

COMMENTS ON G. DREYFUS'S "IS PERCEPTION INTENTIONAL"

What a treat to have such a fine encapsulation of the complex philosophy of Dharmakīrti, who by classical reputation as well as modern is the greatest of Buddhist metaphysicians! In the context of today's gathering my only complaint is that Dharmakīrti's opposition is not so well presented. Practically every point of Dharmakīrti's philosophy was disputed by metaphysical realists primarily of the Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya schools. Professor Dreyfus mentions that Kumārila and Uddyotakara attacked the *apoha* "exclusion" theory of concepts and the related nominalism. But a list of competing positions and arguments could be constructed to match point for point every bit of Dharmakīrti's view as outlined here. And just on *apoha*, Nyāya philosophers continue to develop refutations well into the Navya period, a thousand years after Uddyotakara. Gaṅgeśa in the fourteenth century, for example, rehearses a familiar bundle of arguments, elaborating several at length.

However, to discuss many of the lines of disagreement with Nyāya would take a lot more time than allotted, and though we would learn a good deal of classical Indian philosophy, this group's primary interests, as I understand them, would not be fed. I plan then to focus on a single topic broached at the end of the paper, the storehouse consciousness and especially its inhabitants, dispositions, *saṃskāra*, "mental dispositions" about which the realists have distinct theories. Such dispositions are important because on all accounts they secure mental continuity. According to Nyāya, Yoga, and most of the other schools, *saṃskāra* carry the information retrieved in memory and involved in the exercise of our organs of action. These creatures also hold an obvious interest for contemporary philosophers of mind who countenance dispositional analyses of non-occurrent belief. But before digging in, please indulge a short list of the very most major points of contention within classical philosophy in broader overview. Then we shall take up not so much knowledge as the question of the knower and especially an argument that certain bits of knowledge entail endurance.

1. Intentionality, *viṣayatā* (the technical term used by Māṃsakas and Naiyāyikas), “having-object-directedness,” is a relation linking cognition, *jñāna*, to things external to cognition.
2. Cognition according to Nyāya is irreflexive (except in special instances, such as, “Every cognition is knowable,” a cognition that is itself knowable), requiring apperception to be grasped, as is evidenced by our sometimes being totally absorbed in objects, so to say, having no awareness of our own consciousness.
3. The processes of knowledge-generation, *pramāṇa*, perception, etc., are not the same critters as the cognitions that are their results, *pramā*, namely, bits of knowledge which as cognitions with *viṣayatā* are world-directed.
4. “Not being deceptive” is an inadequate characterization of knowledge, as is shown by a mistaken inference to fire where there is actually fire from misperceiving a line of dust as smoke. The resulting cognition while true and non-deceptive does not have the right pedigree.
5. The issue of cognition as *sākāra*, or, as the realists hold along with the Buddhist Mādhyamika school, *nirākāra*, “with” or “without form of its own,” or “aspect,” is tied to that of *viṣayatā*, according to Naiyāyikas.
6. Nyāya philosophers concur with Dharmakīrti that cognition is not self-validating, arguing against Advaita Vedāntins, for instance, that even if it were self-reflexive it need not be self-validating, as is shown by cases of doubt about, say, a river seen in the distance for the very first time, with the perception only later known as veridical, that is, only when we have confirmed that the cognized thing is a river by walking closer and quenching our thirst.
7. The distinction between perceptual and inferential knowledge, etc., is not to be drawn along the lines of the one having and other not

having content, i.e., object-directedness, *viṣayatā*, since, for one thing, perception is commonly recognitive (*savikalpaka*, “determinate,” to use the Buddhist term), e.g., “This is that pot I saw previously.” Here a memory feeds a presentation of the senses. (More on this at the end.)

8. The primary meaning of linguistic signs is referential. The *apoha* theory is motivated by nominalism which is unfounded. There are at least five further lines of argument in favor of universals as ontologically uneliminable.

9. What appears to be the source of Buddhist error is a misunderstanding of causal relationship and the bundle or *sāmagrī* concept. Such a bundle is causally efficient, having a trigger as only one of numerous co-operating factors arriving more or less late on the scene, some of which are rightly called causes in the distinct sense of a necessary (but not by itself sufficient) condition. The Buddhist “proofs” of momentariness fatally depend on a view of a single factor as alone causally efficient. (More about this, too, in a moment.)

10. The fact that I can remember and recognize only what I myself have experienced, “This is that Bob Thurman I saw previously,” proves an enduring self.

Let me slow down now to look more closely at the issue of self as locus of mental dispositions, *saṃskāra*, the properties that account for potential memories and non-occurrent beliefs. Here the major disagreement concerns Buddhist momentariness and denial of endurance, especially of anything so soteriologically suspect as Nyāya’s enduring self. However, my main point in dwelling on this is to bring out in the midst of disagreement broad affinities of Buddhist ideas with Nyāya and other “Hindu” schools—concerning yogic and meditational opportunities in particular.

In widest perspective, the Buddha’s attacks on an enduring self recorded in the Sermons of the Pali Canon seem to connect with spiritual

exercises intended to correct false identification with the body and mind. The idea of “no-self” was probably meant to guide practice. As in the Sāṃkhya and Yoga philosophies and much Vedānta also, disidentification with *dharma* we commonly take to be ourselves (the body, thought, desires, emotions, all the phenomena in the *skandha*, the five bands or streams) was viewed as essential to spiritual progress. The “medicine” view of Nāgārjuna according to which doctrine is discarded when cured is clearly in line with this. Furthermore, similarly to what is preached by Vedānta, that which is discovered in the supreme enlightenment is not a theory but rather an “extinguishing” of appetitive consciousness where a supernal bliss, *nirvṛti*, emerges. One early Buddhist position that nicely makes the contrast is Sarvāstivāda, which has the person as a composite of seventy-five *dharma*s among which *nirvāna* is one. This *dharma* is distinguished by being eternal as opposed to the fleetingness of thoughts, etc. Sarvāstivāda did not remain mainstream, but it shows Buddhist philosophy’s commitment to the value of enlightenment. The common theme is that by appreciating the fleetingness of life one is led to detachment and advancement on the path.

Now in the renewal of metaphysical reasoning that Vasubandhu represents, in contrast to the conservative anti-intellectualism of Nāgārjuna, it is important, I think, to see momentariness, *kṣaṇikatva*, as the central doctrine, not “no-self,” *an-ātman*. For, all things, including what we take to be an enduring self or person, but not restricted to that, all things are in reality momentary. Dharmakīrti puts forth the standard momentariness proofs and a consonant stream theory of the person. Objects of everyday discourse (*vyavahāra*) are temporal and spatial heaps of *sva-lakṣaṇa*-s, “things that are their own marks,” that is to say, ultimate particulars that exist for a moment, exercising causal efficiency and self-destructing. The Buddhist view is often called Kṣaṇabhaṅgavāda, the theory of “instantaneous destruction.” So too is the self or person a composite of momentary self-destructing particulars.

The intelligibility of the Buddhist theory is challenged by the question of what secures membership in the same series; against the Nyāya

counterpart view there are a set of Buddhist arguments against the possibility of unrealized capacities. Causal sufficiency is said to secure series-membership. Only the seed in the ground gives rise to the sprout. The immediate predecessor is causally sufficient and thus counts as belonging to a seed-sprout series stretching back through a line of seed-moments in the granary, each causally sufficient for a single successor in a seed-stream. Naiyāyikas hold, in contrast, that the seed is only part of the causal story, a seed being a necessary but not a sufficient condition for a sprout. Other necessary conditions are water, soil, heat, and so on, which coming together in an appropriate bundle, *sāmagrī*, together produce the sprout. Buddhists such as Dharmakīrti deny that a mere necessary condition is properly a “cause.”

Dharmakīrti and other Buddhists endorse the following inference:

That which exists is momentary, like a cloud. (*yat sat tat kṣaṇīkam
yathā jala-dharā*)

Since with respect to Naiyāyikas and other non-Buddhists, mutually acceptable examples of co-location of the prover, existence, and the probandum, momentariness (a flame but also a stone, a thought but also a lake, a river but also the sky), are hard to come by, the inference is supplemented by various *reductio* attacks on the assumption that anything that endures could be a cause. So we have, anything X that actually causes Y in the next instant is distinct from something W that does not cause Y right away. No two things are identical if they fail to have all the same properties. The property of producing an effect is especially important since it marks off the real from the fictional or imaginary, *arthakriyākārikatva*, “causal efficacy,” the Buddhist definition of what it is to exist. A seed sprouts at a certain moment, giving rise to a sprout. If it had endured with its property of “not-being-sprout-producing,” it would not have produced the sprout. The seed that sprouts is distinct from all its causal predecessors in the granary. This is so in virtue of the one having sprout-causal-power and the others not. Only the seed in the ground watered and warm is sprout-productive.

Now Dharmakīrti and company are quite explicit about the everyday person being a causally-ordered continuum, a *santāna*, “causal series.” This is a stream united over two moments by memory-impressions, *saṃskāra*, informing present consciousness. But how is this possible given momentariness? The Buddhist answer seems to be that though different from what he was yesterday, Devadatta can be recognized by us, who are also different from what we were, because our sight of him is impregnated (*sagarbhita*) by a rich *saṃskāra* series shaping our current perception. The immediately preceding moment of ourselves is fecund, sufficient to produce the current moment of ourselves.

The Naiyāyika response, voiced by Udayana (c. 1000), is that memory and recognition show the inadequacy of the Buddhist reductionism. If, as the Buddhist proposes, self and personal identity reduce to a series of psychological events held together causally, the temporal gap between the original experience and the later remembering cannot be explained. What happens to the information during the period when there is no awareness of it? The *saṃskāra* as beneath the threshold of consciousness is unavailable to Buddhist presentism according to which every moment of awareness is self-aware, self-intimating, self-reflexive. Similarly, the Buddhist is forced to view deep sleep not as an absence of consciousness but rather as a period when the consciousness stream is composed of moments of self-consciousness without object-consciousness. It is the lack of object-consciousness that is supposed to account for our inability to remember. But Udayana brings out that all remembering presupposes a psychological gap, a period when the information gathered by the original experience is absent from consciousness. On the Nyāya view, it lies latent in the self as the content of a mental disposition, *saṃskāra*.

Desiring to possess or avoid something of a type remembered would be impossible on the Buddhist theory, the realists claim too, as well as recognition which permeates out mental life. Also impossible would be comprehension of a sentence, which, though its words are uttered sequentially, is a single thought. But note that in broader perspective both theories find continuities beyond the body and anything material.

Buddhists share with Hindus beliefs about karma and reincarnation and the centrality of virtuous action. Even without admitting a self as locus of mental dispositions, Buddhists view causal connections as running past death. Causal sequences are not embedded exclusively in the physical body.

The primary support for this view is taken by the classical philosophers to be yogic perception, *yaugika-pratyakṣa*, which is admitted by Buddhist and Hindus alike, though there are other arguments (one of these is examined in a paper I sent to Christopher Kelly and is I believe posted on-line). Recall Dreyfus's appeal to meditative evidence in support of the Buddhist position on the nature of the distinction between, as it were, concept-free perception and concept-laden inference. There are of course disagreements about what yogic perception shows. But almost everyone sees it as comprising a kind of direct acquaintance with *saṃskāra*, some of which are known not to have been formed in the current lifetime. Indeed, the *Yoga-sūtra* distinguishes *saṃskāra* which are new to a given birth and those (called *vāsanā*) which range over multiple births. I believe just about all Buddhist philosophers accept a similar conception.

Stephen Phillips
University of Texas at Austin