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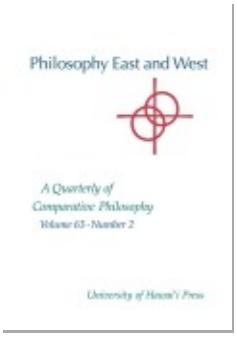

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PARASITISM AND DISJUNCTIVISM IN NYĀYA EPISTEMOLOGY

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From the early modern period, Western epistemologists have often been concerned with a rigorous notion of epistemic justification, epitomized in the work of Descartes: properly held beliefs require insulation from extreme skepticism. To the degree that veridical cognitive states may be indistinguishable from non-veridical states, *apparently* veridical states cannot enjoy high-grade positive epistemic status. Therefore, a good believer begins from what are taken to be neutral, subjective experiences and reasons outward—hopefully identifying the kinds of appearances that properly link up to the world and those that do not. Good beliefs, beliefs that are justified (warranted, etc.), are those that a believer has consciously arrived at by such reasoning (or, in a weaker version, those that *could be* consciously arrived at by such reasoning if required). This approach, which I will occasionally call a *Cartesian* approach, has two important features. First, it considers doubt a legitimate default position in the space of reasons. The burden of proof is upon the believer to defend her belief. In the absence of such a defense, belief is suspect. Second, one's cognitive starting point consists in alethically neutral cognitive states as described above.

The tradition that I will discuss in this essay, the Nyāya school of classical India, looks at things from a very different perspective. It defends what may be called *epistemic trust* as the proper default position. Furthermore, Nyāya has a conception of knowledge sources as faculties that directly connect us to a mind-independent world, irrespective of the potential for indistinguishable error states. Despite such potential for error, Nyāya argues that when we get things right, we directly gain purchase on an external world. This notion of direct openness to the world is tied deeply to Nyāya's epistemic trust. Though, indeed, various sorts of factors trigger review, defense, and, if required, rejection of belief, the notion that we must step outside our knowledge-producing faculties and pass judgment on their overall effectiveness is held to be a fantasy that is unnecessary, pragmatically troublesome, and ultimately incoherent.

This essay will examine a battery of Nyāya arguments in support of default trust and a ground-level realism, which I collectively call *arguments from parasitism*. These are meant to prove that error presupposes veridical cognition, and, this being the case, we cannot even engage in philosophical reflection and critique unless we appeal to a background of true belief and a baseline cognitive connection with the real world. Given that we must acknowledge such a connection, trust is therefore taken to be the correct default epistemic attitude. I will illustrate and classify various forms that the argument takes, consider allied arguments further offered by Nyāya, and suggest ways in which Naiyāyikas may respond to certain challenges. I conclude

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by noting a few ways in which Nyāya anticipates the contemporary philosophical movement known as *disjunctivism.* I will start, however, by framing the discussion with an introduction to Nyāya epistemology.

The Theory of Knowledge Sources (Pramāṇas)

One of Nyāya's central contributions to Indian thought—arguably its primary contribution—is the articulation and development of an epistemological theory centered on *pramāṇa*s or knowledge sources. Nyāya conceives of *pramāṇa*s as knowledge-producing mechanisms or processes. Representative are definitions by the early thinkers Uddyotakara (ca. 650 C.E.)—"*pramāṇa* is a cause of cognition" *(upalabdhi-hetu pramāṇam)*—and Jayanta (ca. 875 C.E.)—"*pramāṇa* is a cause of veridical cognition" *(pramā-karaṇam pramāṇam).* Knowledge sources are specified by Nyāya as perception *(pratyakṣa),* inference *(anumāna),* analogy *(upamāna),* and testimony *(śabda).*[1]

Pioneering scholars of Nyāya have framed its epistemology as a causal theory of knowledge in which a *pramāṇa* is a cause of knowledge *par excellence,* in the sense of proximate cause or trigger.[2] Indeed, various structural features of Nyāya recommend comparison with contemporary *externalism* or *reliabilism,* the view that a belief's positive epistemic status is a function of the reliability of its connection to the truth. More precisely, it resembles *process reliabilism,* the view that a belief partakes of positive epistemic status if it is produced by a reliable belief-forming process. Much of Nyāya's epistemological program is focused on the task of identifying and typifying such cognitive processes. Nyāya defends its typology of *pramāṇa*s with great care.

Straightforward comparison between Nyāya's *pramāṇa* theory and reliabilism becomes quickly strained, however, by a curious feature of Nyāya's view, the notion that *pramāṇa*s are inerrant. The following are representative statements by various Naiyāyikas (practitioners of Nyāya) of the early school. Gautama (ca. 200 C.E.), the *sūtra-kāra,* defines perceptual cognition:

> Perceptually produced cognition arises from the connection of sense faculty and sense object, does not depend on language, *is inerrant,* and is definite. (*Nyāya-sūtra* 1.1.4; my emphasis)[3]

Vātsyāyana (ca. 450 C.E.), the earliest known commentator on the *Nyāya-sūtra,* says: "a *pramāṇa* has truth as its object" (*NB* 3.1.51; *ND* 771).[4] Uddyotakara says: "That which errs is not a *pramāṇa*" (*NV* 2.1.37; *ND* 515).[5] As noted above, Jayanta defines *pramāṇa* as a "cause of veridical cognition." He further argues that qualifications like inerrancy, given in the perception *sūtra* (*NS* 1.1.4), range over the definitions of all *pramāṇa* types:

> Someone may propose that irregular causes of veridical cognition would be *pramāṇa*s. So to exclude causes of memory, doubt, and wrong cognition, three words from the perception *sūtra* (*Nyāya-sūtra* 1.1.4), "caused by the object" *(artha-utpannam),* "inerrant" *(avyabhicārī),* and "determinate" *(vyavasāyātmakam),* should be carried over (to the defi-

nitions of all the *pramāṇa*s). For they apply in general to the set of four (perception, inference, analogy, and testimony). (*Nyāya-mañjarī,* ed. Varadacharya in Jayanta Bhaṭṭa 1969, p. 73)[6]

Commenting on the term "object-possessing" *(arthavat)* in Vātsyāyana's opening phrase, "A *pramāṇa* is *arthavat* since successful action follows from *pramāṇa*-born cognition of an object,"[7] Vācaspati (ca. 950 C.E.) explains:

> The word *arthavat* employs the possessive affix *(vat),* which indicates necessary linkage *(nitya-yoga).* The condition of necessity *(nityatā)* means non-deviation. The import is that a *pramāṇa* does not deviate from its object. A *pramāṇa*'s non-deviation amounts to the fact that there will never be a contradiction anywhere, anytime, in any other conditions, between the nature of the object and the predicate provided by the *pramāṇa.* (*Tātparyaṭīkā* 1.1.1; *ND* 3)[8]

Some scholars of Nyāya have found the idea of inerrant *pramāṇa*s troubling and philosophically indefensible. By their lights, to claim (for example) that our perceptual faculty never fails or that testimony never leads us astray flies in the face of our most common experience. What are normally taken to be our most reliable knowledge-producing faculties (e.g., perception, inference, testimony) are clearly not inerrant. It is suggested that Naiyāyikas, being good philosophers, would not hold such a bad view.[9] They would read Naiyāyikas as wholesale reliabilists, holding that *pramāṇa*s are fallible, but on the whole reliable knowledge-producing mechanisms.

Nyāya's position is not, however, as strange as it may sound at first blush. As will be seen below, Nyāya privileges veridical, truth-entailing mental states and considers error conceptually parasitical upon knowledge. This entails a disjunctive account of *pramāṇa* and non-*pramāṇa* states. That Nyāya's knowledge sources are thought of as inerrant or factive is not a problem in such a view. Nyāya recognizes that there are error states that are subjectively indistinguishable from knowledge states. But this does not lead it to adopt a "highest-common-factor" view, where what is taken to be fundamental is an alethically neutral mental state. Rather, there are genuine *pramāṇa*-produced veridical states, and there are states not produced by *pramāṇa*s, error states that imitate veridical cognition (in Sanskrit, *pramāṇa-ābhāsa,* a "semblance of *pramāṇa*"). This disjunctive conception will be reconsidered in the final section of this essay.

Arguments from Parasitism

Moving to our main discussion, what supports Nyāya's attitude of epistemic trust, which takes the form of a ground-level confidence that our cognitive faculties gain purchase on a mind-independent world? There are a few methods by which Nyāya supports a default trust in cognition. Most famously, perhaps, it argues that default doubt would stultify us, undermining our pursuit of various worthy goals in life. Given that the primary reason we reflect upon cognition is to become more effective in pursuit of our life's goals, an epistemology of default doubt, which undercuts our ability to function, would be pragmatically undesirable.[10] The argument from

parasitism, which establishes the primacy of veridical cognition, makes no such appeal to pragmatic considerations, and is therefore among the more powerful theoretical planks in Nyāya's position. The upshot of this argument is that illusion and cognitive misfires of other sorts are parasitical on veridical experience. Error presupposes veridicality, and therefore, unless we conceive of our cognitive faculties as having some core connection to truth, we lose the very basis by which we may understand and reflect upon error states. Given this, it is right to start with an "innocent until legitimate doubt" approach. What follows are a number of general illustrations of the argument.

In response to a Buddhist interlocutor, who contends that everything exists in a state of flux, and therefore that all cognitions of enduring things are false, Uddyotakara argues:

> False cognitions are imitations of correct cognitions. Therefore, you must provide some example of correct cognition. (*NV* 2.1.16; *ND* 436)[11]

False experience as of an enduring thing imitates or conforms *(anusāra)* to some true experience of an enduring thing. More specifically, the interlocutor must explain what kind of original, veridical experience could have generated the concept of an enduring thing, which we are said to then mis-ascribe to fluctuating streams. In a similar context, against an opponent who considers motion to be unreal, Uddyotakara argues:

> All false cognitions imitate primary cognitions. You must state the original cognitions upon which the false ones are based. For we never find such a difference (between imitators and genuine things) without an original, as seen in the case of mistaken cognition of a post as a man. There being an existing post, one has the cognition "that is a post" regarding a person (in the distance). Or, there being a man, a post is mistaken for a man. (*NV* 2.1.33; *ND* 483)[12]

Mistaking a post for a person in the distance is a standard example of perceptual illusion in Indian discourse. Uddyotakara is arguing that such illusion, in which concept V is wrongly deployed in reference to an existing object d, requires that concept V be generated by prior experience of something V (or, it is implied, at least built out of sub-concepts that were appropriately experienced). This requires that at some point in the causal chain a veridical cognition be obtained by which the concept *person* was acquired.

In his commentary on *Nyāya-sūtra* 2.1.36, Vātsyāyana confronts a mereological nihilist, who argues that perceptual experience as of composite wholes is an error owing to ignorance of minute differences amongst micro-entities. The objector claims that as a forest is merely a collection of trees seen at a distance, or an army is a collection of soldiers, what are commonly taken to be composite wholes are nothing more than heaps of micro-entities. In his response, Vātsyāyana again appeals to the conceptual dependence of error upon the veridical:

> [Vātsyāyana:] If there is an experience as of a single thing owing to non-perception of the differences between atoms—which are in truth separate and various, then such is a case of erroneous cognition, like the cognition of a post as a man.

[Opponent:] What of it?

[Vātsyāyana:] As a false cognition of something as something else depends on the original, it establishes the original.

[Opponent:] In the erroneous cognition of a post as a man, what is the original?

[Vātsyāyana:] The cognition of a man where there really is a man. Given the existence of that veridical cognition, one has the cognition "this is a man" regarding a post, because one apprehends the similarity between the post and a man. (*NB* 2.1.36; *ND* 503-4)[13]

Vātsyāyana further argues that since his opponent holds that the experience as of a composite whole is always fallacious, there is no original veridical experience to which the error in question can be compared and found wanting. The opponent thus cannot provide an adequate account of the error that he cites.

In the arguments above, specific metaphysical theses are under consideration, and generally Nyāya defends commonsense realism against the attacks of idealists and anti-realists. The basic principle, however, is that falsehood presupposes true cognition. A theme that emerges is that in doubting the basis of the connection between cognition and reality, we lose the very distinction on which illusion or error makes sense. This is reiterated in the fourth book of the *Nyāya-sūtra* (4.2.31 ff.), in a more straightforwardly epistemological context. Here, we will begin to classify the specific forms that the argument from parasitism takes.

The *sūtra's* interlocutor, apparently a Mādhyamīka Buddhist, argues that appeal to *pramāṇa*s does not settle the issue of the real (and independent) existence of things:[14]

[Opponent:] The notion of knowledge sources (*pramāṇa*s) and objects of knowledge is akin to that of dreams and their objects. [In his commentary Vātsyāyana elucidates the opponent's position:] As the objects within dreams are false but taken to be real, so, too, are the *pramāṇa*s and their objects.[15]

The Nyāya response (in *sūtras* 4.2.33–37) has many facets. Central to this study is the contention that dreams are understood as dreams only in distinction with waking consciousness and, therefore, that the Buddhist has illicitly helped himself to a case of accepted veridical experience in order to frame his thesis. Vātsyāyana:

It is only because the experience of something can establish its existence that non-experience of it can establish its non-existence. And if in both states (waking and dreaming), the objects of experience did not exist, then non-experience would have no power to prove anything (*NB* 4.2.33; *ND* 1078).[16]

We know that dream objects are false because upon waking we no longer perceive them. Our non-experience of them indicates that they lack a "staying power" that external objects are taken to possess. But non-experience's cognitive efficacy depends on that of experience. It is only because the latter is informative that we can trust that our non-experience of something (in the appropriate conditions) is evidence that it does not exist. I know that there is no elephant in my office because if

there were an elephant, I would see it, thereby establishing its existence. Analogously, if we did not take our enduring experience of objects in the waking state to be sufficient *prima facie* proof that they exist, the non-existence of dream objects would not suffice to indicate that they do not exist in the waking state. The cognitive distinction between dreams and waking awareness, upon which the objector's analogy rests, would be undermined by his very thesis.

A reconstruction of Vātsyāyana's argument:

1. The experience of external objects (by way of *pramāṇa*s) is false and misleading, akin to the experience of dream objects (hypothesis for *reductio*).
2. Dream objects are known to be false only in contrast with real objects, experienced in waking life (as apprehended by *pramāṇa*s).
3. If we do not experience real objects in waking life, we do not know dream objects to be false.
4. We do know dream objects to be false.
5. Therefore, we do (generally) experience real objects in waking life (by way of *pramāṇa*s).

The conclusion contradicts premise 1, which, as the weakest of the premises, is rejected. The "parasitism" premise is premise 2, and it bears the most dialectical weight in the argument. This argument about dreaming and waking is easily analogized concerning similar questions of illusion and other kinds of error in relation to veridical experience. This version of the parasitism argument is *epistemic*. Knowing error is parasitical upon knowing truth (at an appropriate level of generality).[17]

Later, Vātsyāyana provides another kind of argument from parasitism:

> The mis-cognition of something depends upon an original. The cognition of a post—which is not a person—as a person depends upon an original. Indeed, there is no experience as of a person regarding something that is not a person, if a person was never experienced in the past. (*NB* 4.2.34; *ND* 1085)[18]

Clearly, here the parasitism is *causal*. Illusions of the sort described require, as a causal condition, the deployment of concepts like *person*. The concept *person,* it is held, requires the prior experience of actual men and women.[19] As noted above, this is tied to Nyāya's empiricism. Nyāya's theory of error is a theory of misplacement *(anyathā-khyāti).* False cognition generally involves the mis-ascription of concepts generated in past experience to something that is presently the object of a cognitive state. In illusion and other kinds of error states, the wrong concept is deployed in reference to the object of current experience, leading the predication portion of cognition (the *viśeṣaṇa*) astray, so to speak. The cognition is bifurcated, with part of it targeting the object "in view," while another part targets an object properly qualified by the mis-ascribed concept. Thus, every token error presupposes some direct cognitive contact with reality, which engenders the concept currently misplaced.[20]

Uddyotakara supports this position with a third kind of parasitism argument, a parasitism of *meaning*. An opposing interlocutor contends that "there are no external

objects; only consciousness exists." Uddyotakara argues that given such a view, the opponent bears the burden of accounting for the content of the concepts or words deployed in states mistakenly thought to reveal an external world:

> If you claim that "consciousness takes the form of words," then explain what is meant by *form.* When something is mistaken for something else owing to similarity, it is said to share its form. Given your position, however, words do not exist, and therefore the statement "awareness takes the form of words" is meaningless. (*NV* 4.2.34; *ND* 1082)[21]

The immediate context of this passage is Uddyotakara's claim that in the absence of a mind-independent, shared world, his interlocutor would be unable to argue his case, since we only experience the content of another's thoughts by means of external intermediaries (presumably, things like our sense organs and the air, which conveys the sound waves that encode speech, etc.). In response, he notes that his interlocutor may claim that consciousness simply takes the form of speech. That is, we may have awareness of words in an entirely idealist framework, much as we may have conscious states that resemble things like trees or rocks or physical bodies. Uddyotakara's claim is that for conscious states to "take the form" or resemble something else, there must indeed be some other thing which they appropriately resemble or target. If not, it makes no sense to speak of them as "taking the form" of anything.

Uddyotakara provides a concrete example. The opponent contends that merely owing to differences in karmic influence, people may have different experiences, as of a river, without need for an external object to "ground" their experience. Uddyotakara responds:

> He must be asked how consciousness arises in *that very form* (the form of specific objects). If consciousness takes the form of blood, then you must explain what blood is. Similarly, the form of water and river must be explained. In the sentence "They see a river of pus," each word, when examined individually, is found to be meaningless, if there are no real external objects. (*NV* 4.2.34; *ND* 1085)[22]

Concepts, if divorced entirely from engagement with external reality, lose their content. As I understand it, the import is that having an illusion or hallucination of blood requires that we be able to deploy the concept of blood. But if we have never had the appropriate kinds of interactions with blood and such, we would not have such concepts. Analogously, the word "blood" would be drained of meaning.[23] Again, this is a parasitism of *meaning.*

Allied Arguments

I would like to note briefly another kind of dependence discussed by Nyāya. Error states require real causal mechanisms that undergird cognitive processes. When we recognize various sorts of error states, we note that there are often identifiable causal systems that account for the existence and nature of the error. Vātsyāyana notes that mirages of water arise out of the causal relations between sun rays, the earth, and a viewer's perceptual organ. As such, he notes that at an appropriate level of generality, false cognition requires some real causes (*NB* 4.2.35; *ND* 1088). Therefore, whole-

sale anti-realism is untenable. One must admit real, external causal mechanisms in order to account for error states.

An allied but separate line of argument holds that some kind of dependence on *pramāṇa*s is required for rational reflection and communication. Therefore, even an ardent skeptic must begin from a position of epistemic trust. One such argument involves the requirements for engaging in rational debate or discussion. Should a skeptic attack the ability of *pramāṇa*s to deliver the truth, a general retort (seen in, e.g., commentaries on *NS* 2.1.11) is that without recognition of knowledge-delivering *pramāṇa*s of some kind, arguments gain no traction, since rational persuasion requires appeal to trusted sources of knowledge. Further, the institution of language, which a skeptic unreflectively and trustingly employs, presupposes the proper functioning of knowledge sources of various kinds. Gaṅgeśa notes that, among other things, participating in conversation or debate presupposes the reliability of one's own memory and of the general correlations that undergird inductive reasoning. The skeptic trusts the deliverances of memory in that the words she employs have been united with certain meanings in past experience. She further trusts inductive generalization, exemplified in the trust that utterances tied to certain meanings in the past will continue in present discourse.[24]

Given all of the arguments above, Naiyāyikas did not attempt to stand outside the deliverances of *pramāṇa*s in order to critique them. As adverted to repeatedly in the *sūtra*s, such is not possible, as one would lose the very resources for rational reflection altogether. Rather, Nyāya articulates a theory of default trust in *pramāṇa*s and critiques individual cognitions as the need arises. As attacks are marshaled against the *pramāṇa* system, the Naiyāyikas' dialectical position is that they need only rebut such challenges or indicate that somehow the challenger is subtly relying on *pramāṇa*s, though without acknowledging it, and is thus guilty of self-referential incoherence. Default trust in cognition and a fundamental realism are thus woven together in a host of arguments that appeal to parasitism of various kinds.

In summary, we have identified three forms of the argument from parasitism, and three allied non-parasitical arguments:

1. *Epistemic parasitism.* Recognizing that error is parasitical upon on knowing truth.
2. *Causal parasitism.* Any concept V that an individual deploys in various sorts of error states ultimately depends upon her original veridical apprehension of some instance of V (or of sub-concepts, which are then combined in one's mind).
3. *Parasitism of content or meaning.* Divorced from connection with external reality, concepts would be drained of content, as would the words whose meanings are tied to the concepts they express.

Other arguments:

1. *Argument from causal networks.* False awareness requires a real causal network, which undergirds the cognitive mechanisms that give rise to cognition.

2. *Argument from probative force.* Rational persuasion requires appeal to *pramāṇa*s of one kind or another.
3. *Argument from language.* The institution of language presupposes the proper functioning of memory and truth of various kinds of *vyāpti*s (inductive generalizations).

Anticipating the Disjunctive Turn

I think there is much that is attractive in Nyāya's multifaceted argument in defense of epistemic trust. It provides a principled defense of realism and a principled response to skepticism that seeks not to work though the parameters set by the skeptic but rather to subvert them. Moreover, the "innocent until legitimate doubt" approach has many interesting applications to various fields of inquiry, including philosophies of science and religion. I would like to close this essay by calling attention to the fact that Nyāya's arguments from parasitism and its notion of the inerrancy of *pramāṇa*s tie together in a neat way that anticipates an important development in contemporary philosophy, commonly called *disjunctivism* (specifically *epistemological disjunctivism*).[25]

Here, we may recall the earlier discussion of *pramāṇa* inerrancy. While Nyāya admits that any given instance of non-veridical cognition may be mistaken for a veridical cognition, it resists the Cartesian move to prioritize alethically neutral "appearance states." In the Cartesian response, both veridical and non-veridical states share a deep common core—an alethically neutral core—and the only difference between them takes place "outside" cognition. Such neutral states would be captured in phrases like "I am having the experience *as of* a computer in front of me" where the "as of" locution evinces neutrality toward the veridicality of the experience. The Cartesian quest is to start from what is taken to be directly present to consciousness, identified as such appearance states, and then try to work "outward" toward knowledge of the world.

By its arguments from parasitism, Nyāya resists the move "upward" to a fundamental cognitive state that may be amenable to both veridical experience and error. In this vein, Naiyāyikas would ask how a state can be "as of" a computer if we have no confident awareness of what a computer is in the first place. Nyāya rather stresses that our basic relation to the world is one of veridical experience, and that error is best thought of as a separate kind of mental state that is sometimes indistinguishable from the real thing. Moreover (and what I take to be the deep insight of Vātsyāyana's appeal to dreams versus waking states), the very condition by which we develop the skill of indentifying cognitive error and making the Cartesian jump to a higher-order reflection upon belief is the awareness of a difference between veridical and erroneous cognition—an awareness that requires acknowledgment of veridical cognition from the start.

The arguments from parasitism are thus complemented by Nyāya's theory of *pramāṇa-ābhāsa,* fallacious cognitive states that misleadingly look like the real thing. In the work of early Naiyāyikas, we find a great concern with this *ābhāsa.* For example, after speaking of *pramāṇa* as that which produces "definitive ascertainment

of an object" *(artha-paricchedaka)* Uddyotakara (*NV* 1.1.1; *ND* 7–8) notes the existence of a second thing, an impostor of a *pramāṇa (pramāṇa-pratirūpa).* This impostor is called *pramāṇa-ābhāsa,* a pseudo-*pramāṇa* or semblance of a *pramāṇa,* and is differentiated from the genuine article in that *pramāṇa* is *arthavat* (factive) while the *ābhāsa* is *anarthaka* (errant). The latter is spoken of under the heading of *pramāṇa* only in a figurative sense *(pramāṇam ity upacaryyate).* This distinction provides a vocabulary by which Nyāya may recognize the phenomenal indistinguishability between true and false cognitive presentations without collapsing them into a core identical mental state.

Contemporary epistemological *disjunctivism* joins Nyāya in affirming the primacy of the veridical. Non-veridical cognitive states are held to be of a different fundamental kind from veridical states (hence, the name "disjunctivism"). Epistemological disjunctivism is thus a rejection of the Cartesian picture, and an affirmation of the power of our basic cognitive faculties to directly grasp the world. John McDowell's remarks are paradigmatic:

> But suppose we say—not at all unnaturally—that an appearance that such-and-such is the case can be *either* a mere appearance *or* the fact that such-and-such is the case making itself perceptually manifest to someone. As before, the object of experience in the deceptive cases is a mere appearance. But we are not to accept that in the non-deceptive cases too the object of experience is a mere appearance, and hence something that falls short of the fact itself. (McDowell 2009 [1982], p. 80)

That a number of arguments given by pioneering disjunctivists echo Nyāya's position[26] underscores the fact that an engagement with Nyāya (and other Indian philosophies more generally) is not merely an exercise in philosophical history. There are enduring insights in the Nyāya view that anticipate and speak to contemporary developments and that may be mined for further contributions. Moreover, that the Nyāya position exists at all is useful for contemporary disjunctivism, as it gives support to the contention that disjunctivism need not be seen as a mere reaction. It may be motivated independently, as seen in a tradition never set against a dominant Cartesianism, but ever ready to challenge its presuppositions. In the other direction, I think that the parallels with disjunctivism set an agenda for further Nyāya research. Its approach to knowledge seems to resemble aspects of the disjunctivist position,[27] and tracing its development along those lines would, I think, illumine the cohesion of its core epistemological commitments.

Notes

I would like to thank David Ivy, Tristan Johnson, David Sosa, and especially Stephen Phillips for helpful discussion and criticism.

1 – *Nyāya-sūtra* 1.1.3. Clearly, Nyāya takes *pramāṇa* types to be something like cognitive natural kinds. See Dasti 2010, chap. 1, and Phillips unpublished.

2 – Mohanty's statement is representative: "It is a peculiar feature of the Indian epistemologies that this causal meaning of *pramāṇa* is also taken to imply a legitimizing sense so that a cognition is true in case it is brought about in the right sort of way" (Mohanty 2000, p. 16). Also see, e.g., Matilal 1986, Phillips 1995, and the introduction to Phillips and Ramanuja Tatacharya 2004.

3 – *indriya-artha-sannikarṣa-utpannaṁ jñānam avyapadeśyam avyabhicāri vyavasāyātmakaṁ pratyakṣam.*

4 – *pramāṇasya tattva-viṣayatvāt. "NB"* refers to the *Nyāya-bhāṣya*, Vātsyāyana's commentary on the *Nyāya-sūtra*. The succeeding numbers refer to the *sūtra*s on which the commentary is made. *"ND"* refers to the *Nyāya-darśana,* a standard text of the *Nyāya-sūtra* with a number of important commentaries, listed in the Bibliography below under the names of its editors, Taranatha Nyāya-Tarkatirtha and Amarendramohan Tarkatirtha.

5 – *yad vyabhicāri tat pramāṇam na bhavati. "NV"* refers to the *Nyāya-vārttika,* Uddyotakara's commentary on the *Nyāya-sūtra*.

6 – *aśuddha-pramiti-vidhāyinas tu prāmāṇyam prasajyata iti smṛti-saṁśaya-viparyaya-janaka-vyavacchedāya pratyakṣa-sūtrāt artha-utpannam iti avyabhicārī iti vyavasāyātmakam iti ca pada-trayam ākṛṣyate tad hi pramāṇa-catuṣṭaya-sādhāraṇam.*

7 – *pramāṇato 'rtha-pratipattau pravṛtti-sāmarthyād arthavat pramāṇam.*

8 – *tathā hi pramāṇam arthavad iti, nitya-yoge matup. nityatā ca avyabhicāritā. tena artha-avyabhicārī ity arthaḥ. iyam eva ca artha-avyabhicāritā pramāṇasya, yad-deśa-kāla-antara-avasthā-antara-avisaṁvādo 'rtha-svarūpa-prakārayos tad-upadarśitayoḥ.*

9 – See Ganeri 2007 and Saha 2003. For response and discussion, see Dasti and Phillips 2010 and Ganeri 2010.

10 – See Vācaspati Miśra's commentary on *NS* 1.1.5, *ND* 139.

11 – *mithyā-pratyayāś ca samyak-pratyaya-anusārena bhavanti iti kva āmī samyak-pratyayā bhavanti iti vaktavyam.*

12 – *sarvā etā mithyā-buddayaḥ pradhāna-anukāreṇa bhavanti iti pradhānaṁ vaktavyam. na hi niṣpradhānaṁ bhāktaṁ dṛṣṭaṁ sthāṇu-puruṣavad iti yathā sthāṇau sati puruṣe sthānur iti buddhiḥ puruṣe vā sati sthāṇau puruṣa-buddhir iti.* A similar point is made (against a different opponent) in *NV* 4.1.33.

13 – *nānā-bhāve ca aṇunāṁ pṛthaktvasya agrahaṇād abhedena ekam iti grahaṇam atasmiṁs tad iti pratyayaḥ yathā sthāṇau puruṣa iti. tataḥ kiṁ? atasmiṁs tad iti pratyayasya pradhāna-apekṣitvāt pradhāna-siddhiḥ. sthāṇau puruṣa iti pratyayasya kiṁ pradhānam? yo 'sau puruṣe puruṣa-pratyayaḥ tasmin sati puruṣa-sāmānya-grahaṇāt sthānau puruṣo 'yam iti.*

14 – The Buddhist position has been alternatively framed as idealist, skeptical, and, more generally, anti-realist. In any case, the core thesis to which Nyāya is

opposed is that we are radically mistaken about our experience of apparently external objects of common experience. The leading Buddhist idealists with whom early Nyāya contends are Vasubandhu (ca. 350 C.E.), Dignāga (ca. 525 C.E.), and Dharmakīrti (ca. 625 C.E.). The leading "skeptic" (or, at least, anti-realist) was Nāgārjuna (ca. 150 C.E.).

15 – *svapna-viṣaya-abhimānavat ayaṁ pramāṇa-prameya-abhimānaḥ . . . yathā svapne na viṣayāḥ santy atha ca abhimāno bhavati, eva na pramāṇāni prameyāṇi ca santy atha ca pramāṇa-prameya-abhimāno bhavati.*

16 – *upalambhāt sadbhāve saty anupalambhād abhāvaḥ siddhyati, ubhayathā tv abhāve na anupalambhasya samarthyam asti.*

17 – An important subtext of this argument is the requirement for non-controversial examples to support generalizations and presumed inferential relations. This need for an example, a *dṛṣṭānta,* is a standard part of Indian dialectics. Vātsyāyana's argument could also, therefore, be understood as proving that given the thesis that ordinary experience is fallacious, the Buddhist lacks a comparison class for the claim that all cognitive presentations are dubious, since dreams are no longer a non-controversial instance of false cognition.

18 – *atasmiṁs tad iti ca vyavasāyaḥ pradhānāśrayaḥ. apuruṣe sthānau puruṣa iti vyavasāyaḥ sa pradhānāśrayaḥ na khalu puruṣe 'nupalabdhe puruṣa ity apuruṣe vyavasāyo bhavati.*

19 – Vātsyāyana notes an analogy: in the case of dreams, we commonly take dream objects to be constructed from memories generated within waking experience.

20 – Feldman (2005, p. 534) argues that what I am calling the causal version of the argument does not refute idealism (of the sort advanced by Vasubandhu), since all that is needed to generate the concept of x is a previous experience of x, whether veridical or not. I would agree, and suggest that that the epistemic and semantic versions of the parasitism argument are more effective in responding to the idealist.

21 – *atha śabda-ākāraṁ cittaṁ pratipadyate? tenāpi śabda-ākāraṁ cittaṁ ity ākāra-artho vaktavyaḥ. ākāro hi nāma pradhāna-vastu-sāmānyād atasmiṁs tad iti pratyayaḥ. na ca bhavat-pakṣe śabdo vidyat' iti śabda-ākāraṁ cittam iti nirabhidheyaṁ vākyam.*

22 – *pṛṣṭavyo jāyate kathaṁ tathā iti. yadi rudhira-ākāram vijñānam rudhiraṁ tarhi vaktavyaṁ kiṁ rudhiram iti. evaṁ jala-ākāraṁ nādī-ākāraṁ ca vaktavyam. pūya-pūrṇāṁ paśyanti iti ca vākyasya padāni pratyekaṁ vicāryamāṇāni rūpādi-skāndha-abhāve nirviṣayāṇi bhavanti.* The graphic examples owe themselves to the idea that people, while hallucinating or on the brink of death, are said to see things like rivers of blood.

23 – I should mention that though Nyāya was not party to a debate like contemporary internalism versus externalism in philosophy of mind, clearly it would have sympathy with *content externalism.* That is, it would agree with the position that

the content of cognitive mental states is largely constituted by the external objects/facts to which they intend. This argument also clearly anticipates the *semantic externalism* endorsed by Putnam (1981), that the meanings of words are indeed grounded in real things with which one has entered into various causal relations.

24 – Phillips 1995, p. 162.

25 – There are various arenas for disjunctivist thought (particularly in philosophy of mind, epistemology, and theories of action). And, as to be expected, there are various formulations of the disjunctive position in each arena. I am focusing on epistemological disjunctivism here. In providing general characteristics of epistemological disjunctivism, I do not want to commit myself to an overly specific account. My understanding is, however, primarily influenced by McDowell's work, as cited below.

26 – Consider the following:

> When we set [the subjective "space of concepts"] off so radically from the objective world, we lose our right to think of moves within the space we are picturing as content involving. So we stop being able to picture it as the space of concepts. (McDowell 2000 [1995]: 418)
>
> If we refuse to make sense of the idea of direct openness to the manifest world, we undermine the idea of being in the space of reasons at all, and hence the idea of being in a position to have things appear to one in a certain way. (McDowell 2000 [1995]: 418)
>
> In any case of perfect illusion or hallucination, we can explain its character by reference to the case of veridical perception, and we cannot give an explanation of what it is like except by implicit reference to the kind of veridical perception from which it is indistinguishable. (Martin 2009 [1997], p. 98)

27 – I am thinking particularly about the following features of Nyāya: (a) a direct realist account of perceptual states; (b) a notion that external object(s) and property(ies) are partly constitutive of the mental states that grasp them—epitomized by Jayanta's notion that *pramāṇa*-born cognition must be *artha-utpannam,* born of contact with its object; (c) a disjunctive account of cognition, involving the notion of *pramāṇa-ābhāsa,* "semblance of a *pramāṇa*"; (d) a defense of default trust in cognition, as evinced in the arguments above as well as other arguments; and (e) a defense of the power of perception to capture deep structural features of the external world, including substances and relationships between universals. I plan to develop this theme more fully in a future paper.

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