

ANTIQVORVM PHILOSOPHIA

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

6 · 2012



PISA · ROMA

FABRIZIO SERRA EDITORE

MMXII

Direzione scientifica
Prof. GIUSEPPE CAMBIANO
Scuola Normale Superiore, Piazza dei Cavalieri 7, I 56126 Pisa

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Autorizzazione del Tribunale di Pisa n. 41 del 21/12/2007
Direttore responsabile: Fabrizio Serra

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www.libraweb.net

Stampato in Italia · Printed in Italy

ISSN 1973-5030
ISSN ELETTRONICO 1974-4501

Amministrazione e abbonamenti
FABRIZIO SERRA EDITORE[®]
Casella postale n. 1, succursale n. 8, I 56123 Pisa,
tel. +39 050 542332, fax +39 050 574888, fse@libraweb.net

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FREE WILL AND INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

JOHANNES BRONKHORST

THE *Oxford Handbook of Free Will* observes, with regard to Western philosophy, that the problem of free will and necessity (or determinism) is «perhaps the most voluminously debated of all philosophical problems». ¹ This should not surprise us. This abstruse philosophical problem is directly related to a conviction that most of us in the modern world share, and that was well formulated by William James:

the whole feeling of reality, the whole sting and excitement of our voluntary life, depends on our sense that in it things are *really being decided* from one moment to another, and that it is not the dull rattling off of a chain that was forged innumerable ages ago. ²

Many people feel that there is a contradiction between this conviction and one of the tasks which science sets out to address, viz., finding the rules that govern «the rattling off of a chain forged innumerable ages ago».

This is not the place to review the different ways in which modern scholars, scientists and philosophers try to solve the problem. ³ James himself was inclined to a spiritual solution. Others have tried to capitalize on the presumed discovery that nature itself in its fundamental functioning does not seem to be governed deterministically. ⁴ Others again have argued that the almost infinite complexity of processes in the human brain offers us something as good as free will, even if it is not quite the real thing. ⁵

Many psychologists do not waste time on this question. They may be willing to grant that we have the *feeling* of conscious will, and may try to explain why. They are not willing to assign a causal role to this feeling in the mechanism that governs our behavior. They present a variety of arguments and experimental findings to prove *The Illusion of Conscious Will*.

Johannes Bronkhorst, Université de Lausanne, Lausanne; johannes.bronkhorst@unil.ch

This article is indebted to two earlier publications of mine: (i) *Appendix 11.3 (Psychology and free will)* of my *Absorption: Two Studies of Human Nature* (BRONKHORST 2012); (ii) Chapter §4 (*Vaiśeṣika and Nyāya psychology*) of my *Karma and Teleology: A problem and its solutions in Indian philosophy* (BRONKHORST 2000, pp. 17-21). Thanks are further due to Elisa Freschi.

¹ KANE 2002, p. 3, citing MATSON 1987, I, p. 158. DENNETT (1984, p. 2), commenting on this claim, states: «Any philosopher ought to feel at least a little embarrassed that with so much work so little progress has been made».

² JAMES 1890, I, p. 453.

³ *The Oxford Handbook of Free Will* (KANE 2002), already mentioned, provides a useful presentation of the main positions. See also FISCHER *et al.* 2007.

⁴ This remains far from certain. Almost a century after its creation, the indeterministic nature of quantum physics is regularly challenged. See the review articles in «New Scientist» of 22 March 2008 and 28 March 2009, and the cover story of 30 April 2011 («End of uncertainty: Goodbye Heisenberg. Hello quantum certainty?»). Another difficulty with this approach is how undetermined, i.e. random, processes can be supposed to account for free will.

⁵ See, e.g., DENNETT 2003, p. 225: «I claim that the varieties of free will I am defending are worth wanting precisely because they play all the *valuable* roles free will has been traditionally invoked to play. But I cannot deny that the tradition also assigns properties to free will that my varieties lack. So much the worse for tradition, say I». *The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting* is the subtitle of an earlier book by DENNETT (1984).

This, incidentally, is the title of a book by the psychologist Daniel M. Wegner (2002). It will be useful to consider the position he puts forward. Conscious will, he points out (p. 67),

is not a direct perception of [the] relation [between thought and action] but rather a feeling based on the causal inference one makes about the data that do become available to consciousness – the thought and the observed act.

The experience of will ... is the way our minds portray their operations to us, not their actual operation. Because we have thoughts of what we will do, we can develop causal theories relating those thoughts to our actions on the basis of priority, consistency, and exclusivity. We come to think of these prior thoughts as intentions, and we develop the sense that the intentions have causal force even though they are actually just previews of what we may do. (p. 96).

It follows, Wegner thinks, that conscious will is an *epiphenomenon*: «Just as compass readings do not steer the boat, conscious experiences of will do not cause human actions» (p. 318).

James's conviction that things are *really being decided* by us from one moment to another will find little comfort in Wegner's position. He thought that this conviction is incompatible with the other one according to which reality is «the dull rattling off of a chain that was forged innumerable ages ago». Wegner, too, thinks that these two are incompatible. In reality they are not. For Wegner, the *real* action takes place in the brain, or in the unconscious mind. There is there no place for conscious will. Seen this way, this is a mere epiphenomenon with no causal role to play. However, Wegner's conclusion is the outcome of his prior decision as to what psychology is all about. The decision that the real action is confined to the brain, or to processes that remain below the surface, cannot but exclude conscious activities from the causal chain. It follows from such an a priori decision that all the decisions we take, including difficult ones which require much thought (as opposed to the lifting of a finger which figures so prominently in Wegner's experiments), are no real decisions at all.

Wegner's position has to face some serious difficulties. If, as he claims, conscious will is an illusion, an epiphenomenon that plays no role in determining our behavior, then the elements that go into the making of conscious will, ultimately pleasure and pain, play no such role either. This raises the question why evolution has provided us with those experiences to begin with. The obvious answer – viz. that pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain bring evolutionary rewards – is impossible to maintain if those experiences cannot even in principle influence behavior.¹

If, unlike Wegner and so many other modern thinkers, we opt for a psychology which includes experiential elements, James's incompatibility disappears. In that case, our decisions *can* have a causal effect, for the simple reason that our decisions *are* part of the causal chains which our psychology seeks to uncover. This choice does not introduce indeterminism, to be sure. The causal chains of this new psychology can be as deterministic as any. 'Free' choices are determined by prior events, whatever their precise nature.

¹ Compare the opening sentence of Jeremy Bentham's *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*: «Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do». (cited KAHNEMAN 2011, p. 377) Note further that pleasure and pain are «multiply realizable»: «They can ... be embodied in highly diverse kinds of physical-chemical processes and substrates». (DEACON 2012, p. 29)

Yet the main demand of those who insist on the acceptance of conscious will, their conviction that their decisions are 'real' and have causal efficacy, is now fulfilled. As some recent researchers have correctly pointed out: «determinism does not imply that our deliberations and conscious purposes are causally irrelevant to what we do». ¹ The difficult and painful decisions we sometimes have to make are not just the feelings that accompany processes that are beyond our ken and control. On the contrary, these decisions are the way in which a process that may be fundamentally deterministic unfolds. ²

Introducing experiential notions into psychology as functional elements (rather than as accompanying epiphenomena) means abandoning (at least for the time being) the attempt to explain human behavior exclusively in terms of ultimately physical and chemical processes. This is a step other sciences have taken before, so it should not count as an obstacle. ³ Evolutionary biology, to take an example, does not and cannot provide the insights we expect from it if it refuses to think of phenotypes as opposed to genotypes. ⁴ A full account of the molecular processes in organisms is unlikely to clarify why certain species survive and others don't. The biologist has to think simultaneously on different levels if progress is to be made in his field.

A different yet comparable situation may prevail in the study of human psychology. If we wish to make headway, we have to find place for conscious experiences, not as by-products, but as functional elements of the theory to be constructed. ⁵ This is not quite as radical as it may seem at first sight. Goal-directed activity, requiring cognitive maps and goal-seeking, is known from living organisms of all levels of complexity. ⁶ The ques-

¹ NAHMIA, COATES & KVARAN 2007, p. 220.

² Similar remarks could be made about intellectual effort. To cite Mary Midgley: «When Einstein has just solved a difficult problem, his reasoning cannot be explained by giving even the most accurate account of the actions of his neurons. To suggest that their actions were its real cause would mean that they did the work on their own and told him about it afterwards. Anyone who has tried leaving such work to their neurons will agree that this story is improbable». (letter to «New Scientist», 3 January 2009)

³ An extensive literature has developed around the question of different levels of explanation, and the related issue of reductionism; see e.g. McCauley 2007; Looren de Jong 2002; Hofstadter 2007, 37 ff. An important concept here is 'emergence' – the notion that important kinds of organization may emerge in systems of many interacting parts, but not follow in any way from the properties of those parts. See the various contributions in Clayton & Davies 2006. For a sophisticated attempt to explain mind from matter, see Deacon 2012.

⁴ «Because the genotype is asymmetrically dependent on the phenotype with respect to natural selection . . . , it is the phenotype that offers the best causal explanation of reproductive success The phenotypic level has a causal efficacy and explanatory legitimacy of its own, even if the phenotype is determined by the genotype (among other things). Identifying phenotypic traits is not a merely heuristic, free-for-all, essentially void kind of explanation, but rather, it taps real causal factors in an organism's chances of survival». (Schouten & Looren de Jong 2004, p. 312).

⁵ Philosophers will be inclined to invoke the help of emergence; see note 3, above. «Materialist theories of mind . . . seek to do justice to two compelling but apparently incompatible scruples. One is that ours is a physical world, everything happening within it open to physical explanation. The other is that mindedness is a matter of causal significance, that it makes a causal difference that there are minds. The more we feel the pull of one of these scruples, the more mysterious becomes the other. A robust commitment to physicalism leaves the mind looking like an epiphenomenal by-product of natural processes, a causally inert shadow. But a view of the mind as possessing aetiological autonomy threatens to re-enchant the physical world with supernatural causes and effects. The attraction of emergentism is that it offers a way to escape the dilemma. An emergentist tries to prise free the soundly motivated scruples about the dependence and autonomy of the mental from too-rigid theory, to see the problems as symptoms of the fact that an insight has been poorly encoded in doctrine». (Ganeri 2011, pp. 696-697).

⁶ Some quotations from thinkers in this field illustrate this: Rose 2003, pp. 177-178: «despite its popularity with psychological theorists, modellers and neurobiological experimenters, association cannot be the only way in which memory occurs . . . For instance, on Skinner's theory, rats ought to learn to run a maze correctly by learning each correct turn (first left, second right and so on) individually and sequentially as a chain of stimuli and responses. But it was quite straightforward to show, by rearranging the maze or altering the cues within it, that the animals are

tion how such cognitive maps and goal-seeking are to be explained without introducing *homunculi* (little human beings inside human beings used to explain the latter's behavior) is complex. Dennett (2005, pp. 137, also 161) suggested:

As long as your *homunculi* are more stupid and ignorant than the intelligent agent they compose, the nesting of homunculi within homunculi can be finite, bottoming out, eventually, with agents so unimpressive that they can be replaced by machines.

This, however, will not do. Deacon (2012, pp. 83-84) rightly comments:

everything [in Dennett's suggestion] depends on mental processes being a cumulative effect of the interactions of tiny mindless robots. Though the homunculus problem is in this way subdivided and distributed, it is not clear that the reduction of complex intentionality to many tiny intentions has done any more than give the impression that it can be simplified and simplified until it just disappears. But it is not clear where this vanishing point will occur. Though intuitively one can imagine simpler and simpler agents with stupider and stupider intentional capacities, at what point does it stop being intentional and just become mechanism?

And on p. 139 he states: «No fractionation... into modules of even smaller scope and proportion allows the apparent arrow of causality to reverse». Much of the remainder of Deacon's book is a sophisticated attempt to show that this arrow of causality can actually reverse, and how.

This is not the occasion to enter into the details of this fundamental discussion. It should however be clear that much is gained by including experiential notions as functional terms into psychology. This is indeed the position here taken. One of its immediate rewards, as we have seen, is that the so-called problem of Free Will loses its fangs. More precisely put, once the causal role that conscious will can play is acknowledged, the so-called problem of free will is no more than an abstruse philosophical problem that, even if it could be given a precise formulation (which I doubt), will no longer deserve the attention it receives from specialists and lay people alike.

The preceding reflections may be read as an argument in favor of a psychology that includes experiential notions as functional elements. There may be a need for that in modern science, but that is not the point to be made here. I will rather argue in what follows

not so inefficient; instead they seem after a few trials to be able to form *some sort of a global image of the maze, a map if you like*, in their brains, so that wherever they are placed in it they can deduce where the goal may be and adopt the most efficient route towards it without being excessively confused by the rearrangement of the maze. Animals use strategies when they learn; they can create concepts. To understand such mechanisms it is not adequate to reduce them to linear sequences of stimulus-response, positive and negative reinforcement». (my emphasis, JB). Also p. 269: «Cognitive behaviour is not reducible to simple sequences of contingencies of reinforcement but instead reflects goal-seeking activities, hypothesis making and many other features which had hitherto been dismissed from consideration within the Anglo-American tradition in psychology». ROSE 2005, p. 22: «[A] free-living cell... needs to be able to respond appropriately to... changes. One way of conceiving of this capacity to vary a program is as an action plan, an 'internal representation' of the desired goal – at its minimum, that of survival at least until replication is achieved». Intelligence in cells is also defended in FORD 2009. See further KANDEL 2005, p. 118: «investigations which fail to consider internal representations of mental events are inadequate to account for behavior, not only in humans but – perhaps more surprisingly – also in simple experimental animals». FREEMAN 1999, pp. 120-121: «the ingredients received by brains from their sensory cortices with which to make meanings are produced by the cortices. They are not direct transcriptions or impressions from the environment inside or outside the body. All that brains can know has been synthesized within themselves, in the form of hypotheses about the world and the outcomes of their own tests of the hypotheses, success or failure, and the manner of failure».

that such psychological theories are not unknown in classical India. I will first concentrate on the aspect of Vaiśeṣika philosophy (and of the Nyāya philosophy that is strongly influenced by Vaiśeṣika) that deals with human behavior.

Vaiśeṣika has seriously tried to explain human behavior in non-teleological terms. In this system, the soul is conceived of as a motionless substance. Like other substances, it can have qualities. Many of the qualities that can inhere in certain other substances, however, – such as color, or smell, and so on – cannot inhere in the soul. And many of the qualities that can inhere in the soul cannot inhere in those other substances.

The list of qualities that can only inhere in the soul are together responsible for Vaiśeṣika psychology.¹ As enumerated in the *Padārthadharmasamgraha*, alias *Praśastapādabhāṣya*, they are: knowledge (*buddhi*), pleasure (*sukha*), pain (*duḥkha*), desire (*icchā*), aversion (*dveṣa*), effort (*prayatna*), virtue (*dharma*), sin (*adharmā*), subliminal impressions (*samskāra*).² The order of this enumeration is not arbitrary. Knowledge of an object – usually perception – precedes the experience of pleasure or pain connected with that object; this in its turn gives rise to desire and aversion respectively; next in line follows effort that seeks to obtain or avoid that object; as a result virtue and sin come into being, as well as subliminal impressions.

If for the moment we leave aside the issue of virtue and sin, we see that the Vaiśeṣika scheme has a behaviorist flavor to it: behavior that leads to good experiences is repeated, behavior that leads to bad experiences is henceforth avoided. But unlike behaviorism, Vaiśeṣika does not avoid experiential terms – most notably «knowledge», «pleasure», «pain», «desire», and «aversion» – which have a place in the fundamental scheme.

Consider the following nutshell description of psychology in the *Nyāya Bhāṣya*, a text that follows the Vaiśeṣika scheme:³

A [soul] which, being conscious, recognizes that pleasure can be produced through a [certain] means and which, desiring to obtain that [pleasure], makes an effort to obtain the means, will be connected with pleasure, not [a soul] which is the opposite [of this]. And a [soul] which recognizes that pain can be produced through a [a certain] means and which, desiring to avoid that [pain], makes an effort to give up the means, will be abandoned by pain, not [a soul] which is the opposite [of this].

Elsewhere the same text adds some details:⁴

From ...incorrect knowledge result attraction (*rāga*) towards agreeable things, and aversion (*dveṣa*) towards disagreeable things. Under the influence of attraction and aversion, faults (*doṣa*) such as untruth, jealousy, deceit and greed come into being. Prompted by [these] faults [a person], while acting with his body, practices violence, theft and forbidden forms of sexual intercourse; [while acting] with his voice [he engages in] lying, abusive speech, slander and incoherent [speech]; [while acting] with his mind [he engages in] plotting against others, craving other peo-

¹ See BRONKHORST 1993, pp. 62.

² See WI, p. 16 §80.

³ NBh, p. 917 l. 9-11 (on NS 3.2.72): *yaḥ khalu cetanāvān sādhananirvartanīyaṃ sukhaṃ buddhvā tad īpsan sādhanāvāptaye prayatate sa sukheṇa yujyate na viparītaḥ / yaś ca sādhananirvartanīyaṃ duḥkhaṃ buddhvā taj jihāsuh sādhanaparivarjanāya yatate sa ca duḥkheṇa tyajyate na viparītaḥ /*

⁴ NBh, p. 76 l. 10-15 (on NS 1.1.2): *etasmān mithyājñānād anukūleṣu rāgaḥ, pratikūleṣu dveṣaḥ / rāgadveṣādhikārāc cāsatyeryāmāyālobhādāyo doṣā bhavanti / doṣaiḥ prayuktaḥ śarīreṇa pravartamāno hiṃsāsteyapraṭiśiddhamaitḥunāny ācarati, vācā 'nrtaparūṣasūcanāsambaddhāni, manasā paradrohaṃ paradravyābhīpsāṃ nāstikyam ceti / seyaṃ pāpātmikā pravṛttir adharmāya / atha śubhā: śarīreṇa dānaṃ paritrāṇaṃ paricaraṇaṃ ca, vācā satyaṃ hitaṃ priyaṃ svādhyāyaṃ ceti, manasā dāyāṃ asphṛṇāṃ śraddhāṃ ceti / seyaṃ dharmāya /*

ple's property and apostasy. This sinful activity gives rise to sin (*adharma*). As to pure [activity]: with his body [he practices] liberality, protecting [others] and serving them; with his voice [he speaks] what is true, beneficial and agreeable, and [he does] his Vedic recitation; with his mind [he practices] compassion, non-desiring and trust. It gives rise to virtue (*dharma*).

The very presence of a desire proves that there must have been an agreeable experience preceding it. This argument is used in the *Nyāya Sūtra* and *Bhāṣya* to establish that the soul is eternal, or more precisely, that the soul existed before its present birth, for a newborn being desires the breast of its mother:¹

The soul is also eternal for the following reason: *Because of the desire for maternal milk in the case of a person who has died [and is reborn]² which has been brought about by the repeated experience of being fed [in this way] (NS 3.1.21).* A desire for maternal milk, characterized by activity, is observed in the case of a just born living being. This is not [possible] without the repeated experience of being fed. Why? Since it is seen that embodied beings that are suffering from hunger develop a desire to be fed as a result of the series of memories created by the repeated experience of being fed. This [desire] is not possible in the case of a just born being without the repeated experience [of being fed] in an earlier body. An earlier body is therefore inferred, in which this [just born living being] repeatedly experienced being fed.

For our reflections it is crucial that the scheme underlying these passages uses experiential terms. These experiential terms refer to mental states that are part of the mechanism that underlies human behavior. Like all attempts at scientific explanation, determinism is more or less presupposed. It is, at any rate, not an issue in the Indian texts concerned. More precisely, the question of free will is not an issue, because there is no place for a felt contradiction between decisions and the mechanism that makes humans act; there is no place for such a contradiction because human mental activity plays a crucial role in the process. Determinism, seen this way, takes nothing away from the freedom to act in accordance with one's feelings, because these feelings are themselves part of the mechanism described.

Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika psychology, then, is the kind of psychology in which the conflict between conscious will and determinism does not arise, because even if we think of it in deterministic terms, this does not deprive humans of the possibility to act in accordance with their will. To repeat it once more: free will is not an issue in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika because its psychology uses experiential terms among its fundamental notions.

Should we conclude from what precedes that Indian thinkers were immune to the issue of free will and determinism? I do not think so. In systems of thought that postulated that other, 'deeper', forces than the human will determine one's actions, the conflict between the two was acutely felt. An example is provided by the Ājīvikas, a religion that vanished from India without leaving us any texts, but about which we know enough to assert with confidence that it adhered to a thorough-going determinism.³ Most impor-

¹ NBh, p. 745 l. 6 - p. 746 l. 2 (on NS 3.1.21): *itaś ca nitya ātmā: pretyāhārābhyāsakṛtāt stanyābhilāṣāt (NS 3.1.21) / jātamātrasya vatsasya pravṛttiliṅgaḥ stanyābhilāṣo gṛhyate / sa ca nāntareṇāhārābhyāsam / kayā yuktyā? dṛśyate hi śarīriṇām kṣudhā piḍyamānānām āhārābhyāsakṛtāt smaraṇānubandhād āhārābhilāṣaḥ / na ca pūrvaśarīrābhyāsam antareṇāsau jātamātrasyopapadyate / tenānumīyate bhūtapūrvaṃ śarīraṃ yatrānenāhāro 'bhyasta iti /* PREISENDANZ (1994, 365 f., n. 100) refers to other texts, also outside the Nyāya tradition, that use this argument.

² On the difficulty of interpreting *pretya* here, see PREISENDANZ 1994, 369 f.

³ See BRONKHORST 2003. It is possible that determinism also characterized early Jainism; BRONKHORST 2000a.

tantly, this determinism did not involve the human will. One of its fundamental beliefs was that all living beings have to pass through an astronomical number of lives spread over 8,400,000 great world periods (*mahā-kalpa*), at the end of which they will all of them, 'fool and wise', be liberated. In this process the human (or animal) will is powerless against the forces that are responsible for the fate of living beings. The result is fatalism, the conviction that our will is not free. An Ājīvika alive today (unfortunately there are none) might say that the experience of free will is an epiphenomenon.

Fatalism is also known to the Sanskrit epic called *Mahābhārata*. It is referred to as *Kālavāda* ('doctrine of Time').¹ It is here sometimes presented as being altogether different from the doctrine of karmic retribution:² «One does not get anything through his deeds». Other passages show that no such opposition was felt:³ «Realize that Time has deeds for its bodily form (*karmamūrtyātma*) – it is witness to deeds good and bad, and it yields its fruit later in Time, giving rise to pleasant and unpleasant things». And again:⁴ «The universe is driven by action that is yoked to Time (*kālayukta*)». Whether ultimately caused by deeds or otherwise, *Kāla* determines one's fate in a way that is inescapable. The Ājīvikas used the term *Niyati* ('destiny, fate') to emphasize the fatalistic aspect of their doctrine. The existence of *Niyati* does not deny the role of deeds; quite on the contrary, it describes how karmic retribution works according to the adherents of this school of thought. *Kāla* plays a similar role in the *Mahābhārata*: it may simply sum up the workings of deeds in the opinion of those who think that karmic retribution follows a fixed pattern from which there is no escape for the individual.

More important, and interesting, for our purposes is the *Cārvāka* school of philosophy. This school explicitly opted for a materialist vision of the world, and claimed in its foundational text – the *Cārvāka-* or *Bārhaspatya-sūtra* – that consciousness is derived from the four material elements. The relevant *sūtras* read (BHATTACHARYA 2002, pp. 603-604):

- I.2: *pṛthivy āpas tejo vāyur iti tattvāni*
 I.3: *tatsamudāye śarīrendriyaviśayasamjñāḥ*
 I.4: *tebhyaś caitanyam*

This may be translated as follows:

- I.2: Earth, water, fire and air are the principles, nothing else.
 I.3: Their combination is called 'body', 'sense' and 'object'.
 I.4: Consciousness [arises] out of these.

It seems clear from this that mental states play no role in the activity of living beings, and this appears to have been the conviction of the author of this text and of most of his followers. But not of all of them.

The materialistic position of the *Cārvāka-sūtra* does not leave place for mental phenomena except as epiphenomena. At least one commentator on this text, Udbhaṭa,⁵ was not happy about this, and made an effort to find an interpretation that allows them

¹ See SCHEFTELOWITZ 1929; VASSILKOV 1999; further HILL 2001, 195 ff.; GONZÁLEZ-REIMANN 2002, pp. 20-50; BRONKHORST 2007, 105 f.; MALINAR 2010.

² Mhbh, 12.26.5a: *na karmaṇā labhyate*.

³ Mhbh, 12.34.7; tr. FITZGERALD 2004, p. 243.

⁴ Mhbh, 12.34.10cd.

⁵ Udbhaṭa was both a *Cārvāka* and a grammarian; BRONKHORST 2008.

a more active role. He did so by proposing a different interpretation to a number of sūtras, most notably the numbers 1.2 and 1.4 considered above. In sūtra 1.2 he took *iti* not to indicate that the enumeration is complete ('nothing else'), but rather the opposite, viz., that there are further elementary principles, which he then enumerated:¹

yad ācaṣṭa bhāṭṭodbhāṭaḥ: "itiśabdaḥ pradārśanaparo na punaḥ samāptivacanaś caitanyaśabdā-sukhaduḥkhecchādveṣaprayatnasamskārāṇāṃ tattvāntaratvāt ..."

Bhattacharya (2002, p. 615) translates (modified):

As said Bhaṭṭa Udbhaṭa, "The word *iti* does not denote the end [but] is illustrative. There are other principles, viz. consciousness, sound, pleasure, pain, desire, aversion, effort, subliminal impressions. ..."

It is clear from this quotation that Udbhaṭa adds mental phenomena (consciousness, pleasure, pain, desire, aversion) to the list of elementary principles, and therefore as functional elements. The added elements, be it noted, correspond almost term by term to the qualities that can only inhere in the soul according to Praśastapāda, studied above.

Scholars have wondered whether Udbhaṭa's addition of Vaiśeṣika qualities to the Cārvāka list of elementary principles is due to a special link that Udbhaṭa may have had with the Vaiśeṣika (or Nyāya) school of thought.² We do not have to address this question here. For our present enquiry it suffices to consider that Udbhaṭa appears to have felt the need to raise mental phenomena to something more than mere epiphenomena resting on the material elements which alone are ultimately real.

This consideration is strengthened by Udbhaṭa's interpretation of sūtra 1.4. We had translated it as «Consciousness [arises] out of these (i.e., out of the four material principles)», and this was most probably its intended meaning. Udbhaṭa makes use of an ambiguity of Sanskrit (*tebhyaḥ* can be a dative as well as an ablative case) to propose a different interpretation:³

udbhaṭena tu "bhūtebhyaḥ" iti padaṃ caturthyantatayā vyākhyātam, bhūtebhyaś caitanyaṃ bhūtārthaṃ caitanyaṃ svatantram eva śarīrārambhakabhūtopakāraṃ ity arthaḥ

Udbhaṭa interprets the expression "from the elements" (i.e. "out of these" in sūtra 1.4) as being in the dative, meaning consciousness is *to* or *for* the elements;⁴ [he says that] consciousness is autonomous and is an assistant to the material elements which constitute the body.

Philosophically the proposal to allow mental elements to play an assisting role, beside material elements, is not free from difficulty; this has been shown by Ganeri in a recent article (2011). However, we are at this moment not so much interested in the philosoph-

¹ Passage quoted from Vāidivevasūri's *Syādvādaratnākara* (edited by Motilal Ladhaji Osval, Delhi, Bhartiya Book Corporation, 1988, p. 1087, l. 1-4) reproduced in BHATTACHARYA 2002, p. 607, Bhā 16.

² So, e.g., BHATTACHARYA 2010, p. 423 («Avidhakarṇa and Udbhaṭa were basically Naiyāyikas. Even if they were converted to the Cārvāka / Lokāyata, they brought the whole baggage of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika terminology when they composed their commentaries on the Cārvākasūtra»).

³ Passage quoted from Cakradhara's *Granthibhaṅga* (edited by Gaurinath Sastri, along with Jayantabhaṭṭa's *Nyāyamañjarī*, Varanasi, Sampurnanand Sanskrit Visvavidyalaya, 1982-1984, pp. 257-258; edited by N. G. Shah, Ahmedabad, 1972, p. 197) reproduced in BHATTACHARYA 2002, p. 606. Cf. GANERI 2011, p. 689, modified.

⁴ DEL TOSO's (2011, p. 52) interpretation of *bhūtārtha* as «object/thing made by / based on elements» is not possible.

ical possibility of Udbhaṭa's position, but rather in the reason why he reinterpreted the sūtras considered the way he did.¹

This reason, I suggest, is that Udbhaṭa was not willing to put up with the fatalism implicit in the strict materialism of Cārvāka thought. He was not willing to accept that desire and other mental phenomena are mere epiphenomena. He saw that Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thought included a psychology in which there was a possibility for human wishes and desires to play a role. Cārvāka thought had no place for such a psychology. To change that, Udbhaṭa took from Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika the elements he needed – essentially experiential elements – and added them onto Cārvāka ontology. In doing so, he created a variety of Cārvāka philosophy in which there *was* place for 'free will'.² At the same time he opened a philosophical hornet's nest.

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¹ DEL TOSO (2011, p. 50) suggests that «in order to give more internal consistence to his theories in the light of the criticism put forward by the non-materialists, as was the case of the objections ... raised against Cārvāka philosophy by Vātsyāyana ... in his *Nyāyasūtrabhāṣya* ... , it is not impossible that Udbhaṭabhaṭa tried to find new interpretations of some problematic Cārvāka aphorism[s]». This is not the position here taken.

² Most remarkably, Pakudha Kaccāyana, one of the six heretical teachers presented in the early Buddhist canon, claims the existence of seven elementary entities: the four elements (earth, water, fire and air), pleasure, pain and life/soul (*jīva*); see BASHAM 1951, p. 16. That is to say, Pakudha adds to the four usual elements at least two experiential terms. Was he inspired to do so by reflections about 'free will'? (According to PRATCHETT 2000, p. 14 there are five elements: earth, water, fire, air and surprise.)

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ABBREVIATIONS

- ANISt = Alt- und Neuindische Studien, Hamburg.
- NBh = *Nyāya Bhāṣya*. For the edition see *Nyāya Sūtra*.
- NS = *Nyāya Sūtra*.
- NV = *Nyāya Vārttika of Uddyotakara*. For the edition, see *Nyāya Sūtra*.
- Vy = *Vyomavatī of Vyomaśivācārya*, edited by Gaurinath Sastri, 2 vols., Varanasi, Sampurnanand Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, 1983-1984 (M. M. Śivakumāraśāstri-granthamālā, 6.)
- WI = *Word Index to the Praśastapādabhāṣya: A complete word index to the printed editions of the Praśastapādabhāṣya*, by Johannes Bronkhorst & Yves Ramseier, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1994.

COMPOSTO IN CARATTERE DANTE MONOTYPE DALLA
FABRIZIO SERRA EDITORE, PISA · ROMA.
STAMPATO E RILEGATO NELLA
TIPOGRAFIA DI AGNANO, AGNANO PISANO (PISA).

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Dicembre 2012

(CZ 2 · FG 21)



