



4. PHILOSOPHY

In Archaic Greece anyone who was not satisfied of the narrow aims and means of religious exoterism, had to apply to a sanctuary of some Mysteries to be initiated. There, the mystagogue ritually prepared the aspirant to initiation, prescribing him purifications, fasts and other preliminary rituals. After initiation, lasting several days, the neophyte received the *mantra* of the deity to which he had been addressed. After that he received doctrinal instructions. Having the initiates maintained strict secrecy for centuries, little is known about these teachings. The doctrine was divided in two stages, Physic¹ – i.e. cosmology – and Metaphysic, whose meaning is “beyond the Physic”². Who was growing in knowledge and virtue reached wisdom, *sophia* (σοφία), becoming a *sophòs* (σοφός), a *vidvas*. Who desired to reach wisdom but was not yet initiated, was defined philosopher (φιλόσοφος, read *philòsophos*): actually philosophy (Φιλοσοφία, read *Philosophìa*) means to love, to desire (φιλεῖν, read *philèin*) wisdom (σοφία, read *sophìa*).

Unfortunately, during the 6th century B.C. Pythagoras was yet complaining that real wise men were disappearing, and that only philosophers remained. This great *sophòs* has been the first to define the philosophers in the modern sense of term. That is to say lovers of theoretical, bookish, mental speculation. No one wanted anymore to undergo the renunciations and austerities to become a *sophòs*.

Therefore philosophy means an individual theory elaborated by a philosopher, expressing his personal ideas, hypothesis and speculations as explanations of his own view of world, man, and their destinies. Being only individual thoughts, every philosopher invariably refutes his predecessor’s theories.

With the exception of Pythagorean school, which preserved its *paramparā* (through the Neoplatonics stream) until the 5th century A. D., the other Greek-Roman philosophical schools were reduced to mere academic institutions, without any *guruśiṣyaparamparā*, *dīkṣā*, rituals etc.

Therefore it is wrong to declare that the *hindū vidvas*, *gurus*, *paṇḍita*, *jñāni*, are philosophers and their doctrines philosophies.

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¹ In modern scientific thought Physics is only a part of cosmology. This is due to Aristotle, who reduced the physical dimension just to the sub-lunar world.

² In the Eleusinian Mysteries there were two levels of initiation: “little mysteries” and “Great Mysteries”. Probably at the dawn of Greek civilization “little mysteries” corresponded to Physics (*karmakāṇḍa*), and “Great Mysteries” to Metaphysics (*jñānakāṇḍa*). However, on the base of written documents, we can affirm that both levels had become only ritualistic in historical times. This is a signal of the loss of the highest doctrines in ancient Greece.

