Sins and Vices: Their Enumerations and Specifications in the Veda*

In the Christian tradition seven cardinal sins are mentioned: pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy and sloth. They mainly denote defects or faults in the human character rather than specific, committed sins, which may form their specific manifestations in practice. It is remarkable that several of these items are also found in the Vedic material. Here we also find lists of rather specific faults. Moreover some lists contain combinations of evil traits (i.e. vices or sins) and evils which may overcome a human being during his lifetime and which are beyond his own responsibility. In the post-Vedic text Manu 7, 45ff. the vices or passions called vyasanāni are arranged in two groups based on their origin in lust and anger, two well-known terms of the list of seven cardinal sins. Some of the lists combine cardinal sins with specific vices.

Four other types of Christian sins are found in the Bible in its Decalogue: killing, stealing, adultery and lying, i.e. specifications of committed faults. A partial parallelism is found in Vedic culture.

In the following sections I will treat the relevant passages dealing with the cardinal sins (1–7) and with the major sins (8–10).

1 The Seven indriyāṇi in GB 1, 2, 2

The seven indriyāṇi in GB 1, 2, 2 are denoted with the term “passions” by Gonda (1965a, 290) following Bloomfield (1899, 111). They are: 1) brahmavarcasam, “the glory of a Brahmin,” i.e. the object of his passion, translated with “class-consciousness” and with “caste-pride” by the mentioned scholars and comparable with “pride” in the Western list; 2) yaśas, “fame,” the passion for which

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1 In this publication I do not discuss the problem of what is the Vedic idea of sin nor what terms are used to denote sin. For information on these points see Bodewitz (2006b; this vol. ch. 21). The enumerations discussed here will appear to be not homogeneous.

2 Kane (1953, 11, n. 22) observes that “the four main prohibitions contained in the Decalogue (Exodus, chap. 20.13–16 and Deut. 5.17–20) against killing human beings, theft, adultery and bearing false witness are to be found in all well-known religious or moral codes.”
is likewise associated with “pride”; 3) **svapna**, “sleep,” which as a passion looks like “sloth” in the seven cardinal sins; 4) **krodha**, “anger,” not the object of a passion, but a cardinal sin; 5) **ślāghā**, “bragging,” an oral manifestation of “pride”; 6) **rūpam**, “beauty,” perhaps the female beauty which attracts man as the object of his passion; 7) **punyagandha**, “fragrance (of women?).”

If the items 6 and 7 would represent “lust” and 1, 2 and 3 “pride,” only “covetousness,” “gluttony” and “envy” are missing here.

The term **indriyāṇi** denoting these “cardinal sins” is rather neutral and does not explicitly refer to sins or vices. It may be interpreted as (evil) qualities or powers inside a human being and therefore “passions” is a possible translation in a context in which the more or less ascetic Brahmacārīn should overcome these powers which are present in human beings. On the other hand brahmavarcasam and yaśas are not really negative concepts as such. The excessive pride about these honours is essential. The Brahmacārīn even obtains (avārodh) them by overcoming his passion for them. In this confusing text passage an adaptation of more general “cardinal sins” seems to have been made for the persons concerned (the Brahmacārins). They sublimate the evil instincts by their temporary ascetic behaviour, but still obtain attractive aspects of their desires after finishing their Brahmacarya.

The overcoming of the **indriyāṇi** also plays a role in the post-Vedic text Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya (1, 6, 1 and 1, 7, 1), where kings should realize this by giving up the sixfold group of enemies consisting of six vices. These six vices (lust, anger, greed, pride, arrogance and foolhardiness)³ are different from the seven vices called **indriyāṇi** in the GB. Both groups should be overcome like enemies. The **indriyavijaya** of the Arthaśāstra is overcoming senses⁴ or sensuality.

### 2 The Six **pāpmānas** in JB 1, 98 and 2, 363

The six evils of JB 1, 98⁵ are given to man by the gods in order that he will become disqualified for heaven. They are called **pāpmānas** which is translated by Caland (1919, 20) with “die bösen Eigenschaften.” See also JB 2, 363, where these **pāpmānas** seem to be innate in man. This means that they should not be interpreted as evils overcoming human beings, but as natural qualities of man just like the **indriyāṇi** occurring in the preceding section 1, where they are

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³ See section 6.

⁴ Here no correlation of six vices and six senses is found. In the GB passage **rūpa** and **gandha** may correspond to sight and smell, but other correspondences are missing.

⁵ See Bodewitz (1990, 57).
powers or qualities of man, whereas here the evil nature of these powers is explicitly expressed. The combination of *indriyaṇi* and *pāpmānas* means evil powers in man’s character. In the singular Caland (1919, 20) renders *pāpman* with “das Böse” and indeed the term *pāpman* mostly denotes evil overcoming man rather than sin. In the present context the plural, however, definitely refers to a fixed set of vices or cardinal sins.

These six items are: 1–2) svapna and *tandrī*, “sleep” and “lassitude” or “laziness” (cf. “sloth” among the seven cardinal sins); 3) manyu, “anger,” one of the cardinal sins; 4) aśanāyā, “hunger” (cf. “gluttony” among the cardinal sins); 5) aksakāmyā, “passion for dice”; 6) strikāmyā, “passion for women” (cf. the cardinal sin “lust”). Again four parallels of the seven cardinal sins are found here.

In JB 2, 363 these six vices are not only qualified as *pāpmānas* but also as *viṣuvantas*. See Rau (1977, 352): “Sechs böse Dinge gibt es am Manne, sechs Wendepunkte.” The latter qualification is rather obscure. I suppose that in this context *viṣuvantas* is not a noun meaning “turning point” but an adjective meaning “central, chief, cardinal” just as in TS 7, 4, 3, 4, where Keith (1914, 603) translates ‘Now there is the chief (day),’ [note: ‘viṣūvā́n is the central day as the chief day.’] and those who knowing thus perform (the rite of) these (nights) become the chief.” So I would translate: “There are six vices in man, namely the cardinal ones.”

Rau also refers to two remote parallels. In ṛV 7, 86, 6 four items are mentioned in connection with sins which would lie beyond the own will of the sinner: alcohol, anger (*manyū*), dice and carelessness (*ácitti*). The parallelism is limited to anger and the passion for dice. Here apparently attractions like alcohol and dice and furies like anger are regarded as factors influencing man from outside rather than as innate vices. Sleep is also mentioned in this verse, but it is not called a vice or an origin of sin. It only does not prevent sin, which means that even during sleep one may (unconsciously) commit sins. In MS 3, 6, 3 three destructive powers (*nairṛtā́s*) are mentioned: dice, women and sleep. They look like external attractions rather than as vices or sins in the form of passions for them, though the context does not explicitly state this and the disastrous longing for these three items may be meant and regarded as a deadly sin. Falk (1986, 99f.) takes JB 3, 72, in which three pains or sorrows are placed in three types of persons (the eunuch or impotent man, the gambler and the whore), as a parallel of MS 3, 6, 3: “Nach JB 3, 72 trägt der Spieler zusammen mit dem Impotenten und der Hure ein Drittel der Sorge dieser Welt. Zu diesen drei Sünden will MS 3.6.3 [63:13] passen.” I doubt, however, whether *śuc* means sin and the three mentioned persons are sinners. Those who visit a whore rather than the whore herself are sinners. And why should an impotent man be a sinner? The life of the three mentioned types of persons is struck by trouble rather
than by sin in this context. The evils of these persons are not their sins but their sorrows caused by their lifestyle and by lack of respect from other people.\textsuperscript{6}

3 Six \textit{pāpmānas} in AV 11, 8, 19

Six \textit{pāpmānas} are also found in AV 11, 8, 19: sleep (\textit{svágna}), weariness or sloth (\textit{tandrī}), misery (?) (\textit{nīṛtti}), old age (\textit{jarā}), baldness (\textit{khālatyam}) and hoariness (\textit{pālityam}), entities entering the body at the creation by gods. These are called deities (powers) whose name is \textit{pāpmān}. Griffith (1895–1896, 82) translates this term with “sin,” Whitney (1905, 649) with “evil.” It is clear that at least the last three items refer to ills overcoming most people rather than to sins. The qualification \textit{pāpmānas} is found between the first three and the last three items and therefore need not refer to all the six items. Griffith takes it as a seventh item (“and deities whose name is Sin”) and Whitney associates this qualification only with the first three items. Though sleep and sloth elsewhere denote cardinal sins, the third item (\textit{nīṛtti}) hardly can be called a sin or vice. Griffith does not translate this word and Whitney translates it with “misery.” Indeed, \textit{nīṛtti} overcomes human beings and is not a fault in the human character. Mostly it means death. Then it may be taken with the following (fourth) item \textit{jarā} as \textit{jarā} and \textit{mṛtyu}, old age and death. Cf. ChU 8, 1, 5, where the self which is without old age, death, sorrow, hunger and thirst is called \textit{apahatapāpmā} (to be translated with “free from evils” or “free from ills” rather than with “free from sins”). This implies that all the six items refer to the ills of old age, a period not only associated with baldness and hoariness, but also with sleep and exhaustion. See also TS 5, 7, 13 for the association of baldness and Nirṛti. So here the six mentioned \textit{pāpmānas} are not vices and \textit{svápmn} and \textit{tandrī} do not refer to unacceptable sleeping in the day-time and sloth but to the inconveniences or ills of old age.

In the next verses positive and negative aspects qualifying or overcoming man are mentioned. Evils or vices as well as ills or disadvantages occur together in this enumeration of oppositions in which the negative items denote two aspects of evil: vices and ills or mishaps. The specified vices are theft, evildo-

\textsuperscript{6} In PB 8, 1, 10, the parallel of JB 3, 72, instead of the \textit{kitava} the \textit{enasvin} occurs. This does not mean that the other two persons are sinners. Only the player of dice might be regarded as such. One should leave them alone and have no contact with them (according to both texts). Otherwise one would take over their \textit{śuc} (translated by Caland (1931) with “languor” instead of “sorrow”). If the sorrow of these three persons is not the lack of respect from other people, then it might also be their lack or want of money. Contact with them implies a loss of money.
ing (*duṣkṛtām*), deceit (*vṛjinām*) (vs. 20), niggardlinesses (*ārātayās*) (vs. 21), and the unwillingness to give Dakṣiṇās (*āśraddhā*), a special form of niggardliness (vs. 22).

4 **Fifteen doṣas in ĀpDhS 1, (8)23, 5**

The following list of “sins” is mentioned in ĀpDhS 1, (8)23, 5: anger (*krodha*), exultation (*harṣa*), wrath (*roṣa*), covetousness (*lobha*), perplexity (*moha*), injury (*droha*), deceit (*dambha*), lying (*mrṣodyam*), gluttony (*atyāśa*), calumny (*parīvāda*), envy (*asūya*), desire (*kāma*), hatred (*manyu*), lack of self-control (*anātmyam*) and lack of concentration (*ayoga*). The next section (1, (8)23, 6) deals with their opposites, the virtues called freedom from anger etc. The fifteen faults do not concern criminal or sinful, specific actions, but wrong passions. They cannot be divided into two groups (the weaknesses and the evil passions or emotions) as found in sections 5 and 7 below.

The four major sins, which require very serious punishments and are treated in section 8 (killing a Brahmīn, having sexual intercourse with the wife of the Guru, stealing (gold) and drinking alcohol) occur in 1, (7)21, 8 (together with related crimes). For the sinners called *abhiśastas* and their penances see 1, (9)24, 6–9; 1, (9)25, 1–4 and 10.

5 **Two Types of Evils and Vices in MaiU 3, 5**

MaiU 3, 5 divides the evils or vices and the corporeal evils or ills into two groups derived from *tamas* and *rajas*. This distribution does not represent a distinction between vices (faults in the character) and ills (physical ailments).

The following items are based on *tamas*: *saṁmoha* “stupefaction,” *bhayam* “fear,” *viṣāda* “despondency,” *nīdrā* “sleep,” *tandrī* “sloth,” *pramāda* “heedlessness,” *jarā* “old age,” *śoka* “sorrow,” *ksudh* “hunger,” *pipāsā* “thirst,” *kārpanyam* “wretchedness,” *krodha* “anger,” *nāstikyam* “atheism,” *ajñānam* “ignorance,”

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7 See n. 11 on parallels of the compound *kāmamanyū* which refers to passionate liking and disliking. Bühler (1879) translates the dual compound with “lust, secret hatred,” which does not correctly express the two opposite attitudes. See also Olivelle (1999) who translates with “lust, ire.” Perhaps *kāma* here represents love rather than desire in opposition with hatred.

8 These positive qualities, however, count twenty-two items and several items like *tyāga*, *ārjavam*, *mārdavam*, *śama* and *dama* (belonging to the more or less ascetic way of life) have been added. GautDhS 8, 22 mentions only eight positive qualities among which three freedoms from vices like anger, avarice and covetousness are found.
mātsaryam “selfishness,” naiṣkāruṇyam “cruelty,” mūḍhatvam “confusion,” nir-vṛīḍatvam “shamelessness,” nīkrīḍatvam “low conduct,” uddhatatvam “pride” and asamatvam “instability.”

The rajas-based items are: trṣṇā “avidity,” sneha “love,” rāga “passion,” lobha “greed,” hiṁsā “violence,” rati “fondness for somebody,” dviṣti “hatred,” vyāvṛīḍatvam “being indifferent towards others,” īrṣyā “envy,” kāma “desire (or: wish to obtain something),” asthiratvam “unsteadfastness,” caṅcalatvam “fickleness,” vyagratvam “distractedness,” jihīrṣā “desire of robbing something,” arthopārjanam “seeking of wealth,” mitrānugrahaṇam “favoritism towards friends,” pari- grāhāvalamba “dependence upon the wealth of one’s wife or relatives,” anīśtesv indriyārtheṣu dviṣti “hatred in regard to unpleasant objects of sense” and īśtesv abhiṣvaṅga “overfondness in regard to pleasant objects.”

This late Vedic enumeration with a distribution based on Sāṁkhya concepts is much more elaborate than the old Vedic ones. The bipartition represents on the one side several sorts of weaknesses and on the other side emotional attitudes and passions.

The following items denote ills, ailments and disadvantages rather than sins or vices: saṁmoha, bhayam, jarā, śoka, kṣudh, pipāsā, kārpanyam, ajñānam and mūḍhatvam (cf. BĀU 3, 5, 1 mentioning aśanāyā, pipāsā, śoka, moha, jarā and mṛtyu in an enumeration of ills). They all belong to the first list out of which perhaps more items may be interpreted as deficiencies rather than as vices, e.g. nidrā (sleep) here mentioned together with tandrī and pramāda as well as with jarā and therefore perhaps representing one of the three ills of old age.

If nidrā should be interpreted as belonging to the vices rather than to the ills, then the following “cardinal sins” occur in the whole passage: pride, covetousness, lust, anger, envy and sleepiness or sloth. However, most of them belong to the second, rajas-based group in which some items look like gluttony.

There are also some oppositions among these cardinal vices: krodha (dissatisfaction about someone or something)—kāma (desire of someone or something); īrṣyā (envy about missing something)—uddhatatvam (pride about possessing something); nidrā/tandrī/pramāda (sloth, sleepiness, carelessness or lack of interest)—lobha (covetousness, eager desire for something). All these six items represent vices, but they do not primarily refer to moral issues. They also concern lack of profit or success in social and economic life in case they are excessive. He who has no desire to obtain success, misses every pride and becomes the victim of envy without showing any interest in improving his position, is not a sinner but a failure or a dead loser. Not all the texts on the so-called

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9 See also n. 11 on rāga and dveṣa representing kāma and krodha.
vices or evils have been written for saints and ascetics. Among the items mentioned in this text real crimes or sins like murder and stealing are strikingly missing.

In the same Upaniṣad, which does not form a unity and consists of several layers, we find in 1, 3 a shorter enumeration of evils and vices which is not divided into two groups and consists of desire, anger, greed, stupefaction, fear, despondency, envy, parting with the loved (or what is desired), meeting with the unloved (or contact with what is not desired), hunger, thirst, old age, death, illness, sorrow. Most of them are based on tāmas, only three on rajas according to the division in MaiU 3, 5. The first half of them belongs to the sphere of the cardinal sins, the second consists of ills which overcome most or all human beings.

For a similar list of nine items see MaiU 6, 28: confusion; covetousness and envy; sloth (tandrī) and the evil caused by intoxication (irāgha?); self-conceit; anger and greed; desire. Here cardinal sins or vices rather than ills or evils play a role.

6 The Six Vices in Post-Vedic Texts

The following list of six faults or vices is found in the epics, in the Arthaśāstra and in the proverbs (Indische Sprüche, see Böhtlingk 1870–1873²): kāma, krodha, lobha, harṣa, māna and mada. The last two denote manifestations of pride. The other four also occur in ĀpDhS (see section 4). The term harṣa is translated by Böhtlingk with “übermässige Freude” in vs. 1638 and with “Schadenfreude” in vs. 2739–2740. Kangle (1972) translates harṣa with “foolhardiness” in Arthaśāstra 1, 6, 1. So this list of six (the ṣaḍvarga) contains four of the Christian and Vedic “cardinal sins.” They are not purely ethical, but are bad qualities which have to be avoided by a king (vs. 1638) who wants to be successful. They belong to the sphere of strategic warnings formulated by spindoctors.

Six vices are explicitly called doṣās in vs. 6614 of the Sprüche (and taken from the MBh): nidrā, tandrī, bhayam, krodha, ālasyam (“Trägheit”) and dīrghasūtratvam (“Saumseligkeit”). They should be avoided by a man who wants to become successful. Again six items which are not primarily moral. There is some parallelism with three of the six items of JB 1, 98 (swapna, tandrī, manyu) in section 2. For bhayam see MaiU 3, 5 in section 5, where this term (together with nidrā and tandrī as well as krodha) occurs in the list of weaknesses. Actually ālasyam and dīrghasūtratvam belong to the sphere of sloth and pramāda (cf. MaiU 3, 5).
Two Types of \textit{vyasanāni} in Manu 7, 45ff.

Just as in MaiU 3.5 two origins of vices or evils are mentioned in the post-Vedic text Manu 7, 45ff. Instead of \textit{tamas} and \textit{rajas} the origin of these two groups of vices (\textit{vyasanāni}) is formed by \textit{kāma} and \textit{krodha},\textsuperscript{10} of which the common origin is \textit{lobha} (7, 49). In the MaiU \textit{krodha} belongs to the group originating in \textit{tamas}, whereas \textit{kāma} is produced by \textit{rajas}.\textsuperscript{11} The common origin \textit{lobha} forms part of the \textit{rajas} group. This means that Manu does not completely agree with the MaiU. The three mentioned items \textit{kāma}, \textit{krodha} and \textit{lobha} form the first three of the sixfold group of vices occurring in the epics and in the \textit{Sprüche} (see the preceding section). The vices should be avoided by kings in the Manu context. The three items are mentioned together (without any opposition or common origin in \textit{lobha}) in BhG 16, 21.

Eight \textit{vyasanāni} are caused by \textit{krodha} (wrath, anger): slander, aggression, injury, envy, resentment, plunder, abusive words and assault. They are rather specific for kings. For abusive words (\textit{vākpāruṣyam}) and assault (\textit{daṇḍapāruṣyam}) see Kane (1946, 513–518) dealing with the punishment of the subjects of a king for these crimes. Only the Sanskrit term \textit{īrṣyā} (envy) has a parallel in MaiU. Vices and crimes are combined in this group of eight items.

Ten \textit{vyasanāni} are caused by \textit{kāma} (love of pleasure): hunting, gambling, sleeping during the day, gossiping, womanizing, alcoholism, making music, singing, dancing and useless travel. Most of them are specific for kings. The worst of them are considered to be drinking, gambling, womanizing and hunting, the typical vices of kings. The others are traditionally called minor faults.

Among the 1 + 2 + 8 + 10 vices only \textit{lobha}, \textit{kāma}, \textit{krodha} and \textit{īrṣyā} as well as passion for women (i.e. lust) and gambling have Vedic parallels treated above. They belong (perhaps with the exception of gambling) to the old, limited series of cardinal sins or vices.

\textit{Indische Sprüche} 2993 mentions seven \textit{vyasanāni}: gambling, eating meat, drinking alcohol, sex with prostitutes, hunting, stealing, and contact with other women than one's own. They are specific sins to be committed rather than vague, cardinal sins. Vs. 2238 refers to four vices of kings: hunting, drinking alcohol, gambling and excessive sexual intercourse. See the most important four of the ten \textit{vyasanāni} originating in \textit{kāma} according to Manu.

\textsuperscript{10} The two concepts of \textit{kāma} and \textit{krodha} are also mentioned together in Böhtlingk (1870–1873\textsuperscript{2}), \textit{Indische Sprüche} 1639 and 1642–1645.

\textsuperscript{11} BhG 3.37, however, states that both \textit{kāma} and \textit{krodha} arise from \textit{rajas}. The two entities are called \textit{rāga} and \textit{dveṣa} in 3.34, with a Buddhist terminology which makes the opposition more evident especially if \textit{rāga} is taken as \textit{kāma}. 

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8 The Four (or Five) Major Sins According to ChU 5, 10, 9 and Dharma Texts

Four types of men who commit major sins are mentioned in ChU 5, 10, 9 and in its post-Vedic parallel Manu 11, 53. For references to other Dharma texts see Bühler (1886) in a note on his translation of Manu 11, 55. They are the stealer of gold, the drinker of liquor, the killer of a Brahmin and he who has sexual intercourse with the wife of his guru. This fourfold enumeration does not refer to faults in the human character but to specified, committed sins. In this respect these four sins more agree with the four sins of the Decalogue (see Introduction) than with the traditional Christian seven cardinal sins and their partial parallels in the Veda. The four sins are specific, committed crimes which should be punished.

Three of the four major sins of the Decalogue have parallels in the ChU, but here these especially concern the Brahmins as victims or as sinners. The killing of human beings is restricted to the killing of Brahmins. The adultery is specified as sex with the wife of the guru (probably the teacher rather than the father, though contradictory evidence is found in some Dharma texts), mostly a Brahmin. The stealing should have gold as its aim and according to tradition this gold would belong to a Brahmin. The fourth sin (which in the Decalogue is telling a lie), the drinking of liquor, in the Vedic tradition again seems to be restricted to the Brahmins.

The four major sins of these texts do not represent the Brahmin's counterpart of the four vices of a king mentioned above at the end of section 7, since in some of the four cases the Brahmin is not the committer of the sins but the victim.

The verse (śloka) in the ChU has a parallel in the later Dharma literature. A fifth type of sinners has been added in this verse: those who associate with the four mentioned ones. This vague statement indicates that the verse originally belonged to the śloka literature rather than to the Dharma literature. The addition of the fifth item was made in order to obtain the favourite number

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12 See Kane (1953, 23–25). Olivelle (1996, 142) takes gurutalpaga as someone who “fornicates with his teacher’s wife” in ChU 5, 10, 9, but (2004, 194) gurvāṅga as “having sex with an elder’s wife” in Manu 11, 55.
13 See Kane (1953, 23).
14 See Kane (1953, 20 f.) on surā being especially forbidden for Brahmins and Brahmacārins. For the kings drinking too much alcohol is a vice, for the Brahmins every drinking of alcohol is a sin.
15 Horsch (1966, 178) qualifies the verse as a “Dharmaśāstra-Maxime,” but does not comment on the possible source of such a verse.
of five for these major sins. The concentration on the Brahmins may be a late specification of four major sins in general.

Perhaps originally these (four major) sins were the opposites of major virtues and in this way chastity in general (*brahmacaryam*) received as its sinful counterpart the sexual intercourse of a *brahmacārin* with the wife of his guru. See Bodewitz (1999a, 36): “The major and minor observances presuppose major and minor sins. ... Already in the Chāndogya-Upaniṣad (5,10.9) five capital sins are enumerated. ... In this strange set of sins we see an adaptation of the four or five rules of life mentioned before. The prohibition of stealing gold looks like a Vedic restriction of the general rule of *asteyam* ... . The term *brahma-caryam* was taken too literally and as associated with the pupil (*brahmacārin*) who was living in the house of the Guru and whose only chance of sexual intercourse was with the Guru’s wife. The killing of a Brahmin seems to be a strange application of the rule of *ahiṁsā*. It may refer to murder, but also to capital punishment from which indeed the Brahmins were exempted. The drinking of alcohol (forbidden by the Buddhists) can hardly be regarded as a capital sin of all the classes. The whole series makes the impression of a Brahminical adaptation of the rules of life of the ascetics.”

The number of five sins is a favourite number just like seven.\(^\text{16}\) Seven sins were assumed by Yāska in Nirukta 6, 27 to play a role in ṚV 10, 5, 6. For this misinterpretation see Geldner (1951, note 6 on this place). See also Kane (1953, 10) on Yāska’s seven sins: “theft, violating the bed (of the guru), murder of a brāhmaṇa, murder of a bhrūṇa, drinking of liquor, continual performance of the same sinful act, telling a lie as to a sinful matter.” Here the four traditional sins find a different suppletion in order to arrive at seven.

Five rules of life (instead of four) are found with the Jains: *ahiṁsā*, *satyam*, *asteyam*, *brahma* [= *brahmacaryam*], and *aparigraha*. Their negative counterparts would be *hiṁsā* (killing living beings in general), lying, *steyam* (stealing), having sex (in the case of monks) or having too much or wrong sex (in the case of laymen) and *parigraha* (having property, in the case of ascetics, or having too much property, in the case of laymen). A similar, fivefold list of rules is found in BaudhDhS 2, 10, 18, 2–3 *ahiṁsā*, *satyam*, *astainyam*, *maithun-

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\(^\text{16}\) Seven types of sinners are mentioned in a verse occurring in ChU 5, 11, 5: a thief, a miser, a drinker of liquor, someone who has not established his fires, someone who is ignorant, an unchaste man and an unchaste woman. These would be missing in the kingdom of Aśvapati Kaikeya. In this enumeration which is restricted to the highest classes but not exclusively to the Brahmins or the Kṣatriyas, we find three committers of sins belonging to the same sphere as found in ChU 5, 10, 9: stealing, drinking alcohol and having forbidden sex. What we miss is killing.
asya varjanam, tyāga (= aparigraha), not prescribed for householders. One may compare ChU 3, 17, 4 for a list of five prescriptions: tapas (austerity, asceticism, perhaps: having no sexual contacts), dānam (= aparigraha or tyāga), ārjavam (honest behaviour, perhaps: not stealing), ahiṁsā and satyavacanam. These rules look like adaptations of the Jaina rules. The corresponding list of four sins in ChU 5, 10, 9 includes drinking of liquor and therefore may show Buddhist influence though the prohibition of all alcohol for Brahmins may have a long tradition.

ChU 5, 10, 9 states that the committers of these sins fall (patanti), i.e. will become degraded in the social system. Later texts use derivations from the root pat like patanīyāni and pātakāni for denoting major sins. The four (or five) sins of the verse are called mahāpātakāni (major sins) by Manu 11, 55 in distinction with the long list of minor sins (upapātakāni) mentioned in 11, 60–67. Later incest was called an atipātakam, more serious than the mahāpātakāni. See Jolly (1896, 115).

Since the list of four in the verse is rather limited and restricted to specific persons, Manu 11, 56–59 adds an enumeration of faults which may be equated with the four mentioned ones. In this way general forms of adultery and stealing become included among the major sins. An equation of murder committed on people of the other classes with the killing of a Brahmin, however, is not found. This sort of murder belongs to the minor sins. Falsely pretending to be a Brahmin or an other high-class person and accusing a teacher (mostly a Brahmin) of crimes form the sins equal to brahmahatyā. The offences equal to drinking liquor are eating unfit food, forgetting and reviling the Vedas, giving false evidence and slaying a friend. This strange list looks like the various results of drinking too much liquor.

We may conclude that the enumeration of real and secondarily equated major sins of Manu indicates that just like the Vedic principal virtues the Vedic major sins of the ChU and the Dharma texts represent Hindu adaptations of rules of life prescribed by non-Vedic circles. The rules and prohibitions are moral to some extent but functional in the class system, since the strictest rules and prohibitions concern the highest class (the Brahmins) and the ascetic way

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17 Four sins explicitly indicated as such (pāpaṁkaroti) are found in JB 2, 135, but they do not agree much with the four of ChU 5, 10, 9. They are associated because together they have a relation with the body. One speaks with the mouth what should not be spoken, one beats with the arms a man who should not be beaten, one eats with the belly food of someone whose food should not be eaten, one goes abroad with one’s feet.

18 The sin of killing Viṣvarūpa, the house-priest of the gods, i.e. of brahmahatyā, is transferred to someone who sacrifices without giving a Dakṣinā in ŚB 1, 2, 3, 4. So not giving the fee to a Brahmin is equal to killing a Brahmin.
of life, which in Vedism and early Hinduism was practised by Brahmacārins and some Brahmins (in particular situations).

9 Eight Types of Sinners in MS 4, 1, 9 and TB 3, 2, 8, 12

The killing of Brahmins also plays a role in some old Vedic lists of sins which are connected with the legend of sin being wiped off by the gods on the scapegoat Trita, who transfers them to human beings. An early reference to this story is found in AV 6, 113, in which twelve unspecified human sins (manusyainasā́ni) (with one exception: the murder of an embryo or of a Brahmin) are mentioned. In the Yajurvedic Samhitās we find specifications of eight sins (or even more).

See Bloomfield (1897, 521) translating MS 4, 1, 9: “The gods wiped off their guilt upon them [i.e. Ekata, Dvita and Trita]; they in turn wiped themselves upon one who was overtaken by the rising sun, i.e. one over whom the sun had risen while he was asleep; this one wiped himself upon one who was overtaken by the setting sun; he upon one with brown teeth; he upon one with diseased nails; he upon one that had married a younger sister, before the older was married; he upon one whose younger brother had married before himself; [he upon one who had married before his older brother;] he upon one who had slain a man; he upon one who had committed an abortion. ‘Beyond him who has committed an abortion the sin does not pass.’”

This strange list shows increasing seriousness of sins at the end. Bloomfield (1897, 524) tried to find some system in this enumeration by assuming that “the
inversion of order of precedence as between the younger and the older brothers" might play a role in all these eight items. However, inversion is hardly found among most of them. See e.g. the teeth and the nails. The central problem is carelessness about rules concerning life and rituals. From Bloomfield’s translation of the MS passage one gets the impression that the first two items would refer to sleeping in the day-time, indeed a vice sometimes mentioned in section 7. However, being overtaken by the setting sun can hardly imply that one is asleep (or still asleep) during sunset. Sunrise and sunset are the moments when one should start performing the daily Agnihotra ritual. So the first two items do not concern ordinary sleep in the day-time, but carelessness about the exact moment of performing the ritual. One is too late and this pramāda becomes a committed sin.

Similarly the problem of marrying too late should be regarded as violating the strict and religious rules about the correct time.

The dirtiness of teeth and the badness of nails are impurities rather than sins, but these impurities are mostly regarded as the results of sins committed before. See Manu 11, 49: “A man who steals gold gets rotten nails; a man who drinks liquor, black teeth” (tr. Olivelle 2004). They disqualify people for participating in ceremonies and rituals. See GautDhS 15, 18 where persons suffering from these ills occur in a list of unfit invitees (15, 16–19) in which also sons who marry too early or too late and people who neglect ritual duties are mentioned. Apparently the two deformed persons of the two passages treated in this section later became specified as men who had committed the major sins mentioned in ChU 5, 10, 9, because they were mentioned in the two passages of this section together with the killer of a Brahmin. The association of deformed or impure nails and teeth with thieves and drunkards is rather far-fetched, though indeed one steals with one's hands (having nails) and drinks with one's mouth (having teeth).

The last two items look problematic. MS 4, 1, 9 mentions a vīrahán and a bhrūṇahán, whereas TB 3, 2, 8, 12 replaces the latter term by brahmahán. The parallel passage KS 31, 7 is more elaborate, looks secondary and has three killers (vīrahán, brahmahán and bhrūṇahán). If vīrahán should be taken as “killing a hero, a brave warrior,” then an opposition with brahmahán might be assumed. Killing a Brahmin is more serious than killing other human beings, even if they would belong to the warrior class. However, vīrahán is sometimes differently translated. See Kane (1953, 11) who renders with “he who allows his sacred sacrificial fires to be extinguished,” a meaning also found in some dictionaries and based on the fact that this carelessness regarding the fire (or Agni) is equated with killing one of the gods (i.e. Agni) in some Vedic texts (see e.g. TS 2, 2, 5, 5). See also GautDhS 15, 16 (in the list of people unfit to be invited) with the note of
Bühler (1879) on his translation. There is a difference, however, between equation and translation and Agni is only mentioned in this equation as the hero of the gods. Still it is striking that in this passage the daily care about the fires and the tradition of establishing the fires in time by marrying in time as the oldest son play a role.

If one would take vīra as “son” instead of as “man, hero,” then killing a son and killing an embryo would form a couple. One might ask why an embryo is more important than a living son.

The situation becomes more complicated by the fact that bhrūṇahán has been taken by Vedic tradition as “killing a Brahmin” and that this interpretation was followed by some Indologists. For a satisfactory treatment of this problem see Wezler (1994), who has shown that originally bhrūṇa meant “embryo,” but in some old Vedic contexts especially denoted the embryo of which the sexual gender was (still) unknown. Such an embryo might develop into a high-class man, especially a wise Brahmin, who would be able to continue the sacrificial tradition of his father. Ultimately the term bhrūṇa became interpreted as a learned Brahmin who could sacrifice or even as sacrifice itself which was “killed” in case such a Brahmin (originally such a potential Brahmin) would actually be killed.

This means that the killing of a vīra is less serious than the killing of a potential, good Brahmin. The heroic man may be brave (and therefore running all the risks of being killed in battle) but unqualified for the sacrifice, whereas the potential Brahmin (or at least sacrificer) leaves open all the possibilities of continuing the biological and above all ritualistic tradition.

The eight (or more) cases of sinning are hardly to be taken as concerning ethics and morals, though killing someone mostly belongs to the category of the most important sins in most cultures and religions. This appears from the

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22 In JB 3, 190 the seers called Vaikhānasas were killed by a certain Rahasya. Later he confessed this murder to Indra, who was surprised by the fact that a bhrūṇahatya, which is difficult to be confessed, was confessed by Rahasya. Here bhrūṇa can only mean Brahmin. See also Wezler (1994, 643 f.) who proves that “the semantic ‘jump’ from the meaning ‘foetus, embryo’ to ‘Brahmin (qua bearer of the Vedic tradition)’” had already been made by the Yajurvedic Samhitas. See also TB 3, 9, 15, 3, where in a parallel of SB 13, 3, 5, 4 we find bhrūṇahatya instead of brahmahatya. Abortion does not play a role in this context where the killing of the horse in the Aśvamedha ritual is expiated. ĀpDś 1, (1), 32 considers three generations of uninitiated persons as Brahman-killers. Bühler (1879, 5, n. on this sūtra here counted as 1, 1, 27) observes that “Brahman, apparently, here means ‘Veda.’” Probably not initiating a son means killing a possible Brahmin and may be compared with the killing of an embryo. Not the person but the religious tradition represented by the Veda and sacrifice is essential.
fact that evidently the killing of a Brahmin (or his embryo) is especially dealt with and that the females do not play a role here. Man and sacrifice, Brahmins and sacrificers or priests, are the only essential elements. One should not be too late in the daily duties of sacrificing and one should not be too late (as eldest son) in marrying and establishing the sacred fires. Immoral behaviour is missing in this list which would deal with the manusyainasāṇi (the human sins) according to AV 6, 113, 3.

10 Major Sins

10.1 Killing or Murder

ChU 5, 10, 9 restricts murder to the killing of Brahmins and has parallels for this restriction in section 9. The killing of other human beings is mostly not treated as a murder or a sin in the Vedic ritualistic texts. Of course there are some exceptions like the horrible willingness of a father to kill his son in a sacrifice occurring in the Śunaḥśepa story (AB 7, 17, 4), where this is called a pāpaṁ karma, i.e. a sin.

The killing of soldiers in a war is not qualified as murder in most cultures. It is remarkable that killing persons who hate the sacrificer or his priest plays an important role in the Vedic ritualistic texts. There is no criticism of this

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23 Indra kills the divine priest Viśvarūpa in TS 2, 5, 1, 2 and therefore is called a Brahmin-killer. His action is a sin. According to ŚB 1, 2, 3, 2 Indra was free from that sin because he is a god. The sin was transferred to Trita because he was present at the killing and knew about it. Ultimately the Āptyas transfer the sin in 1, 2, 3, 4 to someone who offers without giving a sacrificial fee to the priests, which implies that not giving such a fee to a Brahmin is on a level with killing him. See n. 18.

24 ŚB 13, 3, 5, 3 states that any murder other than the killing of a Brahmin is no murder. In ŚB 3, 2, 1, 40, however, everyone who has become initiated as a sacrificer is a Brahmin, even if he is a Kṣatriya or a Vaiśya. “Wherefore they say, ‘Let no one slay a sacrificer of Soma; for by (slaying) a Soma-sacrificer he becomes guilty of a heinous sin.’” (tr. Eggeling 1885, 35 who observes in a note on this heinous sin: “Viz. of the crime of Brāhmaṇicide (brahma-hatyā)”). See also ĀpDhS 1, (9)24, 6 on killing a Kṣatriya who had studied the Veda or had been initiated for the performance of a Soma sacrifice which would be as serious a sin as killing a Brahmin.

25 For this terminology see JB 1, 28; ChU 4, 14, 3. See also JB 1, 225 on pāpaṁ krtam and JB 2, 135 on pāpaṁ karoti.

26 The excessive killing by warriors seems to be criticized by the gods in TS 2, 4, 13. Therefore they fetter the warrior. Otherwise he would continually slay his enemies. However, the Brahmins free him from his bonds as Bṛhaspati freed Indra. So these Brahmins promote the killing by the Kṣatriyas. GautDhS 10, 17 explicitly states that no sin is committed by killing enemies in battle.
planned or wished killing. The one who will be killed is called a (hating) rival (bhrā́tṛya)\(^{27}\) and there is no mentioning of an official war. In a rather old prose text like the TS we often read about someone “who hates us and whom we hate.” A later text like the JB, in which such a killing is frequently mentioned, the stereotyped expression is “he who knows thus kills his hating rival.” In the TS often gods are invoked to kill the one who is hated and hates the sacrificer or his priest. This twofold hating is also found in the AV and there even occurs in refrains of hymns; see e.g. AV 2, 19; 3, 27. In the JB the killing is mostly caused by, or based on, an incantation.\(^{28}\) By (or with the help of) sacrifice the rival becomes killed. Often one also tries to obtain his cattle in this way. A particular arrangement or way of singing the Sāmans in this Śāmavedic text guarantees the death of the rival. This ritualistic magic is also current in the Yajurvedic ŚB. Whether this killing is only realized by magic or should be supported by this ritualistic magic in a fight is not clearly indicated in the texts. AB 8, 28 and KausřU 2, 11–12 connect the cosmic, cyclical dying (parimāra) with the dying of hateful rivals around (pari) the one who knows this parimāra doctrine (KausřU) or even uses this in an incantation (AB). See Bodewitz (2002b, 40, n. 137).

The singular of the two parties concerned might be an indication that a real war is not playing a role. Of course the sacrificer might be a minor king who plans a raid to collect cattle and kill a rival king, but nowhere a king is explicitly mentioned. Moreover not all the sacrificers are kings. However, mostly the hater and killer belonging to the own party is a leader of the clan or a king.\(^{29}\) In Śāmavedic texts like the JB one sometimes gets the impression that even rivals

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27 Minard (1949, 90–93 = paragr. 247–256) discusses the rival whom one hates and by whom one is hated in the ŚB. He rightly observes that the hatred almost exclusively concerns the willingness on both sides to kill one’s rival. It is remarkable that there is no principal difference between the two persons or parties involved, but in the ŚB we often find the unspecified and unexplained qualification “evil” of the rival whom the sacrificer or his priest wants to kill. In the AV the rival is mostly called a sapātāna instead of a bhrā́tṛya, a term which is not frequently used there (but occurs together with sapātāna in AV 2, 18, 1–2). In AV 10, 6, 1 Whitney (1905) still translates bhrā́tṛya with “cousin,” though evidently a rival is meant by the text.

28 The probably older Śāmavedic PB also mentions this killing of the rival but less frequently. Its addendum ŚaḍvB deals with this abhicāra (incantation) in its third book. On abhicāra see Henry (1934, 220 ff.) dealing with “Rites de magie noire” which even may form part of “la liturgie officielle du grand culte,” which means that in such a context the resulting killing is positively regarded. On this point see Oldenberg (1919, 152 ff.). See also Minard (1949, 92 ff. = paragr. 255) on abhi-car.

29 Sometimes the rival is not killed but only subdued. In this case he has to pay tribute to the sacrificer and their relationship is denoted by the traditional Vedic, political terms of eater and food (leader and one who accepts his leadership). See e.g. ŚB 1, 5, 3, 18 or 1, 8, 2, 17.
of the Udgātṛ are threatened. Anyhow, the priest would be as guilty as the sacrificer since being involved in killing human beings. The killer and the one who should be killed are both haters and the only issue is rivalry and envy. In some cases the Udgātṛ priest (i.e. a Brahmin) even seems to try to produce the killing of his own king (i.e. his own sacrificer?) by black magic.

This means that killing or murder as such are not regarded as sins. In several text places the model of the killing of rivals or of a rival is the conflict between gods and Asuras. So the killing by ritual seems to have the killing of the rivals of the gods as its example and in this example the killing is as lawful as (or even more than) that in any war. The singular may refer to the leader of a clan or a minor king, but, as observed already, every rival may be meant. Like the Asuras (in the plural) Vṛtra (in the singular) may also be the example of the bhrātṛvya who should be killed.

The killing of a Brahmin is generally condemned as the worst sin. However, in JB 1, 171 even Brahmins kill or try to kill in revenge other Brahmins who are

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30 See Henry (1904, 220–221) on texts showing “comment le prêtre officiant peut s’y prendre pour rendre offensive et tourner en malédiction contre son ennemi ou celui du laïque sacrificiant telle phase quelconque du service divin qu’il célèbre.” See also Rodhe (1946, 50) who avoids further research on the question “whether the enemies are priests or kings.”

31 A hating killer seems to play a role in the texts dealing with expiations. See ŚB 12, 4, 1–4, where repeatedly the following warning is mentioned: “But let him not do it in this way, for if, in that case, any one were to say of him (‘…’), then that would indeed be likely to come to pass.” Here the death of the sacrificer often is referred to. Of course the real existence of the introduced speaker who announces the death of the sacrificer is doubtful. The sacrificial mistake rather than the speaker produces the death. See also ŚB 12, 5, 2, 14–16, where a wrong approach in the cremation ritual would be capable of killing the relatives and no person predicts this event.

32 See e.g. PB 6, 6, 5 “For a noble whom he wishes to be slain by his clan, he should shove asunder the pressing stones” (tr. Caland 1931; see also his note on this kāmya variety in the ritual). See further JB 1, 79 and Bodewitz (1993, 219, n. 10).

33 The bhrātṛvyaḥ in JB 1, 152 is praised rather than criticized.

34 In PB 22, 14, 2 Indra, the chief of the gods, thought he had done something not to be done (akāryam) when he killed the Asuras. Now Indra often has some misgivings about killing living beings, but then the impurity of the bloodshed rather than its sinfulness plays a role. See Jamison (1991, 62 ff.) on the killing of the Yatis and of Vṛtra, which only later became regarded as a sin. In the present passage the qualification akāryam (cf. akṛtam qualifying incest in AB 3, 33, 1–2) does not refer to impurity. Sāyaṇa’s commentary explains that the Asuras are Indra’s brothers (born like him from Prajāpati) and that this killing is the murder of his own brothers. Apparently one may kill a bhrātṛvya but not a bhrātṛ.

35 In TS 2, 5, 3, 6 Indra has killed Vṛtra and thinks that he has sinned. Is the sin based on the fact that here already (as later in the epics) Vṛtra was regarded as a Brahmin? On this late assumption see Hopkins (1915, 129): “As Vṛtra is of Brāhmaṇic family his slaughter is regarded as ‘priest-murder’.” See also Gonda (1978, 228 ff.).
even relatives. Suvarata’s son was killed by the two sons of his brother Nṛmedha, who at that moment was acting as an Udgātṛ for his brother. Then Suvarata announces his revenge, binds his brother to a pillar and sets fire on him. Ultimately this attempt to kill his brother on the place of the sacrifice was not successful, but the story of killing relatives is told without any criticism. In fact the two sons of Nṛmedha and the son of Suvarata were not only rivals but also cousins, i.e. they were bhrātṛvyas in the original as well as in the derived sense of the word. The rivalry seems to have been produced by the fact that Suvarata “hired” his own brother as a priest and thereby showed his wish to be superior. Killing cousins (bhrātṛvyas) who are rivals (bhrātṛvyas) is allowed. Trying to kill one’s own brother who belongs to the rivals (bhrātṛvyas) likewise seems to be not a sin.

The problem then remains how to interpret this brahmahatyā in view of the fact that brahmahatyā is generally assumed to be a major or even the major sin in the old Indian tradition. Ethics do hardly play a role in the case of killing Brahmins, since Brahmin priests sometimes plan the killing of a particular person by the ritual and this planned killing, though looking like a murder, is not interpreted as such. Probably rivalry and war were equated. Rivalry may even neutralize the socio-religious rule of not killing a Brahmin36 and the ethical rule of not killing one’s near relatives, as appears from the discussed passage.

In normal circumstances such killing of relatives and Brahmins37 is criticized. See ChU 7, 15, 1–2, where father, mother, sister, teacher and Brahmin are life or lifebreath (prāṇa). “Now, if someone were to talk back somewhat harshly to his father, mother, sister, or teacher, or to a Brahmin, people are sure to rebuke him, saying: ‘Damn you! You are a patricide! ... You are a Brahmin-killer!’ “ (tr. Olivelle 1996, 163). Impoliteness towards persons is metaphorically called killing.38

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36 In ŚB 11, 6, 3, 11 Yājñavalkya says to a rival in the debate “Thou hast gone on questioning me beyond the deity beyond which there must be no questioning. Thou shalt die ere such and such a day” (tr. Eggeling). Cf. BĀU 3, 9, 26. There are more examples of debates with a mortal outcome. See Oberlies (1998, 398 ff.) with further references to literature on this subject.

37 Even the beating of the soma plant with a pressing-stone is regarded as the killing of god Soma in ŚB 3, 9, 4, 17 and since Soma is a deity this killing would be even worse than killing a Brahmin. In order to avoid this one should think in one’s mind of him whom one hates and kills him instead of Soma. On Soma’s “killing” see Schlerath (1987).

38 Ultimately ChU 7, 15, 3 denies the permanency of the mentioned individuals. Life is only temporarily associated with a particular body and may continue without it. This would mean that one cannot kill persons, since one cannot kill life (prāṇa).
Apart from killing the enemies in a war or the rivals in a conflict the killing of other human beings (with the exception of Brahmins) hardly plays a role in the Vedic texts. One should not kill one’s relatives or neighbours, since this is a murder, unless rivalry permits the killing. Otherwise one would behave like the robbers or the demons in the wilderness. See JB 1, 112, where retiring in the middle of a Sāman by taking breath is called a retiring to the wilderness, where one loses one’s property or will be killed. See also JB 1, 83, where slowly moving to the out-of-doors pavamāna is going to the wilderness as it were. Here demons may kill you.

Noble people in society do not murder their relatives or neighbours, unless rivalry forces them to kill one’s rival whom one hates and by whom one is hated. A Brahmin should never be killed by a non-Brahmin since this is murder. A Brahmin cannot be his rival whom one hates, since a Brahmin cannot have a non-Brahmin as his rival and hating a Brahmin is out of the question and as serious a sin as killing him.

10.2 Stealing

Though Manu 11, 55 simply mentions stealing among the five major sins, it appears from ChU 5, 10, 9, Manu 11, 99 and other Dharma texts that the stealing of gold is meant. This specification, however, does not suffice in some Dharma texts, where the gold should belong to a Brahmin. The other forms of stealing (or even the stealing of a very small amount of gold from a Brahmin) are minor sins in later texts. However, KauṣU 3, 1 mentions stealing together with bhrūṇahatyā.

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39 The killing of animals is not problematic in the older Vedic literature and this form of hiṁsā does not play a role in the general rules of life in which ahiṁsā later became especially applied to the killing and eating of cows. An early exception is found in ŚB 3, 1, 2, 21, where this eating is equated with abortion. However, Yajñavalkya states here that he has no objections to eating the meat of a cow provided that it is tender. For the ascetic rule of not eating meat during a particular period of the sacrifice see n. 19.

40 On killing an embryo (i.e. abortion?) which became killing a Brahmin see n. 22. Abortion as such is not a major sin. The killing of a woman who is fit for having conception (an ātreya) belongs to the same sphere, since the killing prevents the conception of an embryo which in case this embryo would be male should result in a Brahmin. See Jamison (1991, 213–223, esp. 216) and Wezler (1994, 632–643) on killing an ātreya being equal to killing an embryo and on the special class of this woman. In ŚB 3, 1, 2, 21 the eating of the flesh of a cow is equated with the killing of an unspecified embryo. It is clear that the killing preceding the eating is meant and that the killing of a holy animal like the cow is equated with bhrūṇahatyā here misinterpreted as the killing of any embryo instead of the killing of a Brahmin. However, ŚB 9, 5, 1, 62 condemns the killing of every human embryo. On the other hand ṛV 1, 101, 1 mentions abortion in a comparison without any criticism.

41 See Kane (1953, 23).
nāhatyā and the killing of the own mother and father as sins which have no consequences if one has the right knowledge of Indra, who likewise could kill many persons without evil consequences for himself. Normally the mentioned acts would be major sins. On the implications of this passage see Bodewitz (2002b, 47, n. 163). The bhrūṇahatyā here probably denotes the killing of a Brahmin and not abortion, as I wrongly assumed there.

The specification gold means that this metal represents the most expensive item in the sphere of wealth and property. Unfortunately Gonda (1991, 179 f.) does not comment on the stealing of gold in his treatment of ChU 5, 10, 9, where only the (economic?) importance of gold is emphasized.

The most valuable properties in the old Vedic period were cattle and gold (representing money of modern times). Why was stealing gold (especially the gold of a Brahmin) a (major) sin and why was stealing cattle not mentioned in this connection? The point seems to be that cattle could be lost in three ways. It could run away, be stolen by more or less professional robbers or thieves or be taken away by a bhrātṛvya (a rival). The rival may kill his rival and take away his cattle as a booty, but he is not a sinner. Cattle-thiefs seem to be professional sinners, operating in groups and being situated outside society. In the classification of sinners the bhrātṛvya cattle-raiders as well as the cattle-thiefs cannot have a place for different reasons. They are more or less institutional robbers of cattle.

The situation with gold is different. Though the theft of gold may be carried out by professional burglars, such a theft mostly is an individual affair. The incidentally stealing counterpart in society of the habitual burglar outside society is a despicable man. Stealing gold is not an act which involves some heroism.

The stealing is associated with the sphere of the wilderness by AB 8, 11, 8 in a comparison: “Just like Niṣādas or robbers or evildoers, seizing a wealthy man in the wilderness, throw him into a pit and run away with his wealth. ...” ChU 6, 16, 1 mentions a case of assumed stealing in society in which the accused should undergo an ordeal and if he burns his hand by the heated axe he should be killed, apparently because he has stolen and has lied. Stealing and telling lies are combined sins here.

42 See AV 19, 50, 5.
43 However, RV 7, 86, 5 mentions an individual stealer of cattle (a paśutrīp who selects single cows like the asutrīp helpers of Death who select single souls) who is bound with fetters (in a comparison with a sinner who is bound by Varuṇa). Such a small-scale theft is like the small-scale theft of gold not a major sin.
In the ṚV Saṁhitā the religious poets betray a remarkable interest in sex and stealing in their comparisons and metaphors. For such comparisons with the activities of thieves and their victims see e.g. 1, 50, 2; 1, 65, 4; 1, 191, 5; 4, 38, 5; 5, 15, 5; 5, 79, 9; 7, 86, 5; 8, 67, 14; 10, 97, 10.

Stealing gold from a Brahmin just like killing a Brahmin is a major sin. For a Brahmin, however, a cow almost seems to be as important as gold in several hymns of the AV. One should neither steal a cow from him, nor refuse to give such a cow to him, if he requests the gift of this cow.

10.3 Drinking Liquor

Drinking liquor is not one of the original major sins. It is one of the vyasanāni in section 7 and in the form of alcoholism a vice especially attributed to kings. Abstention from alcohol was not prescribed even for Brahmins in the oldest Vedic culture, but became a major sin to be avoided by them.44 In Manu 11, 91 even all the twice-born are mentioned in connection with penances for drinking liquor. Apparently this represents a late development.

The prohibition of liquor as such is based on its possible sinful effects. Therefore KS 12, 12 states that one should say to a Brahmin that surā “if drunk by a kṣatriya, does not harm the latter” (Kane 1941, 793). This may imply that this liquor does not make a strong warrior drunk (or that the evil results of intoxication in the form of sinful talks and activities can be forgiven to kings?).

It seems that intoxication of Brahmins by Soma in the religious sphere and of kings by Surā in the palace were regarded as forms of religiously prescribed or social drinking. Later the problem of drinking Soma was solved by its absence (and its nontoxicating substitute). The total prohibition of alcohol just like that of eating meat became associated with increasing asceticism of the Brahmins and with socio-religious etiquette: one should not commit the vices of (some) kings and Śūdras. This asceticism perhaps had stronger roots in Buddhism than in Vedism and Jainism.

According to ŚB 5, 1, 2, 10 Surā (liquor) would be untruth and Soma truth (an equation to be compared with the current one of gods = truth and human beings = untruth). This distinction seems to refer to the sacred and the profane and to have no relation with speaking the truth. In ŚB 5, 4, 4, 5 the king and

44 Kane (1941, 793 ff.) dealing with surā comments on KS 12, 12 (“Therefore an elderly person or a younger, the daughter-in-law and father-in-law drink liquor and remain babbling together; foolishness (or thoughtlessness) is indeed a sin; therefore a brāhmaṇa does not drink surā with the thought ‘otherwise (if I drink it) I may be affected by sin’”) as follows: “This passage makes it clear that at the time of the Kāṭhaka Saṁhitā public opinion had come to this stage that brāhmaṇas had generally given up drinking surā.”
the learned Brahmin are able to speak and to do what is right (sādhū) and this distinction is purely social.

10.4  

**Illicit Sexual Intercourse**

In most cultures and religions the major sin of illicit sexual intercourse primarily concerns adultery, but of course incest is also specifically prohibited. Apart from ascetics and married people involved in a short period of abstention during a ritual marital intercourse is allowed within some restrictions.

In ChU 5, 9, 10 and Manu 11, 51 sex with the wife of the Guru is the specification of the sin. Some scholars and some texts have interpreted this major sin as incest of the son with the wife of the father (provided that this wife is one’s own mother). For this incest see n. 45. Others (rightly?) suppose that a young Brahmacārin has intercourse with the wife of his teacher.

For the first interpretation we may take into account that by extension Manu 11, 58 regards intercourse with a uterine sister likewise as a major sin. YājŚm 3, 231 also mentions intercourse with a sagotra woman in this connection. For further extensions see Kane (1953, 31) mentioning intercourse with a sister of the

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45 For Prajāpati’s intercourse with his daughter see AB 3, 33, 1–2 (akṛtam); ŚB 1, 7, 4, 1–4 (āgas); PB 8, 2, 10; JB 3, 262. This mythical incest in which other gods may play a role is also found in RV 1, 71, 5; 3, 31, 1–3; 5, 42, 3; 6, 55. For the incest (committed or avoided) of the human or half divine brother and sister Yama and Yami (required for starting the human race) see RV 10, 10 and 10, 13, 4. A general criticism of incest between human brother and sister is expressed by 10, 10, 12. Sexual intercourse with mother, sister or woman of the own Gotra and other behaviour of cattle play a role in connection with the strange Gosava ritual (JB 2, 113). Incest of cattle or animals in general and birds is found in two verses of AB 7, 13, 12–13. See Horsch (1966, 84–85) with further references to (criticized) incest. On less strict prohibitions regarding intermarriage between near blood-relations see ŚB 1, 8, 3, 6.

46 In JB 3, 270 some Rṣis want to reach heaven by sacrificing during a very long time. They are interrogated on their behaviour (travelling abroad; eating meat; having sexual intercourse; speaking untruth). Their answers are rather reliable, since they travel only with a certain purpose, only eat meat in order to remain alive and keep their ability of seeing, have sex with their own wives for having offspring and only speak untruth when they are joking or talking with attractive women. However, these activities are not allowed during a sacrifice (which in this case took more than several years). All sexual intercourse apparently was forbidden then. Otherwise heaven could not be reached by such a sacrifice during which one should not leave the place and should observe the ascetic rules of ahimśā, chastity and satyam. Then the Rṣis are asked to stop their sacrifice and express other wishes than reaching heaven. One of them wishes to become the foremost Brahmin, another says: “Of seven hegoats do I choose the rut; whichever woman I may call unto me, may she desire me.” (tr. Caland 1931, 383, in a note on PB 14, 11, 19). These two items (pride and promiscuity) belong to the field of the cardinal sins as found in the old Vedic texts. This is a most hilarious passage.
father or of the mother, with the maternal uncle’s wife etc. etc. This might sup-
port the interpretation of Guru as a father, since incest is involved in all these
cases. On the other hand the extension of the major sin of intercourse with the
wife of the Guru in Manu 11, 58 (and other texts) also includes non-incestuous
intercourse with (young) girls, females of the lowest castes and the wives of a
friend or of one’s son. Such strange enumerations are not very helpful for the
exact interpretation.

The use of the term Guru implies that either a son or a young Vedic student
is meant. Only in one of the extensions intercourse with the wife of one’s son
is mentioned, which supposes a more advanced age of the son. In all the cases
of illicit sexual intercourse in the mentioned texts the incest of a father with
his daughter (a well-known topic in Vedic mythology which supposes some
background in reality) is missing. Therefore I suppose that the incest of the son
with his mother originally did not play a role among the major sins. The Guru
was the teacher, the most respected man. The Brahmācārin was the temporary
counterpart of the ascetic. He had to keep the vow of chastity (*brahmacaryam*)
and breaking this vow (Manu 11, 119) was a secondary sin. One may assume that
breaking his vow of chastity by having intercourse with the wife of his teacher
(in whose house he was staying during a very long time) was a major sin, since
not only the vow a chastity was broken, but a Guru (mostly a Brahmin) was
offended.

Other forms of illicit sexual intercourse are hardly treated in the Vedic ritu-
alistic texts.

Adultery is mentioned in ŚB 2, 5, 2, 20 where the wife of the sacrificer is asked
with whom she has had sexual intercourse apart from her husband, which
would be a sin against Varuṇa. By telling the truth this sin becomes less seri-
ous.47 The philosopher Yājñavalkya who has some rather liberal views on meat
and flesh48 observes “Who would care whether his wife may consort with other
men?” in ŚB 1, 3, 1, 21. The author of RV 4, 5, 5 compares his rival in a disputa-
tion with women who are untrue to their husbands. In an other comparison
found in RV 1, 62, 10 married women are offering their services to audacious or
shameless men (“Viele tausend Schwestern beeifern sich (um ihn) (i.e. Indra)

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47 This may be an indication that telling a lie was considered to be a major sin by some
people. Speaking what is true was more important than being true to the husband.
However, women in general are associated with untruth (together with Śūdras, dogs and
crows) in ŚB 14, 1, 1, 31. Probably here untruth does not primarily refer to the contents of
what they utter but to the profane sound. The sound of a woman is as inauspicious as that
of some animals.

48 See n. 39.
sins and vices

wie vermählte Frauen um den nicht Schüchternen,” tr. Geldner). BĀU 6, 4, 12 deals with the adultery of a Brahmin’s wife. Her lover is cursed with a ritualistic incantation by her husband, but only if he hates this rival. The text is silent on the adulterous wife and seems to be more interested in hatred and rivalry among men than in morality.

For sexual contacts with lascivious women see n. 46. In KauṣB 27, 1 the Anuṣṭubh is equated with vāc and this feminine noun is equated with an alluring woman. One tries to leave the Anuṣṭubh but is not able to do so. This is expressed in a Gāthā: “Nicht berühre ich sie als eine Śūdra-Frau, noch will ich sie loslassen, noch will ich anderswohin gehen: mit einem mannstollen Weibe ist mein Zusammentreffen” (tr. Horsch 1966, 110).

The authors of the ṚV Saṁhitā are interested in comparisons or metaphors in the sexual sphere. See e.g. 9, 72, 3, where Geldner speaks of “eine lascive Metapher.”49 These religious poets did not restrict this interest to poetry, but were also practising lewdness.50

TS 5, 6, 8, 3 states that after having piled the fire the sacrificer should have no more sexual intercourse with a woman of pleasure and after having piled it for the second time not with the wife of someone else. From this context it appears that the prohibitions do not belong to the sphere of ethics. Between the first and the second piling of the fire adultery seems to be allowed.

BĀU 6, 4, 6–7 advises to have intercourse with a woman who has changed her clothes at the end of the menstrual period. This might refer to the duty of a husband to have intercourse with his wife in this period of fertility. However, the text does not explicitly mention the own wife and even states that if the woman refuses to consent, the man should bribe her with presents or beat and

49 See also Oberlies (1999, 72, n. 335) who refers to Jamison (1981, 59, n. 4).
50 See ṚV 1, 126, 6–7, where Kakṣīvat concludes his thanksgiving for the received Dāṣiṇās (the Dānastuti) with a rather detailed description of the enjoyment of the received gifts. Geldner observes in a note: “An die Dānastuti schliesst sich ein lüsternes Gespräch zwischen dem beschenkten Sänger und einem der geschenkten Mädchen.” The young girl concerned states that she has already hair on her pudendum (which implies that sexual intercourse with this very young girl would not be illicit). In BĀU 6, 2, 7 Uddālaka refuses the normal type of gifts from king Jaivali, because he had already his share of gold, horses, slave girls etc. (no doubt Dāṣiṇās received in the past). One may assume that the mentioned Dāsīs were not simple female servants employed in housekeeping, but served for sexual purposes. Like his father Uddālaka the son called Naciketas refuses to accept gifts like elephants, gold, horses, lovely girls, chariots etc. which were offered to him by god (king) Yama in KaṭhU 1, 23–25, because like his father at that moment he was more interested in philosophy and religion. These two passages indicate that kings usually offered attractive young girls or women to Brahmins for their pleasure.
overpower her. Marital sexual intercourse hardly seems to play a role here and if so the foreplay is rather strange. BĀU 6, 4 (see also above) does not take ethics into account in its treatment of sexual intercourse.

11 Conclusion

The discussed enumerations of faults, vices and sins show a fundamental distinction between two categories: a) defects in one’s character, wrong attitudes and passions as well as summaries of faults which might be committed (i.e. general evil behaviour); b) specified, committed sins.

To the first group, which resembles the seven “cardinal sins” of the Christian tradition, belong GB 1, 2, 2 (with seven innate passions among which three of the seven “cardinal sins” sins are missing) and JB 1, 98 and 2, 363 (with six evils called pāpmānas containing four “cardinal sins,” to be distinguished from the ills likewise called pāpmānas in AV 11, 8, 19). These evils or sins of the JB are likewise innate and created by the gods.

In the late Vedic text MaiU 3, 5 a much longer list is found, in which mainly passions and evil behaviour in general occur besides some specifications of this behaviour. This list (consisting of weaknesses and strong passions) is divided by the text into two groups: those produced by tamas and those by rajas (a twofoldness looking like the one occurring in the post-Vedic text Manu 6, 45 ff. (with kāma and krodha as the two origins), which, however, is rather different and mainly includes specific, committed sins, some of them to be qualified as minor sins). A similar but undivided list of fifteen doṣas is found in the ĀpDhS (see section 4).

The second category is represented by ChU 5, 10, 9, in which four specific major sins, to which contact with the committers of these sins is added as the fifth, are the sins which later were called the mahāpātakāni (the great or major sins). Three of these four specified, committed sins remind of three of the four sins mentioned in the Decalogue of the Bible, but murder, adultery and stealing have a different specification focused on the Brahmins in this text. It is remarkable that such a specific list (with several additions) is found in later Vedic and post-Vedic Dharma texts but is missing in the older Vedic literature. A list of eight types of sinners is found in the Yajurvedic Saṁhitās (MS 4, 1, 9; KS 31, 7) and in TB 3, 2, 8, 9, but the “sins” are different and mainly concern violations of socio-religious and ritualistic rules like marrying too late and offering too late every day. Killing human beings is included but restricted to the murder of an embryo (probably of a future Brahmin) and a Brahmin, though killing a vīra is also mentioned as an apparently less serious form of murder. The killing of a
Brahmin or of the embryo of a possible, future Brahmin means doing damage to the continuity of the ritualistic tradition.

The purely ethical aspects are mostly missing in the Vedic material. The passages dealing with the vices of the first category (i.e. with weaknesses and too strong passions and wrong behaviour in general) look like advices on how not to behave in life in order to become successful, i.e. like useful lists of warnings made by counsellors on behalf of Brahmācārins and kings. The lists of specified sins in the ChU and in older Yajurvedic texts mainly concern Brahmins and Vedic ritual. This does not imply that in all Vedic literature general sins (like stealing and murder) are missing. In an Upaniṣad (KauṣU 3, 1) stealing, killing an embryo, killing one’s mother and killing one’s father are mentioned, but this is not a list of the major sins. Still this short enumeration of specified sins in the moral sphere is exceptional. Incidental references to one or two specified ethical sins not referring to the ritual and the Brahmins of course do occur in the Veda.

Three of the four major sins in ChU 5, 10, 9 and later Dharma texts refer to a Brahmin as the victim of a sin. One should not take his gold, his wife or his life.

Among the four major sins drinking liquor and having illicit sexual intercourse are clearly transgressions of the rules for ascetics. These rules (the opposites of the corresponding sins) also include the prescript of not stealing. So in general theft is a major sin also in the ascetic sphere. What we miss here is speaking untruth, since speaking the truth is included among the rules for ascetics. In his commentary on RV 10, 5, 6 Yāska (Nirukta 6, 27) includes telling lies in his list of seven sins. See also n. 46, where telling a lie is one of the possible sins in JB 3, 270. Here eating meat seems to belong to the same sphere. Probably its positive counterpart ahimsā is one of the ascetic rules. Such rules often have a negation: not stealing, not speaking untruth, not killing animals and eating them, not trying to get property (aparigraha) and not having sexual intercourse. Just like speaking untruth the sin of eating meat is missing in the group of four major sins, which probably did not refer to ascetic committers of these sins.

51 On the special position of the wife of a Brahmin see AV 5, 17 occurring next to a hymn (5, 18) where the Brahmin’s cow seems to be almost of equal importance to his wife or even more important than his gold.

52 See Gonda (1959c) on these compounds with a negation.