

PROOF FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD IN CLASSICAL INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract. Both in the East and in the West, there is, apart from the religious approach to God, also a purely rational one. Although in India philosophical speculation on God was mostly inextricably bound to religion, there have also been purely rational developments in Indian Theodicy. This is the case above all in the Nyāyavaiśeṣika system, where we find a purely rational and logical approach to the question of the existence and nature of God. It is the specific contribution of the Nyāyavaiśeṣika system to have developed a purely logical and rational argument for the existence of God. My purpose here is to take this proof in its developed form, as it is found in Gaṣṭeśa, and investigate its philosophical and logical implications.

The question of the existence of God is central to the philosophical traditions of both East and West. Most of the great philosophers in the Western tradition admit that there is an Absolute, the transcendent cause of the material universe. Plato, Plotinus, Thomas Aquinas and others belong to this tradition. In the Indian philosophical tradition, the question of the Absolute also plays a pivotal role. This is the case not only with regard to the Advaita Vedānta, which by definition is a non-dualistic system of philosophy; other systems, like Nyāya, also give to God a central role in their philosophical speculations. Creative thinkers like Śāṅkara, Ramanuja, Madhva, Gautama the founder of Nyāya system, Vatsyāyana Pakṣilaswamin, Uddyotakara, Vācaspati Mīśra, Udayana, Gaṅgeśa, Bhartrhari the great philosopher of Grammar, and a host of others, accept a transcendent Absolute, whatever characteristics they may ascribe to it.

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speculation on God was mostly inextricably bound to religion, there have also been purely rational developments in Indian Theodicy. This is the case above all in the Nyāyavaiśeṣika system, where we find a purely rational and logical approach to the question of the existence and nature of God. It is the specific contribution of the Nyāyavaiśeṣika system to have developed a purely logical and rational argument for the existence of God. In this attempt several philosophers like Uddyotakara, Vācaspati Mīśra, Udayana and Gaṅgeśa, made distinct contributions. Already the *Nyāyasūtras* (Nyāyadarśanam 1944) speak of God as the cause of the world, and this intuition of Gautama remained the corner stone of the philosophical theism of the Nyāyavaiśeṣika system. Obviously it is the later philosophers belonging to this school of thought, like Uddyotakara, Vācaspati Mīśra, Udayana and Gaṅgeśa, who developed the logical proofs for the existence of God. My purpose here is to take this proof in its developed form, as it is found in Gaṅgeśa, and investigate its philosophical and logical implications.

I.

In the beginning of his famous *Īśvaravāda*, Gaṅgeśa (14th century A.D.) gives us a simple form of the following argument: the earth and so on have an agent because they are effects (*kṣityankurādīkam sakatīkam kāryatvāt*) (Gaṅgeśa 1897). A developed form of this argument is given a little later in his work, when he begins to state his own position with regard to the arguments for the existence of God. This developed form of the argument runs as follows: ‘All things existing by the relation of inherence and produced, but not through the unseen, and also not by an effort which is produced and whose object is the material cause, are considered to be the subject.’¹ This just means all those things that are not directly produced by individual souls. The argument is that these things, although not produced by human beings, are nevertheless actually produced, and thus must be produced by someone. This someone is God. The other qualifications of the subject are

¹ For the original Sanskrit text of this passage, its translation and interpretation, cf. Vattanky 1984, pp. 183 & ff. Subject (*pakṣa*) here of course is a Nyāya technical term meaning that on which something is established. In the inference there is fire on a mountain, mountain is that on which fire is established and so it is the subject. Similarly inherence, unseen (*adṛṣṭa*) and effort (*kṛti*) are technical terms in Nyāya ontology. One should get their exact meanings from any reliable textbook on Nyāyavaiśeṣika.

given in order to exclude or include instances of things that are produced, from the peculiar standpoint of the Nyāyavaiśeṣika world view.

Historically the proof must already have been common at the time of Uddyotakara, who probably flourished around the 6th Century A.D. In his commentary on the three theistic *Nyāyasūtrās*, he adds, to his commentary on the third of the *theistic Sūtrās*, a long section on the activities of God. In this he brings forward a proof for the existence of God, in which the logical reason is «being an effect» (*kāryatva*) which is the same as in the proof given by Gaṅgeśa. The whole proof runs as follows:

Likewise one should bring, «being an effect (*kāryatva*),» as the reason,² when grass, etc. are the subject, since these are objects of sight and touch. Likewise, whenever a difference of opinion is given and «being an effect» is also seen, one should prove the existence of God with the same argument, with the same example, after something has been taken as the subject.³

Here we find, for the first time, *kāryatva*, 'being an effect', used as an inferential reason, in a proof to establish the existence of God. The full form of the proof must have been something like this: the different things in nature like grass, earth, shoots, etc., must have an agent, just as things like, e.g. pots have an agent, viz., a potter. And the cause of effects like grass, earth, etc., is God. It may be noted here that while Uddyotakara explains in detail the other proofs, which he brings forward for the existence of God, he does not go into the details of this proof. Hence it is reasonable to conclude that this proof may not be his original contribution, but may have been current at the time of Uddyotakara, within the Nyāya school, so that he just mentioned it as if it were known to all.

But it is Vācaspati Miśra (10th century A.D.) who really defended this proof against the attack of Buddhist philosophers, especially Dharmakīrti (Dharmakīrti 1968), and drew out its philosophical and logical implications. Vācaspati, Udayana (11th century A.D.) and Gaṅgeśa developed the philosophical and logical aspects of this proof. And it is to these dimensions of the proof that we shall turn our attention. However, such a discussion of the philosophical, and especially the logical, aspects of the question presupposes a fairly good acquaintance with the terms and techniques of Nyāya Logic, particularly those concerning the validity of the reason. If

² Reason (*hetu*) is a technical term in Nyāya logic meaning that by which something is established.

³ For the original Sanskrit of this passage and comments on it, cf. Vattanky 1984, p. 25.

a reason is false then the whole syllogism falls. That is why the Nyāya theory of logic has elaborate, accurate and profound discussions of the nature and kinds of fallacies. I shall not enter into any detailed treatment of this topic⁴, only mentioning their basic characteristics, so that the discussions of the arguments for the existence of God can be followed properly.

According to the Nyāya system of logic, there are five kinds of fallacies: deviation (*vyabhicāra*), opposition (*virodha*), counter-thesis (*satpratipakṣa*), unestablishedness (*asidhi*) and contradiction (*bādha*). A fallacy of deviation occurs when the reason exists in that which has the absence of *sādhyā*. As for instance in the inference «there is smoke because of fire»; here the reason is fire and fire can exist even where there is no smoke, as for instance in a red-hot iron ball, where there is fire but no smoke. Therefore the reason provided here is false and the fallacy is called deviation. An example of the fallacy of opposition (*virodha*) is the inference «fire is cold because it is a substance». Here the reason suffers because of opposition, since we know from the direct experience of touch that fire is hot.

An example of the fallacy of counterthesis is the given inference for establishing the existence of God. The opponents, especially the Buddhists, argue that the earth and so on have no agent because they are not produced by someone having a body and this is the fallacy of counterthesis. The fallacy of unestablishedness is of three kinds: unestablishedness of the subject, unestablishedness of the reason and unestablishedness of invariable concomitance. Finally an example of the fallacy of contradiction (*bādha*) is the following: «The lake has fire because of smoke» here we know that the lake, which has water, has the absence of fire. A valid syllogism should be free from all these faults.

It is the philosophical and logical concern of the Naiyāyikās, especially Vācaspati Miśra, Udayana and Gaṅgeśa, to analyze and defend their syllogism establishing the existence of God against all possible attack by opponents, especially the Buddhists. It is my attempt here to highlight the philosophical and logical issues surrounding this argument, to understand and appreciate the defense offered by the Naiyāyikās, and to evaluate the objections of their opponents. Hence let us recall the simpler form of the

⁴ In the advanced works on Nyāya logic like the *Tattvacintāmaṇi* of Gaṅgeśa, *Dīdhiti* of Raghunathasiromaṇi and *Gādādhari* of Gādādhara there are quite sophisticated discussions on the nature and kinds of fallacies. Cf. also Vattanky 2003.

syllogism, which the Naiyāyikās bring forward to establish the existence of God: the earth and so on have an agent because they are effects. The Naiyāyikās justify this inference logically against all the objections of their opponents, especially the Buddhists. The Buddhists argued that there is no invariable concomitance⁵ between ‘having an intelligent agent’ and being an effect in general. Such a concomitance pertains only to that class of things which, although one has not seen them being made by someone, are such that when seen, after having been made, one immediately knows that they have been made by someone. The heart of this Buddhist objection had already been explained by Dharmakīrti and Santaraksita. In short, it means only that after having seen a jar being made by a potter, when we see a similar jar we can infer that this jar has also been made by a potter, although we have not actually seen this jar being made by a potter. But by the same sort of process we cannot, according to the Buddhists, conclude that the earth is produced by someone. And if one infers similarly an agent for the earth, one could infer fire from any white substance as well, though one has never seen any instance of such a substance produced by fire.

Vācaspati’s answer⁶ to this objection proved seminal, in the sense that later Naiyāyikas like Udayana and Gaṅgeśa developed only the details of the answer, but the basic elements of the reply remained the same. Vācaspati asks the opponent: in order to establish the invariable concomitance of having an intelligent agent with being an effect, is it enough that the class of things should actually have an agent, or should this agent be actually seen? If the first alternative is meant, then the Naiyāyikā has no objection: he holds that there is actually an intelligent agent for such things as the earth and so on. But if the Buddhist insists that this agent be visible,

⁵ The theory of invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*) is a fundamental concept in Nyāya system. In simple terms invariable concomitance is the invariable relationship of the reason with that which is to be established by the syllogism. Thus when you establish fire by means of smoke you presuppose an invariable relationship of smoke with fire. But the concept is not as simple as that. In fact, a large part of the Nyāya discussions on the theory of knowledge and inference in general is all about this concept of invariable concomitance. Further, this concept is of primary importance in practically all the major systems of classical Indian thought. In fact, prolonged and persistent controversies ranged among the different schools on this point precisely because they sought to justify their different ontological positions on the basis of this aspect of their theory of knowledge. The controversy was acute between the Buddhists, especially of Dharmakīrti school, and the Naiyāyikas.

⁶ Vācaspati Mīśra, *Tātparyatika in Nyāyadarśnam*, edited by Amrendramohan Tarkatīrtha and Hemantakumar Tarkatīrtha, Calcutta 1944, pp. 933-971.

which is the second alternative, then the Buddhist is denying his own principle. In this case, no instance of an effect would give knowledge of an intelligent agent if the agent were not actually seen. Therefore, when we saw a palace, which we did not actually see being built, we could not conclude that this palace was also built by someone, for the simple reason that we did not see someone building it; or to use the example which Vācaspati himself gives, because this cloth, which one saw being produced by someone has a maker, one cannot conclude that the piece of cloth in the textile shop is also produced by somebody. This, obviously, the Buddhist would likewise not admit.

What follows is an extremely vital but succinct series of objections on the part of the Buddhists and an equally penetrating series of answers by the Naiyāyikās. In fact, all the basic questions concerning the argument establishing the existence of God are raised and answered here by Vācaspati. The Buddhist objects: only members of that class of things of which it has been established that they have an intelligent agent, will have an intelligent agent, but no others. But to this Vācaspati answers that members of the class of things having a beginning, e.g. jars, have an intelligent agent; and certainly trees and so on belong to the class of things having a beginning. Therefore, they also have an agent.

But of course, the Buddhist does not accept this answer: he insists that only the class of things which have been actually perceived as having an agent can be said to have an agent, and no others. For example, we know that individual things like a jar have an agent; but from this it does not follow that palaces have agents, if they do not belong to the class of things perceived to have agents, in this case, since they do not belong to the class of jars. Therefore the Buddhist concludes, only in the case of a class of things perceived to have an agent can we infer that a member of that class has an intelligent agent, even though we do not actually perceive the agent. This is the final and definitive position of the Buddhist. It shows clearly the nature and limitation of his epistemology and logic. Whatever details and argumentations may have been developed by subsequent authors, this, in essence, is the position of Dharmakīrti.

Now, Vācaspati definitely destroys this edifice of Buddhist argument by a decisive blow of his logic; in fact, Vācaspati meets his adversary on his own ground and shows him that the class of things which are effects, are seen to have an intelligent agent. A palace is an effect and we know from perception that a palace has an agent; therefore, whenever we see a thing having the characteristics of an effect, we can conclude that this

thing also has an intelligent agent, since it also belongs to the class of effects. The earth and so on are perceived by us as effects. Hence they also have an intelligent agent.⁷

As to the Buddhist objection, that in that case an anthill should also be produced by a potter, the answer is that we cannot conclude that a potter is the maker of an anthill, since we do not see potters making anthills; but from the fact that the anthill is an effect, we can conclude that it is produced by intelligent agents which are not seen by us. As we have noted already, later Naiyāyikās, including even Udayana and Gaṅgeśa, only developed the details of this answer.

Vācaspati now tries to answer some other objections of the Buddhists. For instance, the objection that there is no invariable concomitance of an intelligent agent with effects in general, but only with those effects whose material causes can possibly be perceived by us. Since we cannot perceive the material cause of earth it is not produced by an intelligent agent. To this the answer is obvious: once the invariable concomitance of «intelligent agent» and ‘being an effect’ is established, in the example, by means of positive and negative concomitance, then it is not legitimate to doubt it, or restrict it only to the case of those effects whose material causes can possibly be perceived by us. There is no additional condition⁸ in the invariable concomitance of «intelligent agent» with effects in general.⁹

We now take up an important objection against the reason justifying the inference establishing the existence of God. According to the opponents, the reason provided is flawed insofar as it has a counter-reason. The counter-inference itself is as follows: the world and so on are not produced by an agent since they are not something produced by someone having a body. Gaṅgeśa naturally rejects this inference on the ground that it tries to establish an absence whose counterpositive¹⁰ is not yet cognized. And an absence whose counterpositive is not known is not at all an absence. To this the opponent objects that the logical consequence of this is that one cannot

⁷ Here one should not immediately conclude that the argument is tautological since the Naiyāyikas gloss effects as those things which have an origin (*utpattimat*).

⁸ Additional condition (*upādhi*) is an important concept in Nyāya logic. For a full treatment of the subject, cf. Philips, Ramanuja Tatacharya 2000.

⁹ A somewhat more elaborate way of establishing the invariable concomitance of agents with effects may be seen in the works of Udayana and Gaṅgeśa. Cf. Vattanky 1993, pp. 112 & ff. and Vattanky 1984, pp. 345 & ff.

¹⁰ Counterpositive (*pratiyogi*) is a technical term denoting that which is absent.

any more speak of a fault of counterthesis, since the *sādhya* is not known before it is established by the inference that establishes it. This however is rejected on the ground that where the *sādhya* is already established, e.g. where the *sādhya* is «cowness» and so on, there is the possibility of counterthesis.

Now the main response to the Buddhist objection that the earth is ‘not produced by someone having a body’ is proposed: in comparison with this, ‘not being produced’ is simpler and so stands in real invariable concomitance with not having an agent. Hence ‘not being produced by body’, does not stand in invariable concomitance with ‘having no agent’. The opponent tries to answer by showing that this is actually no useless qualification since it is helpful for producing the knowledge that the reason actually exists in the subject. Further, it is objected that only when the determinant of qualificandness is not the determinant of invariable concomitance, is the qualification such a determinant. In the case of instances such as ‘not produced by body’, ‘blue-smoke’ and so on, the qualificandness alone could be the determinant of the invariable concomitance in question. The opponent rejects this and says that even in the instances mentioned, there is invariable concomitance in the sense of ‘having no deviation’ or ‘having no additional condition’.

All these objections of the opponent are rejected and it is established that ‘not being produced by body’, and ‘blue-smoke’, cannot be used as valid reasons, though they stand in invariable concomitance with the respective *sādhya*-s. They cannot be used as valid reasons because of the general principle that the determinant of invariable concomitance is itself the determinant of ‘being a reason’. Accordingly in the case of reasons such as ‘blue-smoke’ – the determinant of invariable concomitance is not ‘being blue smoke’, but simply ‘smokeness’, because of logical simplicity, and so ‘blue smoke’ cannot be used as a valid reason. Similarly, in the case of ‘produced by body’ the determinant of the state of being a reason is the ‘state of being produced by body’. Therefore ‘being produced by body’ cannot be used as a valid reason.¹¹

¹¹ There is a detailed discussion about the objection of the counterthesis and its refutation in Vattanky 1984, pp. 361& ff.

II.

We now pass on to a few general objections against the argument establishing the existence of God. First of all, there is the objection that the God who is established by means of the inference given has characteristics that are different from the characteristics of *sādhya*, which is established by the reason and the example. The argument implicit in this objection is that in the example of a jar etc. an agent with no eternal knowledge is cognized, but God, who is supposedly established by the argument, has eternal knowledge. This is considered to be a contradiction, i.e. it is contradictory with respect to the usual kind of *sādhya* that is established by reason of being an effect. This may be further elucidated as follows:

When we cognize the invariable concomitance of *sādhya* with particular characteristics in a reason and with particular characteristics in an example, we infer such a *sādhya* with these particular characteristics in the subject. To explain: in the kitchen we cognize the invariable concomitance of fire and yellow colour, also in the smoke that rises without break straight from fire. From a similar kind of smoke we infer a similar kind of fire on the mountain. In the case of the argument for the existence of God, however, the inference is not made in the same way: in the case of a jar etc. the invariable concomitance of an agent, having non-eternal knowledge, with body and many actions is cognized. Therefore, in the case of the earth etc. we can also infer only the invariable concomitance of a similar agent, having the characteristics of non-eternal knowledge, body and many actions. But the Naiyāyikās assert that there is no agent with such characteristics with regard to the earth and so on, but an agent with eternal knowledge etc. Therefore the reason provided displays the fault of opposition (*virodha*), i.e. in the case of reason in the earth, it does not co-exist with the *sādhya* having these characteristic of non-eternal knowledge and so on. Hence it is pointed out that there is a fault of opposition to the particular (*sādhya*) in the reason.

The answer to this objection is as follows: in the present case, that which is inferred by means of invariable concomitance is not an agent having non-eternal knowledge, nor is it grasped via the reason of «being an effect». The invariable concomitance only of an agent with knowledge and so on is cognized via the reason of «being an effect». The reason is that positive and negative concomitance establish only that an effect is produced by an agent, and not necessarily by an agent having non-eternal knowledge etc. Here, of course, a question may arise naturally: is not the invariable con-

comitance of an agent, having non-eternal knowledge, cognized via the reason of «being an effect?» Pragalbha answers that this is not possible since there would be logical complexity (*gaurava*) in cognizing invariable concomitance in this form and so invariable concomitance of an agent only with knowledge and so on (dropping the qualification on non-eternal) is cognized. Therefore the *sādhya*, in the present case, is only a particular instance of the pervader, viz. being produced by an agent having knowledge, and in this way there is no fault here of the contradiction of the particular *sādhya*.

It may then be urged that by means of the invariable concomitance of being produced with being produced by an agent having knowledge and so on, we can also establish also ‘being produced by an agent having non-eternal knowledge’ and so on. And in this case also there is contradiction of the particular. This objection could have been raised, if invariable concomitance alone were the cause of the inference; but the relation of the reason to the subject is also a cause of inference. But in fact, neither invariable concomitance alone nor the relation of the reason to the subject can cause inference; but both of them together produce inference. If it were not so, one of them would be useless in bringing about an inference; this however, is not admitted by any of the parties. Therefore when invariable concomitance and the relation of the reason to the subject exist separately, we cannot establish the particular *sādhya* in question and there cannot be any contradiction, as pointed out above. When they are together, and cooperate with one another to effect the inference, the desired *sādhya* will be established and there will be no contradiction. Thus when the *sādhya* of an agent with eternal knowledge and so on is not established there is obviously no contradiction; if it is established, there is also no contradiction.

But then, in what does the fault of the contradiction of the particular consist? The answer is that such a fault occurs when the qualification of the reason contradicts the qualification of *sādhya*, in such a way that the things qualified viz. the reason and the *sādhya*, cannot exist together. As, for example, if one infers, that this smoke is not fragrant because it is caused by fire rising from sandalwood. Here there is contradiction. Here the qualification «not fragrant», which qualifies smoke, contradicts the qualification «rising from sandalwood», which qualifies fire. Hence smoke and fire, as thus qualified, cannot co-exist (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*). Therefore in this case, there is the fault of the contradiction of the particular.

The next objection is based on the epistemological principle that what is beyond the senses cannot be the object of human knowledge. This is simi-

lar to an objection from the western analytical school of philosophy, based on the principle of verification. The objection here is that God is not an object of perception by means of the external senses. And so from the absence of the perception of God one can conclude the absence of God; in technical language, where there is an absence of the perception of the counterpositive, there is an absence of the counterpositive itself. The answer to this is that if it were so, it would be impossible to establish the existence of anything that is beyond the perception of the senses. But then it may be objected that it is not the mere absence of the perception of the counterpositive that establishes the absence of the counterpositive, but the non-perception of something, which is the proper object of perception. And being a proper object of perception means that if all the causes of perception are present, the perception of the object should take place. Now such a perception does not take place with regard to God. Therefore God, who would be the object of such a perception, also does not exist. The answer to this objection is that such a proper object of perception is not present here, for it is admitted by all that God, who is to be established by the Naiyāyika, is not a proper object of sense perception.

It may further be objected that, if this is the case, one could say, that one does not perceive horns on a hare, because they are not a proper object of perception, rather than because they do not actually exist. This obviously cannot be accepted. Therefore it must be admitted that horns on a hare do not exist, because they are not perceived, or in general what is not perceived does not exist. Similarly God, who is not perceived, does not exist. The answer to this has already been pointed out: if one accepts that what is not perceived does not exist, it is not possible to establish anything that is beyond the senses. However, it is accepted by all, that there are such things as atoms and ether, which are not directly perceived. Nor can the existence of an agent who is not a proper object of perception simply be denied, as horns on a hare are denied because they cannot be perceived. This is because similarly non-perceptible objects, such as the souls of other persons, are inferred by means of their bodily actions. In this case, inference to the souls of other persons is stronger and hence the absence of such souls is denied. In the same way, God's existence can be inferred, although God is not directly perceived. It can further be objected: the inference purporting to establish the existence of God does not have any supporting reason, just as the inference that a hare has horns because it is an animal, has no supporting reason. This objection too is false because it is not a true analogical answer to assert that you can infer having horns from being an animal.

Even if there is false analogical inference, by means of a reason displaying neither invariable concomitance nor existence in the subject, there is no harm. Further, in the present case, the reason is 'being an animal' and this reason displays no invariable concomitance with having horns.

III.

There are many other arguments, which the Naiyāyikās bring forward in order to establish the existence of God. But the argument from causality, which we have presented, is the most important. The true significance of this argument lies not so much in the argumentation itself, but in the context of the accurate and profound analysis of human knowledge presented in these works. This context is nowhere explicitly mentioned, but it forms the very presupposition of most of the discussions on various topics. In exploring this context, and drawing out its philosophical implications, we will be in a position to provide at least a tentative answer to the question: why is it possible to establish the existence of God according to Nyāya logic and why is it impossible to do so in the logic of Dharmakīrti and his school of Buddhist thinkers? What is quite intriguing is that neither Gaṅgeśa nor any of his commentators like Jayadeva, Pragalbha or Rucidatta ask the question: why is it that according to Nyāya logic it is possible to establish the existence of God. On the other hand, neither Dharmakīrti nor any of his followers, like Jñānasrimitra or Ratnakīrti, raise the question why in the Buddhist logical system it is not possible to establish the existence of God.

The answer to these questions depends on the context of the Nyāya theistic proofs. The context is primarily epistemological. The Nyāya proof for the existence of God presupposes a theory of knowledge, within which it is possible to raise the question of God. Whereas the Buddhists of the Dharmakīrti school propose a theory of knowledge according to which it is radically impossible not only to prove the existence of God, but even to conceive an idea of him. Thus the Nyāya system has, as a horizon, a theory of knowledge, which renders possible proofs for the existence of God. That is why, it could be validly asserted that in the Nyāya theory of knowledge the Absolute becomes the horizon of all knowledge and, therefore, of all human activity. This aspect of the Nyāya theory of knowledge is not developed explicitly, in all its details, in the Nyāya treatises. In fact, to my mind, this aspect is more implied than explained in detail in any of the books. But of course, this does not mean that such an interpretation is purely subjec-

tive. On the contrary, an interpretation of this kind is based on the very foundation of the system itself.

In order to explain this, it is necessary to refer to some of the very basic notions in the Nyāya epistemology. Intimately connected with this is the fundamental Nyāya theory concerning what is usually known as invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*). In simple terms, invariable concomitance is the invariable relationship of the reason with that which is to be established by the syllogism. Thus when you establish fire by means of smoke, you presuppose an invariable relationship of smoke with fire. But the concept is not as simple as that. In fact, a large part of the Nyāya discussions on the theory of knowledge, and inference in general, concern precisely this concept of invariable concomitance. Further, this concept is of primary importance in practically all the major systems of classical Indian thought. In fact, prolonged and persistent controversies occurred between the different schools, on this point, precisely because they sought to justify their different ontological positions on the basis of this aspect of their theory of knowledge. The controversy was acute between the Buddhists, especially of the Dharmakīrti school, and the Naiyāyikās. The point of difference between these two schools is that, in Nyāya, it is possible, from what we know, to assert also what have not known; whereas, the Buddhists tend to deny this. But, this of course is an oversimplified statement.

In slightly more technical terms the Buddhist position would be the following: we can know a thing whose existence we have not directly perceived only if that thing belongs to the class of things which could be the object of direct experience. The Naiyāyikās, on the contrary, hold that we can, on the basis of the experience of those things about which we have direct knowledge, assert the existence of a thing, even if that thing does not strictly belong to the class of things that could be perceived. This in fact, in simplified terms, is the crux of the problem, according to the Buddhist and Nyāya theories. Consequently the arguments regarding the existence of God became the centre of heated controversy. The Nyāya school holds that it is possible for us to know the unknown from what we have known. It also means that this unknown need not necessarily belong to the class of things which are already known, but according to the Buddhist system, as represented by the school of Dharmakīrti, it is necessary that this unknown thing should belong to a class of things that are already known. Otherwise, we cannot make any affirmation whatever about this unknown thing.

From what has been said it follows that the epistemological presuppositions of the Nyāya theory of inference assume the capacity of the human

intelligence to rise above immediate experience. We could further draw the important conclusion that this Nyāya theory implies that human beings cannot think except in the context of an Absolute. No theory of knowledge is possible without implying, at the same time, the existence of an Absolute and the inherent capacity of the human intellect somehow to grasp the Absolute. And such an explanation of the basis of the Nyāya theory of knowledge, particularly with reference to the concept of invariable concomitance is quite legitimate. An interpretation of this kind is based on sound philosophical and philological analysis of the texts concerned. This implies, therefore, that the Nyāya theory of knowledge can be adequately explained and validated only against the background of the basic and inherent capacity of the human intellect to rise above mere phenomena or objects directly perceived.

This is also the basic reason why it is said that the God of the Naiyāyikās is a transcendent God. The dynamism of knowledge, implicitly affirmed in the Nyāya theory of inference, cannot simply stop at an anthropomorphic God, immanent to the system itself. If the God of the Naiyāyikās were just one of the categories admitted by the system, then there would not be much point in elaborating a theory of inference, which tries to establish objects beyond sense-experience. In fact, as we have already explained, the dynamic nature of the Nyāya theory of knowledge and inference can fully be understood only in the context of the infinite capacity of the human intellect to reach out to the ultimate. Thus the epistemological principles and the theory of inference advocated by the Naiyāyikas provide a valid argument for the existence of God.

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