

OCHS Shivdasani Conference

Thinking Inside the Box: The Concept of a Category in Indian Philosophy

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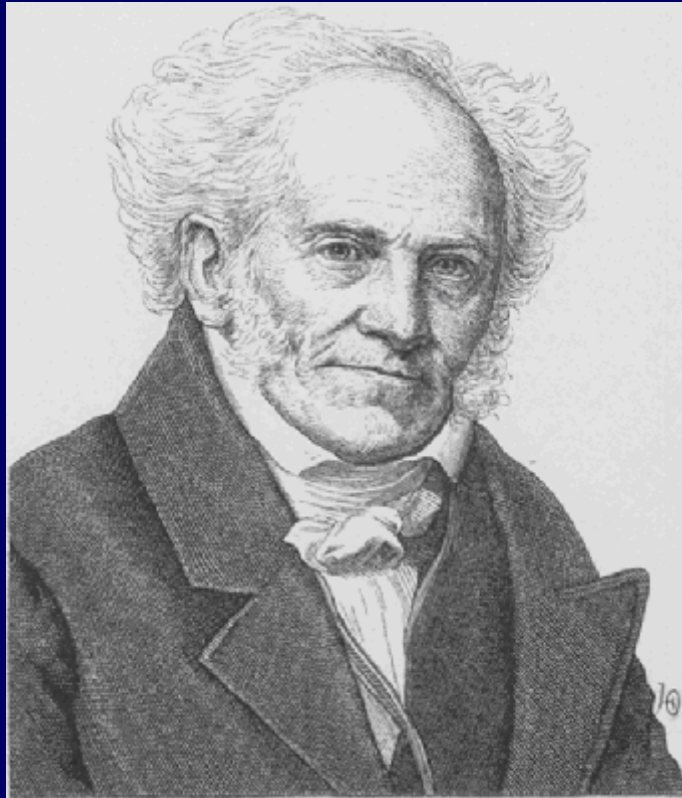
The Analysis of Experience in Classical Sāṃkhya

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Arthur Schopenhauer on Sāṃkhya's 'pedantry'



"A peculiar feature of pedantry and narrowness in the Samkhya is the system of numbers, the summation and enumeration of qualities and attributes. This, however, appears to be customary in India, for the very same thing is done in the Buddhist scriptures."

(Parerga and Paralipomena [1851])

Categorial systems in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* (c. 450 CE)

<i>pratyaya-sarga</i>	<i>bhautika-sarga</i>	<i>kṛtaḥ sargaḥ</i>
Comprising fifty psychological states and dispositions	Comprising three 'realms': <ul style="list-style-type: none">• divine (<i>daiva</i>)• natural/animal (<i>tairyagyona</i>)• human (<i>mānuṣa</i>)	Comprising the twenty-three categories of manifest (<i>vyakta</i>) <i>prakṛti</i>

The difficulty of interpreting Sāṃkhya's 'cosmology'

“Out of [its] intense observation of the world comes what classical Sāṃkhya is most famous for: the categorization of cosmic creation into 23 essences (*tattvas*) (Puruṣa and unmanifest Prakṛti make 25). The whole cosmology of Sāṃkhya finds its foundation on these essences.

Yet a deep confusion has existed among scholars who have attempted to interpret the essences. The state of affairs has come about because the *Kārikā* presents the essences as both cosmic and psychological phenomena.”

(Rodney Parrott 1986: 55)

Gist of my paper

- Existing interpretations and their problems

Two troublesome presuppositions:

- a) relations between the categories are diachronic
 - b) psychological interpretation = account of psychological *faculties*, related in terms of material causality
- Alternative interpretation
 - as an analysis of experience

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Sāṃkhya's 'metaphysical dualism'

"It is uncontroversial that Sāṃkhya–Yoga is a kind of metaphysical dualism: it posits just two fundamental categories of reality, *puruṣa* ('self', 'consciousness') and *prakṛti* ('nature', 'matter')."

(Roy Perrett 2001: 8)

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... contrasted with that of Descartes

"If one looks ... at the classic expression of the dualist position in Western thought, namely that of Descartes, one realizes immediately that the Sāṃkhya somehow misses the mark."

(Gerald Larson 1983: 219)

“In classical Sāṃkhya ... the fundamental dualism is that between individual consciousness, on the one hand, and the unconscious world, on the other. The Sāṃkhya dualism is not a dualism of mind and body, or a dualism of thought and extension.”

(Larson 1969: 47)

Sāṃkhya's alleged realism

"[Sāṃkhya] upholds a thoroughgoing realism. The world around us is real and independent of our perception of it being a series of material evolutes (*pariṇāma*) deriving from *prakṛti*."

(Richard King 1999: 65)

***Prakṛti* as 'material substance'**

"*Prakṛti* ... is a unitary material substance which evolves into the world we perceive through our senses."

(Roy Perrett 2001: 9)

Sāṃkhyakārikā 22

*prakṛter mahāṃs tato 'haṅkāras tasmād gaṇas ca ṣoḍaśakaḥ |
tasmād api ṣoḍaśakāt pañcabhyaḥ pañca bhūtāni || 22 ||*

*prakṛti → mahat (or buddhi) → ahaṅkāra → 'group of sixteen'
(namely: manas, five buddhīndriyas, five karmendriyas, and
five tanmātrās); five tanmātrās → five bhūtās*

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Alternative translations of *Sāṃkhyakārikā* 22

Gangānātha Jhā (1896):

“From Prakriti **issues** Mahat (or Buddhi); from this Mahat again **issues** Self-consciousness (Ahankâra), from which **proceeds** the set of sixteen; from five of these sixteen, **proceed** the five gross elements.”

S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri (1948):

“From Primal Nature **proceeds** the Great One (intellect), thence individuation, thence the aggreg[a]te of the sixteen and from five out of these sixteen, the five gross elements.”

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Gerald Larson (1979):

“From *prakṛti* (**emerges**) the great one (*mahat*); from that (**comes**) self-awareness (*ahaṃkāra*); from that (**comes**) the group of sixteen. Moreover, from five of the sixteen (**come**) the five gross elements.”

Exegetically neutral?:

“From *prakṛti*, *mahat*; from that, *ahaṃkāra*; and from that, the group of sixteen; from five of those sixteen, the five *bhūtas*.”

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Standard interpretation of the 23 manifest categories

mahat or *buddhi* – ‘intellect’

ahaṃkāra – ‘self-awareness’ / ‘egoity’

manas – ‘mind’

buddhīndriyaṣ – five senses

karmendriyaṣ – five ‘action capacities’

Psychological
faculties

tanmātraṣ – five ‘subtle elements’

bhūtaṣ – five ‘gross elements’

Constituents
of the
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Radhakrishnan's duplicative interpretation

“Buddhi, as the product of prakṛti and the generator of ahaṁkāra, is different from buddhi which controls the processes of the senses, mind and ahaṁkāra. If the former is identified with the latter, the whole evolution of prakṛti must be regarded as subjective, since the ego and the non-ego are both the products of buddhi. This ambiguity is found in the other products of prakṛti also.”

(Radhakrishnan 1927: 268)

Ian Whicher's version

"It would be a grave mistake to assert that the cosmic and individual *buddhi* for example, have the same ontological status. ... Personal intellects are not generated from *prakṛti* in the real causal process but are 'created' when the prakṛtic sense of self 'imagines' or conceives *māhāt* to be the locus of authentic identity."

(Whicher 1998: 71)

Larson's bemusement about the categories' soteriological relevance

"[Sāṃkhya's] theory of evolution has very little to do with the problem of salvation, since in any given life, evolution is already accomplished before that particular life begins.

But why then does the *[Sāṃkhya]Kārikā* discuss the problem of the functioning of the individual in the context of evolution or emergence?

One possible answer is that each successive life somehow recapitulates the original process of emergence, but such a doctrine of recapitulation is nowhere set forth in the *Kārikā*.

... Clearly the exposition of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* on this point leaves much to be desired."

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Richard King on categories of experience

“the Sāṃkhya scheme ... can be interpreted both in psychological and cosmological terms. The twenty-five *tattvas* can be seen as a conceptual map of the basic categories of experience – an analytic picture, if you like, of what you are actually experiencing now.”

(King 1999: 66)

Jajneswar Ghosh's phenomenological suggestion

“[Sāṃkhya] makes no question about the existence of a reality beyond the presentation continuum in us or of a principle behind it to which it owes its solidarity. At the same time, since analytical reflection is brought to bear primarily on the contents of consciousness, there is no great leap from thought to things in themselves ...”

(Ghosh 1977 [1936]: 4)

J. N. Mohanty:

“one may make sense of the Sāmkhya order of evolution by invoking some parts of Kantian epistemology.”

(2001: 86–87)

Heinrich Zimmer on *buddhi / adhyavasāya*

“... determination, resolution, mental effort; awareness, feeling, opinion, belief, knowledge, discrimination, and decision.”

(Zimmer 1953: 320)

***Yogasūtra* 4.23 on objectual /
intentional consciousness**

draṣṭṛdr̥śyoparaktam̐ cittam̐ sarvārtham̐

“all objects [result from] the colouring (*uparakta*) of
consciousness (*citta*) by the seer and the seeable.”

(*Yogasūtra* 4.23)

Translations of *ahaṃkāra*

'self-consciousness' (Jhâ 1896)

'self-awareness' (Larson 1979)

'individuation' (Suryanarayana Sastri 1948)

'egoity' (Burley 2007)

Creative source (*prakṛti*)

**Intentional consciousness
(*buddhi, mahat*)**

Egoity (*ahaṅkāra*)

sāttvika

tāmasa

Mentation (*manas*)

Five sense-capacities (*buddhīndriyas*)

seeing (*cakṣus*)
hearing (*śrotas*)
smelling (*ghraṇa*)
tasting (*rasana*)
touching (*tvac*)

Five action-capacities (*karmendriyas*)

speaking (*vacana*)
clasping (*ādāna*)
walking (*viharaṇa*)
excreting (*utsarga*)
sexual enjoyment (*ānanda*)

Five modes of sense-content (*tanmātras*)

sound (*śabda*)
tactile feeling (*sparsā*)
visible form (*rūpa*)
flavour (*rasa*)
odour (*gandha*)

Five perceptual elements (*bhūtas*)

earth (*pṛthivī*)
water (*ap*)
fire (*tejas*)
air (*vāyu*)
space (*ākāśa*)

Mircea Eliade on the *tanmātras* and *bhūtas*

"By a process of condensation that tends to produce structures increasingly gross, these *tanmātras* give rise to atoms (*paramāṇu*) and molecules (*sthūlabhūtāni*; literally, 'dense material particle'), which in turn give birth to vegetable organisms (*vrikṣa*) and animal organisms (*śarīra*)."

(Eliade 1969: 21)

Herbert Guenther on the *mahābhūtas* according to Abhidharma Buddhism

“There are four such ‘great elementary qualities’: earth-, water-, fire- and air-basis ... ‘Earth’ is the symbolic expression for all that is solid and able to carry a load, ‘water’ for all that is fluid and cohesive, ‘fire’ for all that is light and moving.”

(Guenther 1974: 146)

Creative source (*prakṛti*)



Intentional consciousness
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Five perceptual elements (*bhūtas*)

earth (*pṛthivī*) – solidity
water (*ap*) – fluidity
fire (*tejas*) – light and heat
air (*vāyu*) – movement
space (*ākāśa*)

Creative source (*prakṛti*)

Intentional consciousness
(*buddhi, mahat*)

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Illustration of Schopenhauer

<http://www.parodos.it/filosofia/immagine/Schopenhauer.gif> (accessed 30 September 2009)