence.

The first problem is the nature of the contact itself, what kind could it have been and where did it take place? As we saw in chapter II., there was not much evidence of direct travelling between the two countries, India and Greece, and probably such travels were very exceptional. A more likely place for contact was clearly in the metropolises of the Achaemenian empire.[68] There the Indian and Greek subjects could, and indeed did, meet each other and of course they could also learn something from each other. If some philosophical ideas really were exchanged it probably occurred either in this way or through Persian intermediary. On the other hand, it is not very likely that there was much expertise in Indian philosophy and religion even in the Persian metropolises.[69] It is true that some Greek philosophers were keen travellers, familiar with Persian, Mesopotamian and Egyptian ideas, but the same cannot be said of their Indian colleagues. As will be seen in chapter VII.1., travelling in foreign (and especially western) countries was regarded as a sin in Indian orthodox circles even in this period. And as to the hetorodox traditions, recent research has convincingly put the death of the Buddha forward by some hundred years.[70] This means that we know very little of the heterodox thinking in India in the sixth and early fifth centuries. It is no longer easy to suggest a Buddhist influence even for Plato.

We must also keep in mind that the people who came from India to the Persian centres probably had very superficial ideas concerning the philosophical thinking of their country.[71] It is not very likely that such ideas had any great influence on Greeks, even if they ever came to listen to them.[72] There was also the language barrier, everything probably had to be translated through Persian or Aramaic. It is unlikely that the Indians knew Greek in this period, and many Greeks only knew their own language. It was not too difficult to travel in the Empire with Greek, for interpreters were available everywhere.[73]

There is, in fact, an often-mentioned tradition of an Indian sage travelling as far as

influences in Neo-Platonism is anything but proven (Sedlar 1980, 199ff.).

[68] Some would also like to add Miletus, as the town has often been mentioned as a likely gate for many kinds of oriental influence coming to Greece (see Guthrie 1962, 31ff.). But all this ended with the destruction of Miletus by Darius, and this took place so soon after the annexation of India by the same monarch, that any Indian ideas current in Miletus seem rather unlikely.

[69] Perhaps we should also include the Mesopotamian cities trading with India. But Persepolis and Susa still seem to be the most likely.

[70] See chapter VI.5. Among the many consequences of this new chronology we may note that Jaspers' popular idea of an "Achsenzeit" (see e.g. Conger 1952, 127f.) has become even more artificial.

[71] If it was the philosophical thinking of their country at all. Theirs was the Indus country, but we know no Upaniṣads from there. The Upaniṣads arose in the Āryāvarta, the country of the Aryan culture (see chapter VII.1.), and the Indus was definitely outside its borders.

[72] Lomperis' (1984, 44) idea of "some philosophically attuned Indian", a Kṣatriya officer serving in Xerxes' invasion army and living afterwards as a slave in Greece, where he should have taught the Upaniṣads to Socrates, is thus highly artificial. But there is little need to trouble ourselves with Lomperis' ideas, as he did not compare the Upaniṣads with Plato, but Radhakrishnan's and Gandhi's conception of the Upaniṣads with Urwick's interpretation of Plato.

[73] They were used e.g. by Herodotus, see Jacoby 1913, 277.

Athens and conversing there with Socrates. At first glance this seems to have something in it,[74] as it is not an apocryphal story of the Roman period, but comes from a late fourth century author, the musicologist Aristoxenus. But there are also serious objections against it. Aristoxenus was no friend of Socrates and often tried to belittle him.[75] At the same time he was interested in deriving Greek doctrines from oriental wisdom,[76] and was not too scrupulous with historical truth. As he was just late enough to have been influenced by the first historians of Alexander, it is quite probable that he derived his Gymnosophist from them. The authenticity of his account seems to have been suspected by the very man[77] who told it, and it is clearly apocryphal.[78] It is, however, another question whether there are any oriental (not necessarily Indian) influences in Plato, who seems to have been rather interested in oriental doctrines.[79]

A more general factor making extensive influence unlikely is the overall Greek attitude towards other peoples, the *barbarians*. While the Hellenistic period was interested, even fascinated in foreign wisdom, in the classical period most Greeks never thought that the barbarians could have anything worth offering. Only the Egyptians with their awe-inspiringly ancient history and wisdom were sometimes accepted as an exception. This was the common way of thinking, and it was shared by Plato and Aristoteles, probably by Democritus too. As to the Indians, before Alexander's campaign they were just one barbarous people among many (and more distant than most), nothwithstanding their supposed great justness. Only Onesicritus and Megasthenes with their accounts of Gymnosophists laid the foundation of India's fame as the country of wise philosophers.

It has been noted that there were two notable exceptions who did not share the general opinion of foreigners: Herodotus and Alexander.[80] It was, in fact, in ethnography where the new attitude began to develop. Early on it became a τόπος to ascribe a kind of "wisdom" to distant peoples, especially those living on the edge of the inhabited world. But this was part of ethnographic theory, and only slowly did it result in a real interest in their religions and philosophy. It was not supposed to be a philosophy as in Greece, it was a kind of primitive wisdom, a share in the "original wisdom" of humankind, which the Greeks had lost and had to find.[81] When the real contact took place, things began to change. Alexander and his men were rather interested in Indian philosophy, though they apparently could understand very little of it. They were still in need of several successive

[74] It has been accepted by several scholars as at least a possibility. See e.g. Conger 1952, 104f. and Tola & Dragonetti 168f..

[75] Guthrie 1969, 390.

[76] Moraux 1984, 136.

[77] Aristocles, who quoted Aristoxenus' lost work. Aristocles' work is lost, too, and we have the fragment through a quotation of Aristocles by Eusebius (text in Breloer & Bömer 1939, 16).

[78] Moraux 1984, 137, see also Daffinà 1977, 19f.

[79] Much has been written on this subject, see references in Guthrie 1975, 557, note 2 and Moraux 1984, 136f., note 186.

[80] See Evans 1982, 3, Jones 1971, 379, and Hegyi 1978, passim. In Herodotus such passages as 3, 38 and 4, 76 are good examples of this.

[81] It seems, however, that it was not thought possible to learn it again from those peoples who still had it. Cf. Karttunen 1988 and chapter V.1.

interpreters,[82] who could hardly give a very correct idea of the original words. And yet the Indian Gymnosophists still had to be fitted into the theory. Onesicritus was not so interested in their real doctrine, for him it was more important that they represented the τόπος, standing for the original, primitive wisdom. For him this meant the Cynic ideal, and it is little wonder that the Gymnosophists faithfully reflect this ideal. A real interest in Eastern religions and doctrines came only later in the Hellenistic period.[83]

The idea that all foreign peoples were barbarians and could provide nothing that was worth learning, was not very old. There is much Near Eastern influence in archaic Greek art, and apparently in religion too. In the beginnings of Greek philosophy, foreign influence and inspiration is thus quite possible, and in such cases as Orphism and Pythagoreanism its existence seems clear. We must therefore consider the possibility that the similarities between Greek and Indian thinking that are sometimes observed, may be due to a common source in ancient Near East and Egypt. Often this is a much easier explanation than direct contact.[84]

But in most cases these doctrinal similarities are only superficial, and it may be, and often has been, argued that no conclusions about possible contact or common origin can be drawn from them. The early Greek philosophers and the Upaniṣadic thinkers offered many alternative theories about the origin and the foundation of the world and their juxtaposition item by item proves only that similar alternative answers are likely to arise where similar questions are contemplated. Nevertheless, there are some cases of more striking similarities, and we should perhaps briefly survey the instances where contact has been suggested.

For many of the defenders of early philosophical contacts between the two countries, the doctrine of transmigration[85] is of essential value. Schroeder stated plainly that Pythagoras acquired it from India and introduced it into Greece.[86] Nowadays, however, it is no longer fashionable (or reasonable) to try and deny the reliability of traditions about Pherecydes and early Orphism, and both seem to have contained transmigration.[87] It is not easy to deny a connection between Pythagoras and Orphism; and as a doctrine, transmigration is not rare. Although Herodotus' ascription of it to the Egyptians[88] may be a mere projection of Orphic or Pythagorean doctrine,[89] as there seems to be no

[82] Onesicritus F 17a) (from Strabo).

[83] Dihle 1961, 222. See also Halbfass (1988, 5ff.), who seems to be somewhat too optimistic with the openness of the Greek mind, at least as far as the early period is concerned.

[84] It is often suggested by West (1971).

[85] The Greek term was μετεμψύχωσις, sometimes also παλιγγενεσία or μεταγγισμός.

[86] Schroeder 1884, 5ff. For a general discussion of the Greek doctrine and its possible links with India see Sedlar 1980, 22ff.

[87] Conger 1952, 112f. For Pherecydes see also the long discussion in West 1971, 1ff. (on reincarnation 60ff.).

[88] Hdt 2, 123.

[89] Both are mentioned in Hdt 2, 81 as having a common belief, along with the Egyptians, that one should not be buried in woollen clothes. As to the reference to metempsychosis, this does not necessarily refute Herodotus' veracity. As Egypt was considered the country of ancient wisdom, and as many Greek thinkers considered transmigration as wisdom, it may well be that there was a Greek tradition ascribing it

mention of it in the Egyptian sources,[90] we have no reason to suspect its similar ascription to Thrace.[91] And in Thrace we find also the origin of Orphism.[92] Other authors have ascribed transmigration to Gauls and other peoples.[93]

With the exception of transmigration **Orphism** seems to have contained nothing strikingly Indian.[94] Instead, it has often been suggested that it may have been a kind of shamanistic sect.[95] The little we know about **Pherecydes** (5th century B.C.) contains some such points, but parallels are also shown in Iran.[96] The cosmogonical theories of the early Ionian philosophers have sometimes been compared with similar doctrines in the Upaniṣads, and as Ionians and Milesians they could well have had oriental influences in their imperfectly known systems. But while **Thales**[97] (early 6th century) suggested water as a general principle, and **Anaximenes**[98] (middle of the 6th century) air, it is not necessary to go all the way to India in order to find parallels. Even **Anaximander's**[99] (middle of the 6th century) concept of the Boundless (τὸ ἄπειρον) as the origin of all (ἀρχή πάντων)[100] can be easily explained without Indian influence. As Conger and West emphasize, an Indian inspiration on Greek thinking cannot be wholly left out, but as the doctrines themselves are not so hard to trace, and have parallels in coutries much nearer to Greece,[101] such an inspiration is rather unlikely and unnecessary.

The case of **Pythagoras** (late 6th century) is more important and needs more detailed discussion. Schroeder' early thesis is still often accepted as proven, especially by Indologists.[102] There are indeed several points in Pythagorean doctrines which may be and

to the Egyptians. If Herodotus "knew" that Egyptians had the doctrine, it was not too difficult to have it confirmed on the spot. He could easily have misunderstood what the interpreters told him, and the interpreters themselves – like tourist guides everywhere – may have told him what he wanted to hear (Diels 1887, 435; Evans 1982, 10 suggests another case where Herodotus [2, 125] was apparently deceived by his informant). See also Schroeder 1884, 21f.

90 This was emphasized by Schroeder (1884, 10ff.), and it seems that nothing has changed since him, although the amount of known Egyptian literature has greatly increased.

91 Hdt 4, 93–96. See also Dodds 1966, 143f. and Guthrie 1962, 158f.

92 Kirk & Raven & Schofield 1983, 21f. and West 1983, 4.

93 For Gauls see Caesar, *De bello Gallico* 6, 14.

94 Conger 1952, 113.

95 Sedlar 1980, 25.

96 Conger 1952, 112f., West 1971, 1ff. and 1983, 18ff. and Sedlar 1980, 25, more generally Kirk & Raven & Schofield 1983, 50ff.

97 On Thales see Conger 1952, 114f. and West 1971, 208ff., for a more general account Guthrie 1962, 45ff. and Kirk & Raven & Schofield 1983, 76ff.

98 On Anaximenes see Conger 1952, 115f. and West 1971, 99ff., for a more general account Guthrie 1962, 115ff. and Kirk & Raven & Schofield 1983, 143ff.

99 On Anaximander see Conger 1952, 115 and West 1971, 76ff., for a more general account Guthrie 1962, 72ff. and Kirk & Raven & Schofield 1983, 100ff.

100 F 9, 11 as quoted in West 1971, 78.

101 Cf. e.g. the importance of water in Mesopotamian cosmology, suggested by Conger (1952, 114) as the possible source of inspiration for Thales.

102 Thus the authorities used by Arora (1982b, 482) have led him to believe that "the influence of India on the thoughts of Pythagoras has been recognized by [a] majority of the scholars". The idea has been accepted by several scholars otherwise known for their critical acumen. Thus Charpentier 1918, 472f., but

have been compared with Indian, and a century ago Schroeder was sure that he had actually settled the case. But it is not so clear at all, not even when we leave aside the most far-fetched part of Schroeder's theory, the personal debt of Pythagoras, who supposedly had himself travelled all the way to India and learnt the elements of his system there. In the middle of the sixth century[103] the long and hard journey to the still more or less totally unknown India is rather difficult to accept.[104]

The main arguments of Schroeder were transmigration[105] and the prohibition against eating beans. It has already been mentioned that contrary to Schroeder's opinion it is rather likely, that transmigration was known in Greece before Pythagoras – which makes it wholly unnecessary for him personally to bring it from India or anywhere – and in several other countries closer than India, too. The more detailed doctrinal similarities[106] are few and of secondary nature. In the sixth century the doctrine itself was still new in India,[107] and it would be interesting to know how it came there.

At first sight the prohibition against beans[108] seems very promising as it is found both in Pythagoras and in several Indian ritual texts.[109] The *faba Pythagorae cognata*[110] was in India thought of as ritually impure and therefore forbidden as food during rituals. But this is not all, and in a later study Schroeder himself withdrew the bean part of his theory. It is not so important that Herodotus ascribed the bean prohibition to the Egyptians,[111] as he did the same with transmigration as well, but a ritual prohibition against beans is well attested among the Romans, too.[112] There is also some evidence that among several

in 1934, 25f., he stressed the difficulty of supposed Indian travel by Pythagoras and suggested some form of indirect contact.

[103] According to Guthrie (1962, 173) Pythagoras was born c. 570 B.C. He migrated from Samos to Croton in order to escape the tyranny of Polycrates (overthrown 522 B.C.), and established his school there. What he learnt during his travels – and he probably visited at least Egypt – must necessarily have taken place before he came to Croton.

[104] We may note that even Rawlinson is here more critical than usual, and calls such a journey "almost a physical impossibility" (Rawlinson 1926, 157).

[105] Schroeder 1884, 5ff.

[106] Ibid. 28ff.

[107] Or at least in the part of Indian culture and religion known from the extant sources. The first mention is found in the Upaniṣads. Cf. Schroeder 1884, 25ff.

[108] Discussed in Schroeder 1884, 35ff.

[109] Schroeder (1884, 36) referring to *MS* 1, 4, 10 (**ná māṣāṇām aśnīyād, ayajñiyâ vaí māṣā**), *KS* 32, 7 (**na māṣāṇām aśnīyād, amedhyā vai māṣā**) and *ŚB* 1, 1, 1, 10 (**sa vā 'āraṇyam evāśnīyāt/ yā vāraṇyā oṣadhayo yadvā vṛkṣyaṁ tad u ha smāhāpi barkurvārṣṇo māṣān me pacata na vā 'eteṣāṁ havir gṛhṇantīti tad u tathā na kuryād vrīhiyavayor vā 'etad upajaṁ yacchamīdhanyaṁ tad vrīhiyavavevaitena bhūyāṁsau karoti tasmād āraṇyaṁ evāśnīyāt**). See also Schroeder 1901, 201ff. with further Vedic references.

[110] Horace, *Saturae* 2, 6, 63. On the possibility of bean prohibition in Orphism see West 1983, 14f.

[111] Hdt 2, 37 states that Egyptians neither cultivate nor eat beans, and that their priests look upon them as impure and would never taste them. But in fact beans *were* cultivated in Egypt, and there is no trace of such a prohibition there. Pythagoras was supposed to have got his wisdom from Egypt, and Herodotus' account of bean prohibition and transmigration in Egypt might be derived from this theory (Evans 1982, 40f.).

[112] Schroeder 1901, 189ff. with many references.

Indo-European nations, beans were somehow connected with the rituals of the dead.[113] Thus it is wholly unnecessary to trace the Pythagorean prohibition from distant India.

The other similarities mentioned by Schroeder are minor ones. After having himself admitted that the complete vegetarianism of Pythagoras is not certain[114] he proceeds to derive it anyway from India. In this respect he finds it significant that Pythagoras apparently prohibited the eating of the flesh of cattle, but his prohibition applied to the ploughing ox, while the Indian prohibition was at first concerned with the cow. The sixth century is also rather an early date for the total prohibition of beef in India, as it was still eaten centuries later.[115] As to the prohibition against urinating facing the sun, its appearance both in India and in Pythagoras[116] is not curious enough to imply a common origin. The five elements – earth, fire, air, water and aether[117] – are not limited to Pythagoras or to India, and the same can certainly be said of the general "phantastisch-mystisch-symbolischer Character" of the Pythagorean system.[118] As to the famous theorem, it is certainly known, though in a different and practical form in the Vedic Śulvasūtras,[119] but Pythagoras could find it much more easily in Mesopotamia, where it was known already in Hammurapi's times.[120]

Thus we are left with nothing that really points to a connection between Pythagoras and India. Of course we cannot categorically deny any relation, but it remains one hypothesis among many, and there are better (and nearer) possibilities of Oriental influence in Pythagoras than India (not to speak of China).[121] On the other hand, there is some evidence connecting him with the "shamanist" tradition of early Greek religion and such names as Aristeas.[122] A late source (quoting Aristoteles, however) calls Pythagoras "the Hyperborean Apollo",[123] and it may well be that his inspiration must be sought in the north instead of the east.

With **Heraclitus**[124] (early 5th century) we again find doctrines bearing a general

[113] Schroeder (1901) quotes examples from Romans (191f.), Scandinavians etc. (194ff.) and Indo-Aryans (201ff.).

[114] Schroeder 1884, 31; on vegetarianism of Pythagoras in general see Guthrie 1962, 186ff. and Kirk & Raven & Schofield 1983, 231.

[115] Chattopadhyay 1968a, 62f. (with references) and again (answering an orthodox Hindu critic) 1968b. According to her, beef is mentioned as food e.g. in *ĀpDh, Caraka-* and *Suśruta-Saṁhitā,* and not expressly forbidden in Manu and Yajñavalkya. *KA* is somewhat ambiguous in this respect. Suśruta (Sūtrasth. 46, 89) even underlines the purificatory effect of beef (**gavyaṁ pavitram anilāpaham**).

[116] Schroeder 1884, 39.

[117] Ibid. 59ff.

[118] Ibid. 79ff.

[119] Ibid. 39ff.

[120] Guthrie 1962, 217.

[121] See the discussion in Guthrie 1962, 251ff.

[122] Meuli 1935, 153ff. on Aristeas, 159f. on Abaris and 171ff., also Guthrie 1965, 11, Dodds 1966, 135ff. and West 1983, 5ff. and 144ff.

[123] Aelianus, *V. H.* 2, 26. Ἀριστοτέλης (fr. 191 R) λέγει ὑπὸ τῶν Κροτωνιατῶν τὸν Πυθαγόραν Ἀπόλλωνα Ὑπερβόρειον προσαγορεύεσθαι.

[124] On Heraclitus see Conger 1952, 117ff., West 1971, 111ff. and Sedlar 1980, 18f., for a more general account Guthrie 1962, 403ff. and Kirk & Raven & Schofield 1983, 181ff.

similarity to those proposed in India, but they have parallels elsewhere, too, and can hardly suppose any connection with distant India. A fragment of Heraclitus makes the likelihood of him deriving inspiration from barbarians rather unlikely,[125] yet some Iranian influence is rather probable. Ionian was also **Xenophanes** (late 6th and early 5th century), whose doctrine contains no foreign elements, according to one scholar,[126] and some general similarities to some Upaniṣadic passages according to another.[127]

All these philosophers belong to the sixth or early fifth century, when philosophical contact with India still seems rather unlikely. In the fifth and fourth centuries it is already much easier to suppose, but unfortunately no case even as good as Pythagoras' can be found. The "māyā" of Eleatic **Parmenides**[128] (early 5th century) is hardly sufficient reason to suggest a relation, as epistemological dualism is not difficult to invent. **Empedocles**[129] (c. 492 – c. 432 B.C.) with his four elements, transmigration and egg-shaped cosmos, with an endless succession of worlds governed by the alternation and struggle between the two principles of love and strife (φιλότης and ἔρις),[130] is indeed more promising. But the clear Pythagorean and Orphic connections of this healer and wonder-worker[131] make any theory about Indian inspiration superfluous. Still less can be made of Conger's suggestion of an Indian parallel with **Anaxagoras**[132] (c. 500 – c. 428 B.C.). The list could continue, but we need hardly consider every Pre-Socratic philosopher.

It was seen in chapter III.5. that there is just one, philosophically insignificant fragment among the remains of **Democritus**[133] (c. 500 – c. 428 B.C.) that points to India, and the tradition about his Indian travels is late and unreliable. As to the doctrinal convergencies, there are atomic doctrines in India[134] (and elsewhere), but again they are too general to prove anything.

It has already been shown how uncertain the tradition of the meeting of **Socrates** (470/469–399) with an Indian sage is, and any attempt to show Indian inspiration in

[125] F 107 (Diels & Kranz I) κακοὶ μάρτυρες ἀνθρώποισι ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ ὦτα, βαρβάρους ψυχὰς ἐχόντων.

[126] West 1971, 227f. See also Guthrie 1962, 360ff. and Kirk & Raven & Schofield 1983, 163ff.

[127] Conger 1952, 119.

[128] Conger 1952, 119ff., Sedlar 1980, 19f. and Guthrie 1965, 53, note 1. For a more general account on Parmenides see Guthrie 1965, 1ff. and Kirk & Raven & Schofield 1983, 239ff. Parmenides, too, has been included among the early Greek "shamans", see Meuli 1935, 171f. and West 1983, 149.

[129] Conger 1952, 123, West 1971, 233ff. and Sedlar 1980, 29, for a more general account Guthrie 1965, 122ff. and Kirk & Raven & Schofield 1983, 280ff.

[130] See Guthrie 1965, 141f. (elements), 250ff. (transmigration), 190f. (egg) and 167ff. (succession of worlds) and Kirk & Raven & Schofield 1983, 314ff.

[131] According to West (1983, 149) he "strutted about in holy garb offering prophecies, cures for diseases, control of wind and rain, and the ability to raise the dead."

[132] Conger 1952, 123. For a general account see Guthrie 1965, 266ff. and Kirk & Raven & Schofield 1983, 352ff. Of course even Conger did not mean that Anaxagoras necessarily derived his νοῦς doctrine from India, his method was to collect everything somehow resembling Indian ideas. His conclusions from the whole material are not very positive (Conger 1952, 124ff.).

[133] On Democritus see Reese 1914, 93f. and Conger 1952, 123f., more generally Guthrie 1965, 386ff. and Kirk & Raven & Schofield 1983, 402ff.

[134] But Vaiśeṣika is both much later and different in many details. See also Lysenko 1982.

Socratic thinking seems rather far-fetched. As to his pupil, it would be hard to deny oriental elements in **Plato** (c. 429–347), but it is much less clear that there are any Indian influences.[135] There is transmigration, but probably he derived the idea from the Pythagoreans and Orphism.[136] Plato expressly accepted his debt to both in many respects,[137] but he never mentions India at all.

The few attempts to find Indian elements in **Aristoteles** (384–322) can hardly convince any critical scholar.[138] Yet in his case such an influence would be somewhat easier to accept as he was already a contemporary of Alexander.

When some kind of direct influence or inspiration between the doctrines of two countries is suggested, it may have happened in four ways. First, there is direct dependency, where doctrines or whole systems are adopted as such. Second, a less direct way we might call inspiration. Here the contact with foreign doctrines has been a reason for the further development of one's own system. It can be positive, when an idea is adopted for further development, but also negative, when the new development can be characterized as a reaction to the foreign idea.[139] A third alternative is simply sympathy. One sees or thinks one sees that others have similar ideas to those one has already discovered, and this is expressed approvingly.[140] Fourth, there is antipathy, the contrary to sympathy, where acquaintance with a new doctrine inspires only criticism.[141] But every one of these possibilities requires contact, and all evidence for contact is missing with the early Greek philosophers and India. In as much as we cannot find any cases which show a clear and unambiguous dependency and have no alternative explanations, we cannot build much on similarities without any evidence of contact. I do not deny that there was the possibility of contact, and therefore there may have also been some exchange of ideas. But in as much as neither is unambiguously shown, we have only mere theories.

Of course there are cases of reputed contacts. However, we have already seen how little the meeting of Socrates with an Indian sage can be relied upon, and the reputed Indian travels of the Greek philosophers are not much more reliable.[142] Later tradition ascribed such travels to several early philosophers, and in some cases the philosophers in

135 See the short account in Sedlar 1980, 30. The attempt of Lomperis (1984) has been discussed (and dismissed) in the beginning of this chapter.

136 Guthrie 1975, 36 and 341f.

137 Guthrie 1975, 249f.

138 Mostly they are not noted at all, e.g. in Guthrie 1981.

139 In this way the influence of Manichaeism and Neo-Platonism seems to have been very important in Christianity.

140 This is probably the way we can define the relation between Onesicritus and later Cynics and the Indian Gymnosophists. A similar case in the modern period is seen in the relation of Schopenhauer to Indian thinking.

141 The history of missionary activity – Christian and other – is full of examples.

142 Most often such travels are mentioned by Diogenes Laertius and some Christian authors. The latter often show a tendency to draw Greek doctrines from oriental sources whether it is likely or not. Democritus, for instance, is said to have visited India by Diogenes (Diels-Kranz F A1), *Suda* (A2), Aelianus (*V. H.* 4, 20 = A16) and Hippolytus (A40). The list of reputed travellers to India include such wholly unlikely names as Lycurgus (Aristocrates F 2 in Breloer & Bömer 1939, 42).

question were great travellers indeed. Plato and Democritus[143], perhaps even Pythagoras[144] were without doubt familiar with Egypt and Mesopotamia. But there is still not much reason to believe in their Indian travels. During the Hellenistic and Roman period it became fashionable to suggest not only Indian, but oriental wisdom in general as an inspiration in Greek thinking.[145] Along with this, the extent of the supposed travels constantly increased. All traditions about philosophical travels to India are attested only from the Roman period, and most likely they were fabricated in the Hellenistic or Roman period, when the fame of India as the country of wise sages was already established by the historians of Alexander. The only reliable mention of some sages[146] in India before Alexander is the Herodotean account of an ascetic people in India, and they were not likely to instigate any philosophical travels. The same also applies to the old commonplace of the righteousness and even wisdom of any remote people. If there is anything that goes back to Indian inspiration in early Greek philosophy, it must have come through Iran. But then there is always the other possibility that both Greece and India gained inspiration from Iran.[147]

With Alexander's Indian campaign all this was changed. At Taxila Alexander's men met real Indian sages, henceforth known in the west as Gymnosophists, and Onesicritus especially described them in a very favourable light. In this respect it is not so important that his account seems to contain few real Indian doctrines but is instead concocted from Cynic ideals.[148] It was from these times India began to be known as a country famous for its naked philosophers, and sometimes it was even considered as a kind of source of all wisdom.[149] This, however, is a purely Western myth with no real connections with India anymore.

Alexander's campaign meant the first real attested contact between Greek and Indian thinkers, difficult though the language barrier must have been. With Onesicritus we have

[143] ἐγὼ δὲ τῶν κατ' ἐμαυτὸν ἀνθρώπων γῆν πλείστην ἐπηπλανησάμην ἱστορέων τὰ μήκιστα καὶ ἀέρας τε καὶ γέας πλείστας εἶδον καὶ λογίων ἀνδρῶν πλείστων ἐπήκουσα... says Democritus himself in F 299 (Diels & Kranz). Although the authenticity of the fragment has been questioned (see discussion and references in Diels & Kranz), the travels itself cannot be denied. See Guthrie 1965, 386f.

[144] According to Guthrie, his Egyptian travels are quite probable, though Babylonian are not so certain (Guthrie 1962, 172f. and 217). We are often more sure with Egypt, and perhaps this depends on whether Egyptian travels were thought to be more worthy of mention than those to Mesopotamia or other countries.

[145] Mostly this has nothing to do with the real Near Eastern elements in the thinking of the early philosophers.

[146] If they really were sages, see next chapter.

[147] Cf. Conger 1952, 124ff.

[148] See Brown 1949, 38ff. (and earlier Schwartz 1896, 83ff.) Part of what Onesicritus says about these Gymnosophists can also be interpreted from an Indian viewpoint (see Schwarz 1980, 86ff. and Vofchuk 1984, 470ff. and 1986, 192ff.). Of course, this can be true as well. It is all the more easier to make the Gymnosophists representatives of the Cynic ideal if they really resembled (or at least seemed to resemble) this ideal. We have already seen that the Cynic ideal was not restricted to Gymnosophists in Onesicritus' book.

[149] For the outlines of this development see Karttunen 1987 and the references there. The relevant texts are most easily found in Breloer & Bömer 1939.

a "Cynic philosopher" (though no original thinker) in a contact we have characterized as "sympathy". Another case often mentioned[150] is that of Pyrrho. This founder of the Sceptic school participated in Alexander's campaign and probably gained some acquaintance with the Gymnosophists. Doctrinal similarities between his philosophy and Indian thinking has often been suggested,[151] and it seems likely that we again have a case of "sympathy" if not more. But there is the difficulty that we do not know very well what was really Pyrrho's own contribution to the school he founded[152] and this complicates the issue. Some real parallels can be indicated, but they are too few and often too open to other explanations for us to make any definite conclusions.

[150] There was even a classical tradition (Antigonus Carystius apud Diog. Laertius, cited in Breloer-Bömer 1939, 32) that Pyrrho derived his system from the Gymnosophists (Flintoff 1980, 88ff.), but the same was claimed by Diogenes and other late authors in many cases where Indian inspiration is clearly out of the question.

[151] See e.g. Brochard 1887, 53 and 73ff., Fremkian 1958, Piantelli 1978 and Flintoff 1980 (105 note 5 gives further references). The comparison is most commonly made with the Upaniṣads (Fremkian) or Buddhism (Brochard, partly Flintoff) or both, but Flintoff (1980, 100f.) rightly emphasizes that there were more Indian doctrines which may have come into the question (e.g. Ājīvika). This combined approach is also found in Piantelli 1978, 146ff.

[152] See e.g. Fremkian 1958, 213ff.