HINDU SYSTEMS OF THOUGHT
AS EPISTEMIC DISCIPLINES

This is not a study of Hindu philosophies —
but a methodology of how they are to be
studied.

I. THE SCIENCE OF PHILOSOPHIES

The title of this essay may sound exotic, and its subject (at least in
direct formulation) may certainly seem out of place in the history and
philosophy of science. So my first tasks will be to show how and in
what sense it should belong there.

To prove my point naturally requires that I bring to trial some
material taken from the particular content of a certain group of Indian
philosophies. But this is not the only, not even the essential, reason why
I have to treat my subject in a material way. I shall always keep my
thought within a certain concrete subject-matter, never abstracting to an
extent that would make it impossible to unfold some parts of its content
in accord with concrete interpretation. The reader must be informed of
my reasons immediately, although their proper understanding will come
to him only when he finishes reading the entire essay.

The material found in Hindu philosophies is selected as essential to a
much more general and radical project of reforming the whole idea of
philosophy. Here philosophy is to be constructed as an object for a new
science which can in full right be called the science of philosophies.
What I need most of all if I am to make this science is a categorial
framework that can be placed within its expected subject-matter. Then
when I proceed to unfold my thought, always keeping within the given
specific content, the required object will not be long in appearing.
Exactly this kind of categorial framework comprises the set of the six
Hindu philosophical systems or, better yet, reflections of thought.

Darśana, meaning ‘reflection’, ‘mirroring’, ‘speculation’ (cf. Latin
‘speculum’ = ‘mirror’) is a standard Sanskrit technical term for philo-
sophical system. Each of the darśanas is to be represented here as a

* For a glossary of Indian philosophical terms occurring in Chapter I, see p. 350.
part of the total *categorial* means by which philosophy in general can become an object of the science of philosophies.

It should be made clear to the reader that this kind of problem has never before been formulated, and that it has perhaps never even been suspected. This speaks not to the author's unusual originality or insight but simply to the fact that its historical necessity could not appear until the present. The dominant striving of modern philosophy to be in one way or another 'scientific' resulted in the absorption of philosophy by science, even in its virtual disappearance (at least in the traditional sense of the word) from the historical horizon; also, with the transformation of science itself into a system of *culture*, that is, into an object with a normative constitution and therefore fit to be studied by some other science (or sciences) of a 'second order', presumably by the sciences of culture (such as cultural anthropology, etc.), it now appears both possible and legitimate to ask whether philosophy, since it has been absorbed by science, can also be an object of a 'second order' science.

Speaking in abstract terms, philosophy need not be a 'sort of' science, a quasi-science, to provide this possibility. To be an object of science does not at all mean to be 'scientific'. In this regard, for instance, my project may not have anything to do with Husserl's idea of developing philosophy as a 'rigorous science'. A *study* of alchemy, for example, can be scientific if it meets the requisite normative criteria — although alchemy itself is not a science and never can be made a science. Therefore, in the course of realizing my program, I need not try to make the traditional Indian or Western philosophies scientific by artificially bringing them into line with the epistemic organization of human social activity known as 'science'.

But to speak concretely, the absorption of philosophy by science could happen in the sense of actual history only if philosophical activity itself has — or once possessed — a reality of its own, that is, a definite and independent ontological status and metaphysical priority. But this is exactly what is denied to philosophy by positivist analysis. Therefore, I shall first try to present philosophy as a subject-matter *in its own right* — and then to show it as a possible object of scientific research. As a long shot, this should enable me to begin a new philosophical synthesis, with a *predicament* greater than has ever been given to philosophy heretofore (although following from what has just been said): the history of philosophy is not at an end - - - its *genuine* history has simply not yet begun.