

RAGHUNĀTHA ŚIROMAṆI AND THE ORIGINS OF MODERNITY IN INDIA¹

Jonardon GANERI

Raghunātha Śiromaṇi (c.1460–c.1540)² is the first modern philosopher, his ideas single-handedly responsible for the emergence of a new form of Navya-Nyāya, the ‘new reason’, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He was born and lived in the remarkable town of Navadvīpa, a town roughly a hundred kilometres north of modern day Kolkata. Many modern Indians continue to this day to celebrate Navadvīpa as the birthplace of the religious reformer Caitanya, who was Raghunātha’s peer and, at least according to legend, the student of a common teacher. In the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, the town of Navadvīpa, which is also known by its latinized name Nadia or Nuddea, was one of the great sites of scholarship in South Asia. Students from all over the subcontinent, indeed from Nepal and possibly even Tibet, were attracted to a strict programme of studies in the ‘new reason’, a vigorous intellectual community, and the eventual prospect of prestigious certification by title. The programme of studies was provided in ṭols run by a series of celebrated paṇḍits, whose more important works were frequently transcribed and swiftly distributed throughout India.

I believe that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a remarkable project began to take shape in the Sanskritic philosophical world. It is not just that the philosophers are willing to describe

¹ I would like to thank Toshihiro Wada, Toshiya Unebe, and the other participants at Nagoya University for their very helpful comments. The material in this paper is expanded and elaborated in Ganeri 2011.

² NCat 8:26, P 948. The dates follow D.C. Bhattacharya 1952. Ingalls 1951 suggests 1475–1550; Vidyabhusana 1971 recommends 1477–1541. D.C. Bhattacharya reaches this dating on the following basis: (1) a dating of 1375/80–1455/60 for Śūlapāṇi, Raghunātha’s maternal grandfather; (2) a reference in Jayānanda to Raghunātha as a contemporary of the sons of Viśārada, i.e. Vāsudeva, Vidyāvīrinci, Vidyānanda, and Vidyāvācaspati; (3) a ms. in Navadvīpa, on the front cover of which is a book-list dated 409 lakṣmanavāda = 1517 CE and including the title *Guṇāśiromaṇi*; (4) a difficulty even among the earliest commentators, Kṛṣṇadāsa and Rāmabhadra Sarvabhauma, in critically establishing the text of the *Dīdhiti*.

themselves as “new,” though that is indeed a striking feature of the period. By the end of the seventeenth century we find in a work by Mahādeva a daunting array of terms denoting the new:

New	(<i>navya</i>)	Gaṅgeśa et al.
Newer	(<i>navyatara</i>)	Later Mithilā thinkers
Modern	(<i>navīna</i>)	Raghunātha
Very modern	(<i>atīnavīna</i>)	Post-Raghunātha thinkers
Contemporary	(<i>ādhunika</i>)	Contemporaries of Mahādeva. ³

Yet others before them had done the same, and the question is in what this self-attributed newness consists and what the self-affirmation means. Was it only a newness in the ways that the ideas of the ancient authorities are described, a newness of style but not of substance? In asking this question, I have in mind Sheldon Pollock’s well-known assessment of the new intellectuals of the seventeenth century, that their work displays a “paradoxical combination of something very new in style subserving something very old in substance” (2001a: 407). That was certainly how a pre-modern, Jayanta, at the end of the first millennium, conceived of his own originality:

How can we discover a new truth? So one should consider our novelty only in the rephrasing of words.⁴

This characteristically pre-modern attitude of deference to the past changes fundamentally in the work of Raghunātha Śiromaṇi. Raghunātha belongs to a tradition of philosophical speculation known as Nyāya, a term more or less synonymous with the appeal to reason and evidence-based critical inquiry — rather than scriptural exegesis — as the proper method of philosophy. Raghunātha concludes his most innovative work, the *Inquiry into the True Nature of Things*, with a call to philosophers to think for themselves about the arguments:

³ Mahādeva 1967; 1982.

⁴ *kuto vā nūtanam vastu vayam utprekṣitum kṣamāḥ | vacovinyāsavaicitryamātram atra vicāryatām ||* (Jayanta 1982: 1, v. 8). A similar sentiment is expressed by the grammarian Bhartṛhari (*Vākyapadīya* 2.484); I am grateful to Toshiya Unebe for drawing my attention to this reference.

The demonstration of these matters which I have carefully explained is contrary to the conclusions reached by all the other disciplines. These matters spoken of should not be cast aside without reflection just because they are contrary to accepted opinion; scholars should consider them carefully. Bowing to those who know the truth concerning matters of all the sciences, bowing to people like you [the reader], I pray you consider my sayings with sympathy. This method, though less honoured, has been employed by wise men of the past; namely that one ask other people of learning to consider one's own words (*Inquiry into the True Nature of Things* 1915: 79,1–80,3; trans. Potter 1957: 89–90).

The new attitude was summarised at the time by Abū'l Faḡl, in a work — the *Āīn-i-Akbarī* — which relates the intellectual climate during the reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar. Abū'l Faḡl describes the philosophers as those who “look upon testimony as something filled with the dust of suspicion and handle nothing but proof”.⁵ In the writings of those philosophers who follow Raghunātha from about the middle of the sixteenth century until the end of the seventeenth there is a fundamental metamorphosis in epistemology, metaphysics, semantics, and philosophical methodology. The works of these philosophers — some of whom lived in Raghunātha's home-town of Navadvīpa in Bengal, others in the newly invigorated city of Vārāṇasī — are full of phrases that are indicative of a new attitude, phrases like “this should be considered further (*iti dhyeyam*),” “this needs to be reflected on (*iti cintyam*),” “this is the right general direction to go in (*iti dik*).” Openness to inquiry into the problems themselves, a turn towards the facts, is what drives the new work, not merely a new exegesis of the ancient texts, along with a sense that they are engaged in a radical and on-going project.

Life and Work

It is indeed probable that Vāsudeva received Raghunātha into his school, for children joined typically as soon as they could read, and there is an anecdote about Vāsudeva explaining the phonetics of the alphabet to a demandingly inquisitive Raghunātha (Ingalls 1951: 12). Raghunātha records Vāsudeva's view in one of his works.⁶ Raghu-

⁵ [1597] 1873: 537. Abū'l Faḡl does not mention Raghunātha in the list of philosophers he provides to accompany this description, Raghunātha presumably already dead when Akbar came to the throne; but he does name someone with close ties to Raghunātha, Vidyānīvāsa, and he also mentions Raghunātha's best-known student.

⁶ Under the heading “But some say ...” (*kecit tu*) in the logical definitions; D.C. Bhattacharya 1940: 63–4.

nātha may well have studied for some time in Mithilā, possibly under Jayadeva, with whom he disagreed strongly, before returning to Navadvīpa. Whether or not he was actually a student in Mithilā, he supposedly defeated Jayadeva in a famous debate, the date of which lies between 1480 and 1485.⁷ Raghunātha displays a greater tolerance for another Mithilā scholar, Yajñapati. As well as his commentary on Gaṅgeśa's *Gemstone [Fulfilling One's Wish] for Truth (Tattvacintāmaṇi)*, Raghunātha prepared brief but penetrating comments on works by Udayana, Vardhamāna and Vallabha, all called *Light-Ray (Dīdhiti)* on the text in question. Raghunātha would write three short treatises,⁸ the *Treatise on Negation (Nañ-vāda)*, the *Treatise on Finite Verbal Forms (Ākhyāta-vāda)*, and the *Inquiry into the True Nature of Things (Padārtha-tattva-nirūpaṇa)*.⁹ His impact is due to the originality of the ideas he puts out in the course of his commentaries, to the new approach to the study of language that his two works in semantics herald, and to the daring metaphysical ideas of the *Inquiry into the True Nature of Things*. More than that, it is due to the spirit his writings embody, with their emphasis on independent thinking. Raghunātha certainly thought of his conclusions as original to him, urging potential critics to consider well his arguments before condemning them.

Gaṅgeśa had written only on epistemology. Indeed, he had argued that all philosophy “rests upon” (*adhīna*) the study of the ways of gaining knowledge. That is why he organised his only work into four chapters, one for each of the four ways of gaining knowledge acknowledged in classical Nyāya. Later thinkers would follow this organisational principle, although they were not afraid to abandon a discussion of the third method of gaining knowledge, analogy (*upamāna*) as a principle of learning the meaning of words, when their new work in the philosophy of language made it superfluous. Gaṅgeśa's exclusive attention to epistemology nevertheless left a vacuum in the study of metaphysics, and made space for creative

⁷ For an early report of the tradition concerning the encounter between Raghunātha and Jayadeva, see Ward (1811; different versions in later editions). Ward also claims, however, that Raghunātha was studying under Vācaspatiśra II (c. 1400–1450), which makes his testimony unreliable.

⁸ He is not, however, responsible for a commentary, the *Bhūṣāmaṇi*, on Śrīharṣa's *Amassed Morsels of Refutation*. D.C. Bhattacharya 1952 speculatively identifies the writer as Raghunātha Vidyālaṅkāra, author of the *Dīdhiti-pratibimba*.

⁹ Summaries of the entire corpus are found in Potter and Bhattacharya 1993: 521–590; S. Bhattacharyya 2004: 485–510. Krishna 1997b takes a broader view, while a detailed study in Sanskrit is Pandeya 1983.

thinkers to embrace the spirit of the new philosophy and turn their attention to a reconceptualisation of ancient metaphysics. The last important pre-Gaṅgeśa metaphysical works to have been written were Udayana's *Row of Lightbeams* (*Kiraṇāvālī*) and Vallabha's *Līlāvālī*. Gaṅgeśa's son, Vardhamāna, wrote commentaries on a number of these works, and it was that corpus of metaphysical texts which formed the object of Raghunātha's attention. To describe Raghunātha's notes on these works as "commentaries" is potentially misleading, however. What they are, very often, are very provocative and stimulating thoughts about what he is reading. One might think, by way of analogy, of the notes Wittengstein used to make on whatever he was reading. Sometimes Raghunātha's notes are about issues which the text has, in his opinion, failed to mention at all. Raghunātha, we might say, is not *explaining* the text but *thinking with* it. It is this feature of his "commentaries" which made them profoundly interesting to the philosophers who came after him, and who in many cases, no longer commented about the original texts but only about Raghunātha's notes.

To give just one example, when Gaṅgeśa says, at the beginning of the *Gemstone [Fulfilling One's Wish] for Truth*, that the whole world ("jagat") is steeped in suffering, and that philosophy is a method of alleviation, Raghunātha's note refers to the scope of "the world", which he affirms includes everyone, women and untouchables included. Matilal says that the view that "world" refers to all sufferers is "clearly ascribable to Raghunātha ... according to Raghunātha's cryptic statement, Gaṅgeśa was saying that 'philosophy' or *ānvīksikī* is open to all, not restrictive to the male members of the three *varṇas*." (Matilal 2002: 367).¹⁰

As if in acknowledgement of the restrictions imposed by the inherited framework, Raghunātha wrote a separate treatise in metaphysics in which a complete rethinking of the traditional system is undertaken, the *Inquiry into the True Nature of Things*. The treatise does not dismiss the ancient metaphysics, or offer some wholly different metaphysics in its place, but rather thoroughly reworks it.¹¹

¹⁰ Another representative example are the remarks about meaning and reference Raghunātha makes in the course of commenting on Udayana's metaphysics. These remarks became the basis for a new theory of meaning in the work of Jagadīśa, Bhavānanda and Gadādhara; see Ganeri 1999 for details.

¹¹ In addition to the summaries mentioned above, see also the introduction in Pahi and Jain 1997.

Raghunātha wants to make the old system consistent with a new metaphysical principle, and is not afraid to dismiss those parts of the ancient theory which seem, from the new perspective, to be anomalous. This text therefore embodies a fundamentally new attitude towards the ancient text. The new attitude is that there is a good underlying metaphysical insight, but that it has not been articulated with clarity and consistency in the ancient texts or their pre-modern interpreters, who include much that is irrelevant and leave out much of what is important. Raghunātha's leading idea is that the defence of realism in metaphysics requires one to be a non-reductivist, and his reform of the ancient theory is such as to remove from it intermingled reductivist elements.

Raghunātha begins the work in a highly provocative manner:

Among entities, space and time are nothing but god, since there is no proof [that they are distinct from god]. For wherever particular effects arise, these arise simply from god by his being combined with particular causes (1915: 1,3–3,1; trans. Potter 1957: 23).

This identification of space and time with god, or of god with space and time, is startling enough, the second sentence meaning that god as delimited by a specific time and place is the cause of any given happening, i.e. that effects are spatio-temporally located occurrences. Yet it is only further into the work that the truly challenging dimension of Raghunātha's position is made clear:

The universal selfhood, insofar as it is the limiter of the inherence-causality of pleasure etc., is not in god (1915: 44,2–45,1; trans. Potter 1957: 55).

A self is that which bundles psychological properties, and so that in virtue of which a pleasure or pain felt by one person does not belong to someone else. The individual ownership of psychological properties is the reason we need a plurality of individual selves, falling under a common kind, rather than an amorphous *consciousness*, which Advaita Vedānta thinkers identify both with 'every' self (*ātman*) and with *brahman*. The 'inherence cause' of a property instantiation is the substance in which the property inheres. Raghunātha says, however, that such considerations do not apply to god, who does not feel pleasure or pain, for example, and does not need discriminating from other individuals. In saying this, he is breaking

with the ancients, who had argued that god must be a self because no other type of entity has psychological properties, and god has the property of thinking (*buddhi*) (Vātsyāyana 1997: 228, 6). This argument from elimination was not entirely free from difficulty, even for the ancients, because they took it that thinking, like all other psychological attributes, requires embodiment. One solution, albeit an *ad hoc* one, was to say that god's psychological attributes are different in kind from human mental properties, and in particular, that its 'thinking' is eternal (Uddyotakara 1997: 432–433). One can appreciate the force of Raghunātha's new claim if one thinks that, rather than persist with the argument from elimination, one instead admits that god does not belong to the same kind of thing as human selves. As we will see when we examine his realism in detail, this is in fact a standard move for him, one which I will argue is a form of non-reductivism. It is preferable to admit a new type of entity into one's ontology than to get into all of the ancient contortions that come with attempts to fit round pegs into square holes. Raghunātha begins several of his treatises, including the *Inquiry into the True Nature of Things*, with a homage to the supreme self, which is of the nature of bliss and consciousness (*akhaṇḍānandabodhāya pūrṇāya paramātmāne*). Superficially that sounds very much like Advaita Vedānta, but the crucial difference is that Raghunātha does not endorse the Vedāntic reduction of human selves to delimitations or reflections of the supreme one.¹² The whole topic of the individuation of selves, and the question of whether selfhood was a natural kind also embracing god, developed as an important topic for some 'new reason' philosophers. Not all found themselves able to agree with Raghunātha, but all recognised that they needed to think afresh about the fundamental issues involved, rather than continue simply to follow the ancient tradition.

The spirit in which Raghunātha writes the *Inquiry into the True Nature of Things* is clearly seen from this passage, in which Raghunātha wonders about how fictional and historical names get their

12 Venīdatta worries, nevertheless, that a collapse is on the cards: "[Raghunātha's claim about god, space and time] will have the unintended consequence of not being able to admit either the multiplicity of individuals or the extendedness of the self, since a judgment that "this is Caitra, this Maitra, this Devadatta" could also be based on god through artificial delimitations" (*ahaṃ caitro 'yaṃ maitro 'asau devadatta ityādipratītiṅām api tattadupādhibhedeneśvarād eva vailakṣaṇya-saṃbhava vibhujīvātmanām anaṅgīkāraprasaṅgāt jīvabahutvānaṅgīkāraprasaṅgāc ca*; Venīdatta 1930: 2). In other words, one could treat individuals as spatio-temporally delimited regions of god, just as one speaks of the space in the kitchen, the space in the lounge, the space in the hallway. See also Potter 1957: 24; Mishra 1966: 193.

reference:

How does it come about that, from (hearing) the word “Daśaratha,” people now, who never saw Daśaratha [the father of the legendary king Rāma] come to know of him? Likewise how, from the words [for fictional entities like] “hobgoblin”, do others come to know of them? I leave this for attentive scholars to meditate upon. I shall not expand further here. (1915: 60,4–61,4; trans. Potter 1957: 76).

In saying that he will leave the matter for others to think about, the clear message is that it is the philosopher’s responsibility to think about the issues and problems, in the course of a search for the truth, rather than merely revert to exegesis of texts or ancient tradition. Raghunātha puts a new set of intellectual values at the heart of philosophy, including lack of deference, independent mindedness, and above all a sort of playfulness which is absent in the scholastic tomes.

The modern nature of Raghunātha’s question about reference is indicative of another major source of his influence. His composition of individual treatises examining the semantic role of two types of linguistic expression reveals a new approach to the study of language. Previously, Nyāya philosophers treated language in the context of a study of the sources of knowledge. So the question about language was: how does it function so as to enable the possibility of testimony (*śabda-pramāṇa*). Language is one of the four ways of gaining knowledge, and it is in that context that Gaṅgeśa devotes a chapter to language in the *Gemstone [Fulfilling One’s Wish] for Truth*. It is significant then that Raghunātha feels the need to write these two treatises, which again fill in lacunae in the original. I think that Raghunātha perceives in Gaṅgeśa something that the Mithilā scholastics did not, namely that language can be used as a vehicle for philosophical investigation, separated from its epistemological moorings. In this new pursuit of a new philosophical method, based on a careful attention to logical form and the way words work, many later Nyāya thinkers follow Raghunātha’s lead, and indeed this became one of the leading features of seventeenth century philosophy in Navadvīpa and Vārāṇasī.

What underpins the new attention to language is the idea that philosophical linguistics can become a new *method* in philosophy. To illustrate the new method, let me draw an example from Raghunātha’s study of negative constructions, his *Treatise on Negation*. He carefully distinguishes various sorts of logical work that the negative

particle might perform, before turning to what some of the Mīmāṃsā ritualists say about prohibitions. They think that the sentences “One should perform ϕ ” and “One should not perform ϕ ” are contradictory, and in cases where the ritual texts mention both, the performer of the ritual has the “option” (*vikalpa*) to suspend the prescriptive force of one or the other. Raghunātha points out that “One should perform ϕ ” means “Performing ϕ is the means to one’s desired outcome”. So then “One should not perform ϕ ” can mean “Performing ϕ is not the means to one’s desired outcome”, but it can also mean “Performing something not- ϕ is the means to one’s desired outcome”. There is now no contradiction and so no need for the strange doctrine of optionally suspended injunctive force. The issue for philosophical linguistics hinges on whether a negative particle can attach to the verbal root rather than only to its suffix, and that is why this discipline can become part of a new method in philosophy.

By the end of the seventeenth century the method had gained considerably in sophistication. A second example will illustrate the development. In his *Essence of Reason*, Mādhavadeva considers afresh the problem we mentioned above, that if a self is, for some given pleasure or pain, the place where it inheres, then god is not a self. Mādhavadeva moves the problem up to the level of language, and asks us to think about what it means to say “I am in pain” or “I am in a state of pleasure.” The word “I” gets its meaning fixed as referring to something which has the property of being a self. Once we have fixed the referent of “I”, we attribute it with the quality of pleasure or pain. So while it is certainly true that selfhood is what delimits the substratum of states of pleasure and pain, that remains the case even when the word “I” refers to god. It doesn’t matter that god doesn’t feel pain or enjoy pleasure. All that means is that, if uttered by god, the sentence “I am in pain” would be false.¹³

In the presentation of this argument, Mādhavadeva uses various elements of a technical apparatus. Where I said that the word “I” gets its meaning fixed as referring to something which has the property of being a self, for example, he says that referenthood as conditioned by

¹³ *āmatvajātīmān ātmā | āmatvaṃ tu sukha-samavāyikāraṇatāvachedakatayā sidhyati | na ca sukha-samavāyikāraṇatāvachedakatayā siddhasyātmavasyeśvara-vṛttive pramāṇābhāveneśvare vyāptir iti vācyaṃ | ahaṃ sukhī ahaṃ duḥkhī ityādipratyakṣa-sukhādyāśraye prakāratayā bhāsamānāyā āmatvajāteḥ pratyakṣa-siddhatayā tasyā evātma-śabda-śakyatāvachedakatayā śrūtāv ātma-śabdasya mukhyatayāvopapattiyā ceśvare tatsiddhau tasyāḥ sukhādisamavāyikāraṇatāvachedakatvāt | na ceśvare sukhādyāpattiḥ | adṛṣṭāder abhāvāt nityasyetyāder aprayojakatvāt | (Mādhavadeva 1903–4: 55).*

the word “I” is delimited by selfhood. Selfhood is also, in the apparatus, what delimits substratum-causehood-to-pleasure. The point of the technical apparatus is that we can now see clearly that there are two distinct logical roles in play, which happen to be performed here by one and the same entity.

It is the early modern use of these highly artificial constructions which baffles and sometimes misleads. It might look like it is just the same old argument, the one we have already seen in Vātsyāyana, but reformulated in an elaborately adorned style. I hope that I have been able to show, however, that this is far from being the case. To a first approximation, the sentences of the early modern technical apparatus are equivalent to statements in a quantified language with dyadic relations including identity. The two sentences about the self are, to this approximation, equivalent to the claims that whatever is a causal substratum of pleasure is a self, and that anything referable to with “I” is a self. These two sufficient conditions, it is now easy to see, are compatible with the further claim that god is a self which is not a substratum of pleasure. This method, then, serves the same function — albeit in a very different way — as the introduction of new methods into philosophy by early modern thinkers in Europe.

Raghunātha’s Challenge in Metaphysics

A seven category ontology came to be established as standard only in the work of Śivāditya (c. 1100 CE), incorporating the six categories of “being” (*bhāva*) affirmed by Praśastapāda along with a metaphysically distinct category of “non-being” (*abhāva*). This establishment can be seen as the stabilization of various revisionary currents, some pressing in the direction of expansion, others for contraction. The only work of classical Vaiśeṣika to have entered the Chinese tripiṭaka is a text arguing for ten categories, the standard six together with non-being, power, impotence, and ‘particular universal’ (*sāmānyaviśeṣa*).¹⁴ Bhāsarvajña (c. 860–920 CE), on the other hand, argues for an amalgamation of the categories of motion and quality, as well as for systematization within the category of quality. Though certainly indicative of the existence of dynamic internal criticism, neither of these works achieved a significant position within the main-stream of

¹⁴ Candramati’s *Treatise on the Ten Categories (Daśapadārthaśāstra)* was translated into Chinese by Yuan Chwang in 648 CE. See Ui 1917; Thakur 2003: 169–170.

discussion. The work which did was Raghunātha's *Inquiry into the True Nature of Things*. In this work Raghunātha affirms eight new categories: legal ownership (*svatva*), intentionality (*viṣayatā*), number (*saṃkhyā*), the qualifying relation pertaining to absence (*vaiśiṣṭya*), causal power (*śakti*), being-a-cause (*kāraṇatva*), being-an-effect (*kāryatva*), and temporal moments (*kṣaṇa*). At the same time, he dismisses the ancient category of distinguisher and takes motion into a sort of quality. The list is open, and elsewhere other new categories, such as locushood (*ādhāratā*), are entertained. Raghunātha's decision to abandon the idea that there is a fixed list of categories can be read as a robust commitment to the idea that the phenomenon under study itself determines what types of thing there are, not the authority of any canonical text.

The new categories, most of which are like number in being relational, fall into three broad groups. One group has to do with the nature of time and causation, Raghunātha rejecting the old view that causation is reducible to a relationship of invariable temporal succession between things of the same type.¹⁵ A second group includes new relations invoked by the philosophical study of quantity and negation, specifically the relations which sustain the logics of absence and enumeration. Finally, there are the relations of mental content and of legal possession, which Raghunātha again claims have their own categorial standing. From a modern perspective, it is striking that the new categories are all related to normative properties or laws of nature. Raghunātha, we would now say, has insisted that there are several distinct types of normative relation, none of which is reducible to any of the others or to any non-normative type, and also that the laws of nature do not admit of Humean reduction. The normative relations he acknowledges are those belonging to logical form, mental representation and legal rights. He does not, however, speak here about moral or aesthetic norms.

Raghunātha's fundamental criticism of the orthodoxy might therefore be said to consist in the thought that Praśastapāda's view of the world is myopic and flat, seeing only a mechanistic space of objects, compounded from atoms, bearing qualities of various sorts, and moving about in various ways. The inclusion into this picture of human inquirers has them fall under an identical descriptive model, located in space and time, displaying a range of qualities, many of

¹⁵ *Nyāyakośa* 1928: 197–199; Mohanty 2006: 44; Matilal 1985: 284–293.

which overlap with those of ordinary physical objects. That might seem like an attractively naturalistic picture, and later ‘new reason’ thinkers are keen to preserve the naturalism, but I have already given reasons why the very flatness of the model causes serious fault-lines within it. What it fails to see, according to Raghunātha, are the irreducibly normative structures introduced by the presence of thinking beings who represent and reason about the world they inhabit, and have duties and rights with respect to each other.¹⁶ To say that we therefore need new categories is just a way of claiming that the old model can not accommodate this facts; and I have suggested that the point of doing to is to throw down a challenge to his contemporaries to show how, if at all, a naturalistic reduction is to be achieved. The force of Raghunātha’s challenge is to call for an account of just how to achieve an acknowledgement of the reality of features of human life which Praśastapāda’s model seems ill-equipped to accommodate without abandoning naturalism as that model conceives of it (a unified explanation of all objects of inquiry including inquirers).

Old Categories Eliminated, New Categories Affirmed

I have observed that Raghunātha rejects the ancient category of differentiator. What, though, does this rejection consist in? His view, I think, is that differentiators are bogus pseudo-entities which a new metaphysics should discard. Raghunātha says:

And further, differentiator is not another category, because there is no proof. For [atoms and selves] the eternal substances discriminate by themselves, without a discriminating property – just as do the differentiators, according to others. “Yogis see distinct differentiators” [it is said]. Well, then let them be asked on oath whether they see distinct differentiators or not. (1915: 30,3–32,1).

It is clear that he rejects the claim of the old thinkers, that what distinguishes one atom (or self) from another is its possession of a unique discriminating property, conceived of as a special sort of property which the atom has in addition to all its other properties. Raghunātha notices that the postulation of differentiators is superfluous, and potentially regressive. For even those thinkers, the old

¹⁶ The question about whether there are irreducibly normative properties continues to be a live issue of debate. Many agree with Raghunātha that there are; for example, Scanlon 1998, Shafer-Landau 2003.

Vaiśeṣika metaphysicians, who claim that they exist do not also claim that every differentiator has another differentiator to distinguish it from all the others. Given that the threatened regress has to be stopped somewhere, it may as well stop with the atoms themselves. His claim is that there are no differentiators, and that it was a mistake of the old school to think that any such category of thing exists. He scoffs at the idea that there is any empirical evidence of their existence.

Raghunātha is therefore clearly an *eliminativist* about differentiators. His rejection of the category is therefore quite different in kind from the rejection of his own new categories by philosophers who came after him, for whom rejecting a category means showing how its members can be “included in” (*antarbhāva*) some more basic category. This *reductionist* strategy is already visible in what the later philosophers say about differentiators. Raghudeva says, in his commentary on the *Inquiry into the True Nature of Things*, that:

The meaning of the statement “differentiator is not another category” is that it is not a [sort of] being different from the five beginning with substance.¹⁷

His words echo those of Rāmabhadra, who said that “the meaning is that it is not a [sort of] being different from those beginning with substance”.¹⁸ Raghudeva offers a reductionist, not an eliminativist, reading of Raghunātha’s thesis. He takes the claim to be that differentiators are indeed real things, but that they are reducible to entities in the categories of substance, quality, motion, inherence and universal. Raghudeva does not say how the reduction should go, but presumably in the case of atoms, it will make use of the qualities of spatial and temporal separation of one from another, or the quality of contact between atoms and regions in space and time.

It seems more difficult to give a reductive account of the discrimination of one self from another, for the obvious suggestion that it is in virtue of their different mental qualities does not explain what discriminates two selves when they have become liberated, when, according to the standard theory, they no longer have mental lives. The apparently innocent rejection of differentiators thus comes to have have surprisingly radical consequences for the ancient

¹⁷ *viśeṣo 'pi na padārthāntaram iti | na dravyādipañcabhinno bhāva ityarthah |* (Raghudeva 1915: 30, 21-2).

¹⁸ *dravyādibhinno na bhāva ityarthah |* (Rāmabhadra 1915: 91,11).

soteriology. We see early modern thinkers in the process of working through these problems in works like Mahādeva's *Examination of Selfhood as a Basic Kind*. Jayarāma seems to think that it is important to preserve differentiators as the ultimate grounds of distinction between individual human selves, given the absence of generic descriptive individuation.¹⁹

Veṇḍatta, for one, resists the elimination of differentiators. He does so on the grounds that the word "differentiator" does not fail to refer, the way "the rabbit's horn" (*śaśa-śrṅga*) does (1930: 13; cf. Thakur 2003: 363). It is fundamental to Vaiśeṣika realism that a sort of entity is real if it is denotable by a genuine singular term, and that Meinongian ultra-realism about the merely possible is avoided by denying that fictional terms and names of merely possible objects *are* genuinely singular. The standard example of such a term is "the rabbit's horn," which can be parsed as saying falsely of the rabbit that it has a horn. Veṇḍatta's argument, then, is that to be an eliminativist about differentiators, that is to deny that differentiators are real at all, one must claim that their names are not genuinely singular. Some followers of Raghunātha do indeed seem to have taken precisely this course, for Raghudeva himself refers to "those who delight in reasoning" (*tarka-rasika*), who say that a differentiator is the same as a rabbit's horn (1915: 31,18). That comment is interesting and significant, because it confirms what I said earlier, that for these 'new reason' metaphysicians, the whole point is to show that reductionism and realism are compatible. Realism consists in the affirmation that names of differentiators are not like fictional terms; reductionism about differentiators consists in the claim that they are not different in being from entities of some other type.

While Raghunātha is an eliminativist about differentiators, his is a non-reductivist in many other domains. He says, for example, that legal ownership is a distinct category:

Being-owned is another category. If you think that it is being-fit-for-use-as-one-wishes, [we answer] "What is that 'use'?" If you say eating and such like, [we answer] "no, for it is possible to eat the food of another." If you say that this is prohibited by written law, [we answer] "Which written law is that?". If you say that it is the scripture beginning "One may not take what belongs to another", [we answer] "How does that apply if one

¹⁹ *tathā caitramātravṛttive sati sāmānyaśūnyatvaṃ viśeṣalakṣaṇam* / (Jayarāma 1985: 217). For a modern defence of the idea that persons have "individual essences" or haecceities, see Chisholm 1976: 29.

does not yet have the notion of being-owned?” Therefore, being-owned is indeed distinct. And the proof is just the written law beginning “One may not take what belongs to another”. It is produced by receiving as a gift, by purchasing, and on inheritance, and it is destroyed by giving away and so on. (1915: 62,1-64,2).

The claim is that one can describe the circumstances in which possession comes into being and goes out of existence, but that one cannot define possession in terms that do not presuppose it. Ownership is not a matter of what one *can* do with the object, but what one is *entitled* (for example by written law) to do with it. While we can specify the circumstances in which such entitlement arises, one cannot reduce the entitlement itself to something else. The law books tell us that there is such a thing as ownership and under what conditions it comes into being and is transferred, but they do not, and cannot, tell us what ownership itself consists in. The attempt to reduce ownership to the property of being fit to be used as one wishes is in this way undermined.²⁰

How do later thinkers react? To which traditional category does legal ownership belong? Jayarāma prepared a monograph on the topic, the *Meaning of Ownership*.²¹ There are particularly interesting discussions in Mādhavadeva and Veṇḍidatta. Mādhavadeva (1903–4: 282–6) begins by offering a rather different defence of non-reductionism to that of Raghunātha, but instead follows a pattern of argumentation familiar already from our review of discussions about number. He says that being-owned cannot be a substance, quality or action, because qualities too can be owned! The implicit premise here is the Vaiśeṣika principle that substances, qualities and actions inhere only in substances. To support the rather surprising idea that not only objects but even qualities can become somebody’s property, gives as an example the use of a particular red mark as proof of purchase. On the other hand, being-owned cannot belong within the categories of universal, inherence or differentiator, because unlike them it can be

²⁰ “Ownership is not an additional category, for it consists in the fitness of a thing to be used as one desires. Receiving gifts and so on is what delimits such fitness” *svatvam api na padārthānaram | yatheṣṭaviniogyatvasya svatvarūpatvāt | tadavacchedakam ca pratigrahādī-labdhatvam eveti ||* Anambhaṭṭa 1918: 65, 11–12).

²¹ Anjaneya Sarma and Satyanaryana have kindly transcribed the only extant copy Adyar D 1401E (73879c) of Jayarāma’s text, the *Svatva-vādārtha*, for me from the Telugu script. See also Derrett 1956. Kroll 2010 contains an extended analysis of the seventeenth century ‘new reason’ *svatva* literature, with particularly helpful discussions of Raghunātha’s further discussion in his *Light-Ray* on Vallabha, and Jayarāma’s *Treatise*, and clearly bringing out the jurisprudential significance of the discussion.

created and destroyed, here implicitly invoking another Vaiśeṣika principle. The whole “proof” is an example of the semi-axiomatic method made possible by the newly regimented metaphysics. Mādhava does not think it is a sound proof, though, and seems to prefer a performativist theory of ownership, assimilating it to the category of action.

Veṅīdatta (1930: 33) considers a rather different proposal, due to Rāmabhadra, a proposal which is consistent with the soundness of the above proof. The proposal is to give the following reductive analysis of legal possession: I own something just in case (i) I purchased it in the past and have not yet sold it, or (ii) I was given it in the past and have not yet given it away, or (iii) I inherited it in the past and have not yet sold it. The anti-reductionist, Veṅīdatta continues, ought not object to this analysis that it makes the word “owned-ness” have a disjunctive meaning, since they too will have trouble explaining what the condition of use for that word other than with reference to “owned-ness-ness”. He doesn’t come down in favour of one side or the other, but simply remarks that this analysis faces an epistemological difficulty which its proponents need to consider, namely that since one does not know the future, one can never say if, according to this analysis, one owns something or not.

This last analysis reveals how the new category of absence transforms reductionist strategies from attempts at naturalization into projects of logical analysis. A similar movement can be seen in the discussion about causal powers. Raghunātha had said that it is right to think that causal power is a new category because to do so is ontologically more economical. His example is the causal power to produce fire, which is found in dry grass — which bursts into flame when dry, in fire-sticks — which burn when rubbed together, and in translucent gems — which produce fire by focussing the sun’s rays. It is simpler, argues Raghunātha, to describe this situation as one in which a single causal power is triply instantiated than to say that there are three distinct causal regularities involved (1915: 65,1–66,1). Raghunātha is not the only one to argue that causal power belongs to a separate category; this is also the view of the Mīmāṃsaka thinker Prabhākara. Prabhākara’s argument is that objects have dispositional capacities which are not necessarily instantiated, something that laws between actual causes and actual effects cannot describe. When Mādhavadeva reconstructs the argument non-reductivism, he makes it

an argument from elimination rather than an argument from simplicity:

However [says the opponent], it is not the case that there are just seven categories, since causal power is in truth a distinct category. How, otherwise, is it that burning with fire does not [automatically] arise when there is a gem and instigating factor? So there is a causal power disposed to burning, which [burning] does not arise from the gem but from the instigating factor. This causal power is not a substance, since it does not possess qualities. Nor is it a quality, since it exists even without the cause of any prescribed quality. Nor is it another quality, distinct from [any of the prescribed ones], for to imagine such a quality is ontologically redundant. Nor does it belong to the category of motion, for it would then wrongly follow that motions like the capacity fire has will be perceptible, since that is the principle governing perceptibility. Nor does it belong to the categories of inherence and so on, since it will be destroyed when it arises. Therefore, it is a distinct category. If this is claimed, [we reply], no. Thinking about the causes [of fire] before it has arisen or after it has ceased to be in terms of a permanent causal power is redundant, for one can imagine the causality to be either with respect to the fire as qualified by the absence of the gem as qualified by the absence of the instigating factor, or with respect to the fire together with the absence of the gem as qualified by the absence of the instigating factor. (1903–4: 3,12–4, 11).

The argument that causal power is irreducible to any of the six categories is here not controverted; rather, what Mādhava provides is a reduction to a complex absence, an unexercised potentiality being analysed into the absence of appropriate triggering causes: “A gem has the power to burn” is analysed as meaning that when the triggering cause is present it burns, and when the triggering cause is absent it does not burn. Mādhava in effect concedes that there were good reasons in the time of Prabhākara to treat causal power as an additional category, but that the inclusion of absence as a distinct category gives the Vaiśeṣika new scope for a successful reduction.

Again, in a decisive break from the ancient tradition, Raghunātha declares in the *Inquiry into the True Nature of Things* that numbers constitute a new category altogether:

Number is a separate category, not a quality, for we make the judgment that there is possession of number in qualities, etc. And this judgment is not an erroneous one, for there is no other judgement which contradicts it. If you argue that judgments of this kind occur when there is inherence of two qualifiers in one individual, I say no, for inherence and inherence-of-two-qualifiers-in-one-substratum are two different relations, from which one cannot derive the homogenous idea of possession. (*Inquiry into the True Nature of Things* 1915: 75.1–5. Potter’s translation, slightly altered).

Raghunātha’s thesis is that the *is-the-number-of* relation is not

reducible to the relation of inherence or any relation constructed out of it.

In alternating between eliminativism and irreductivism, Raghunātha reveals himself to be at best uncomfortable with the idea that one can be a reductionist and a realist at the same time. This is the position, however, which emerges as the most attractive in the seventeenth century. The ability to see that there is a way to escape the antinomy produced by the false dichotomy between realism and reductionism is one of the great “conceptual breaks” of the period.

Raghunātha's Impact on the Seventeenth Century

Raghunātha's *Inquiry into the True Nature of Things* was taken very seriously in the seventeenth century, in spite of the fact that it very radically altered, while remaining reliant upon, the traditional metaphysics of the *Vaiśeṣika-sūtra* and Praśastapāda's expansion. It was not revolutionary in the sense of casting aside the entire Vaiśeṣika account in favour of a quite different one, but rather it reworked the basic ideas in line with a new underlying principle. The new principle, I have claimed, is an anti-reductionist realism. A lot of the ancient metaphysics could be squared with this principle, but much could not be. Raghunātha, in trying to make constructive metaphysics rest on a clear philosophical foundation, had no choice but to engage in a reworking of the ancient categories. His attitude towards ancient philosophy, then, seems to be that there is a good underlying metaphysical insight, but that it has not been articulated with clarity and consistency in the ancient texts or their pre-modern interpreters. One form that the response to Raghunātha took was to offer a different foundational principle, which, it was claimed could salvage more of the ancient theory. For many of the Vārāṇasī metaphysicians, that principle is a “sophisticated” reductive realism. In either case, the point I want to make is that there has been a fundamental shift in attitude towards the ancient: no longer one of deference, the new attitude is to enter into conversation with, to learn from, ancient sources, but not be beholden to them. This is precisely the attitude, I have claimed, which we find in some of the early modern philosophers in Europe too. It is the distinctive trait of early modernity.

Let me re-affirm that I think that it should be evident that Raghunātha's contribution is one of philosophical substance, and not merely of expressive style. Sheldon Pollock says that

In the eyes of many seventeenth-century writers, Raghunātha represents the new scholar par excellence, and his metalinguistic innovations in the search of ever greater precision and sophistication of definition and analysis were enormously influential. These innovations sometimes produced — as readers of say, Heidegger would appreciate — the opposite of the intended result: Raghunātha's style makes his work undoubtedly the most challenging to read in the whole of Indian philosophy. (2001b: 12).

Behind the apparent praise there is here an ever-so slight insinuation that Raghunātha's cleverness consists in a certain obfuscation. Pollock describes Raghunātha's contribution as a "transformation in discursive style." What I hope that our case-study has established is that such a judgement does not engage with the real philosophical content of Raghunātha's thought, an originality of content that in turn led him to invent new modalities of articulation. Nor is it correct to describe his style as "the most challenging to read in the whole of Indian philosophy" — it is difficult, laconic, and technical, but no more so than work in any specialist field of inquiry. Frauwallner's views about the history of philosophy have exerted an unfortunate influence on perceptions of early modernity in India, Frauwallner saying of Raghunātha that

Not only does he strive for brevity but he takes pleasure in contrived and artificial obscurity. He does not speak clearly but gives hints, so that different interpretations are possible. Often important links in the train of thought are left out and the reader has to guess the omissions. It is also characteristic that he avoids to say openly what his own view is. That is why his work is unusually difficult to read. But this obscurity which pretends to be depth of thought, may have contributed, not in a small way, to the reputation which his work enjoyed subsequently. (Frauwallner 1994a: 55).

Frauwallner is clearly quite unable or unwilling to appreciate Raghunātha's work in appropriate terms, and his criticism is reminiscent of those critics of Wittgenstein who berate his unsystematic style and likewise make unwarranted and *ad hominem* accusations of intellectual dishonesty. The publication in 1968 of Matilal's annotated translation and critical study of Raghunātha's *Treatise on Negation* decisively undermined Frauwallner's claim, a claim motivated in part by Frauwallner's larger ambition to present

Aryan culture as a great ancient civilization that fell into stagnation, modernity thereby being preserved as a distinctively Germanic achievement.

Is it possible to reach any conclusions about the type of “illocutionary intervention” that Raghunātha took his work to be making? Clearly, he was fortunate in living in a highly accultured city at a time of relative calm and surrounded by many sources of intellectual inspiration. One text from the period concludes by saying that it was written in Navadvīpa in 1494, under the peaceful governance of Majlisavarvaka, a place full of learning and learned men.²² Raghunātha, of course, would have been among them. On the basis of this document, D.C. Bhattacharya is — and in this he is more or less unique among Navya Nyāya historians — willing to allow the importance of benign Muslim governance:

The historical importance of this newly discovered information should not be overlooked. In the cultural history of Bengal, [Raghunātha] Śīromaṇi's victory over Mithilā and his writing the *Dīdhiti* are unique events, and it is indeed interesting information, according to the new evidence, that behind the writing of the *Dīdhiti* was the unhesitating inspiration of Muslim kingly power.

The claim that there was an “unhesitating inspiration” is an exaggeration, but there is little doubt that during Raghunātha's lifetime Navadvīpa was a place of great scholarship and comparatively peaceful Muslim rule. This, though, does not in itself explain his originality, even if it is a *sine qua non*. One further consideration is Raghunātha's relationship with the scholastic community in Mithilā. Both he, and before him his teacher Vāsudeva, went, it seems, to study in Mithilā before returning to Navadvīpa. There seems to be a clear sense in which one of the things Raghunātha is trying to do is to retrieve Gaṅgeśa from them, to recover a thinker lost in the mires of a conservative scholasticism. Another consideration is Raghunātha's relationship with Vāsudeva, someone who taught the convert to Sufism, Sanātaṇa Gosvāmi, the private secretary of Husain Shāh, who left Navadvīpa for Orissa, and wrote and taught both Navya Nyāya and Vedānta, and was the uncle of the well-connected Vidyānivāsa, a man who would emerge as the head of an important stream of Navya Nyāya influence. I think it would have worked to Raghunātha's

²² Mahādevācārya Siṃhā's commentary on Bhāvabhūti's *Mālatīmādhava* (Sāhitya Pariṣat Patrikā, p. 245; D.C. Bhattacharya 1952 [35]).

advantage that he was not himself a member of that powerful family, not having to bear responsibility for the family's prestige and wealth. Being on the periphery, he was able to benefit from a close association without the burden. I highlighted a particular intellectual virtue in his work, namely its provocative playfulness, its lack of a certain sort of heaviness. I am suggesting that what made this possible is his location in the penumbra of scholarly power, neither too remote nor too close. A final consideration is his exposure to other very dynamic and engaging intellectual programmes in a culturally hybrid city under the administration of the liberal Husain Shāh. Even if one is not inclined towards syncretism or overt dialogue, the existence of alternative world-views as real lived possibilities exerts its own influence. Not stifled in the conservative environment of Mithilā, Raghunātha had options the Mithilā scholars did not.

The illocutionary force of the *Inquiry into the True Nature of Things*, its "intervention," consists in a call for a re-orientation of gaze, away from the texts and onto the facts themselves. If you don't like the idea of treating numbers as a new type of entity, he seems to be saying, then show me how to do better and still be true to the facts about the logical form of number statements. This is typical of the challenge Raghunātha's work had. It is also typical that we have had to collect together his comments from various texts, in contexts not clearly marked as having to do with the subject in hand. This left his followers, and his critics, with plenty of work to do.

Raghunātha's innovativeness consists, in the first instance, in a radically new conception of one's duties, as a philosopher, to the past. The new spirit is nicely put by Veṇḍatta at the end of his *Embellishment of the Categories*. He says that that it is acceptable to modify (*ūh-*) the old scheme of metaphysical categories if it done on the basis of a deliberation (*vicāra*) involving considerations of simplicity and complexity, even without there being a conflict with the ancient sources, and that Raghunātha's theory too could thus be modified. Indeed, if this were not the case, a scepticism which denies all the categories would be confirmed, for while one can agree to reject categories that do conflict with the ancient sources, the rejection of a category which does not must be a matter of careful thought.²³ The

²³ *yathāyatham lāghavagauravābhāṃ śrutisūtrāvirodhena vicārya padārthā ūhanīvāḥ | asmākam iva gaudaśiromaṇer apy ayam eva panthā ūhyah | anyathā sarvapadārthāpalāpe vaitāṇḍikatvaṃ sidhyedīti santoṣaṃ sudhībhiḥ | śrutisūtraviruddhānāṃ khaṇḍanaṃ svīkaromy aham | khaṇḍanaṃ tvaviruddhānāṃ padārthānāṃ matam sama ||* (Veṇḍatta 1930: 36).

early modern philosopher enters into a conversation with the ancient texts, neither discarding them altogether nor allowing one's own reason to be subservient to them. Veṅḍatta refers to a type of reasoning, 'modification' as one of the key instruments in the new approach to the past.²⁴

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²⁴ Veṅḍatta here finds a new application for a conception of reason as modification (*ūha*) that had already achieved considerable theoretical articulation, especially in the work of Mimāṃsā ritualists who seek rationally to adapt the ancient ritual prescriptions to suit modern times.

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Professor
Dept of Philosophy
University of Sussex
U.K.
and
Dept of Philosophy
Kunghee University
Seoul, Republic of Korea