

Abhinavagupta is undoubtedly the most famous Kashmirian medieval intellectual: his decisive contributions to Indian aesthetics, Śaiva theology and metaphysics, and to the philosophy of the subtle and original Pratyabhijñā system are well known. Yet so far his works have often been studied without fully taking into account the specific context in which they are embedded – an intellectual background that is not less exceptional than Abhinavagupta himself. While providing fresh interpretations of some of the great Śaiva polymath's works, the nineteen essays gathered here attempt to map out for the first time the extraordinary cultural effervescence that took place in the little kingdom of Kashmir around Abhinavagupta's time.

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Around Abhinavagupta

Aspects of the Intellectual History of Kashmir
from the Ninth to the Eleventh Century

edited by

Eli Franco and Isabelle Ratié

LIT

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Why Isn't "Comparison" a Means of Knowledge?

Bhāsarvajña on *Upamāna**

ELI FRANCO

The inclusion of a paper on Bhāsarvajña's *Nyāyabhūṣaṇa* (hereafter NBhū) in this volume requires a word of justification. The evidence that ties Bhāsarvajña to Kashmir is wafer-thin¹ and in fact we do not know where he lived. On the other hand, there are very close affinities between the NBhū and the *Nyāyamañjarī* (hereafter NM) and thus the relevance of the former to the Nyāya philosophy of Kashmir is undeniable. Further, the NBhū was well known in Kashmir and our oldest manuscript of it, in Śāradā script, comes from the Kashmiri region. Furthermore, Bhāsarvajña's NBhū represents the most thorough response to the Kashmiri Buddhist philosopher Prajñākaragupta. Thus, even if Bhāsarvajña himself was not a Kashmiri, his work certainly played an important role in the region. Last but not least, Bhāsarvajña was known to and referred to by Abhinavagupta.

Bhāsarvajña is one of the most important and most fascinating philosophers of classical India and his magnum opus, the *Nyāyabhūṣaṇa*, deserves far more attention than it has received so far. The work was thought to be lost for a long time and its first (and so far only) edition was published in 1968 by Swami Yogīndrānanda.² Since then, only a single book-length study and a handful of papers

* I am grateful to my Naiyāyikī, Karin Preisendanz, for several discussions on *upamāna* and the materials presented here.

¹ See the discussion in JOSHI 1986, pp. 1-3.

² The edition is a small miracle. It is based on a single manuscript which the editor was not permitted to consult directly; instead a transcript was prepared for his perusal. The fact that the edition is nevertheless quite readable testifies to the accuracy of the single manuscript, the modern transcript, and the editor's capacity. However, at least two more manuscripts of the text have been discovered and a new edition is certainly a desideratum. Even in the small section translated below, a few significant improvements could be made.

have been devoted to it.³ This is indeed surprising, for Bhāsarvajña is an unusual figure in the Nyāya tradition inasmuch as he did not hesitate to reject some of the most fundamental doctrines of his tradition. Mostly his new tenets relate to the metaphysics of the Vaiśeṣika. He unified the categories of qualities and motions and reduced the number of qualities⁴; he changed the doctrine of liberation in arguing that *mokṣa* is not a neutral state but a blissful one, and he considered God, time and space to be a single entity. In the area of *pramāṇas*, Bhāsarvajña's most conspicuous departure from the Nyāya tradition is that he accepted only three means of knowledge, perception, inference and verbal communication, and denied *upamāna* an independent status. It is on this rejection of *upamāna* that I would like to expand here today.

Upamāna, often translated as “analogy” or “comparison,” is one of the minor means of knowledge. Only three philosophical traditions accepted it as an independent means, that is, assumed that it cannot be included in one of the other means of knowledge or reduced to a combination thereof: Nyāya (but not Vaiśeṣika), Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. The Vedānta theory merely repeats that of the Mīmāṃsā and thus there are basically only two theories of *upamāna* in

³ Potter's bibliography mentions the following: (494.2.1) A. Thakur, “*Nyāyabhūṣaṇa*: a lost work of medieval Indian logic,” JBRs 45, 1959, pp. 89-101; (494.2.2) G. Oberhammer, “Der Worterkennntnis bei Bhāsarvajña,” *Offenbarung*, pp. 107-120; (494.2.3) G. Oberhammer, “Bhāsarvajña's Lehre von der Offenbarung,” *WZKSOA* 18, 1974, pp. 131-182; (494.2.4) Summarized by B.K. Matilal, *EnIndPh2*, 1977, pp. 410-424; (494.2.5) T. Kumare, “*Sakalajagadvidhātranumānam* (I) – the proof of the God Śiva by Bhāsarvajña,” *JIBSt* 28(1), 1979, pp. 7-10; 30(2), 1982, 26-29; (494.2.6) L.V. Joshi, *A Critical Study of the Pratyakṣa Pariccheda of Bhāsarvajña's Nyāyabhūṣaṇa*, Ahmedabad: 1986; (494.2.7) E. Franco, “Bhāsarvajña and Jayarāṣi: the refutation of skepticism in the *Nyāyabhūṣaṇa*,” *BerlinIndStud* 3, 1987, pp. 23-50; (494.2.8) P.K. Sen, “Some textual problems in *Nyāyabhūṣaṇa*,” *Prajñajyoti*, pp. 199-205; (494.2.11) P. Haag-Bernede with K. Venugopaladas, “Une vue dissidente sur le nombre: le *Nyāyabhūṣaṇa* de Bhāsarvajña”, *BEFEO* 88, 2001, pp. 125-159. To these and MURRAY 2011, a considerable number of studies in Japanese, notably by Shodo Yamakami, could be added. See <http://www.cc.kyotosu.ac.jp/~yamakami/publication.html>.

⁴ He denied that numbers, size (*parimāṇa*), separateness, disjunction, farness, nearness and impetus (*vega*) are qualities. He also denied that viscosity (*sneha*) belongs to water alone.

classical Indian philosophy, namely, of the Mīmāṃsā⁵ and the Nyāya. In the pre-classical period, certain Buddhists, probably of the Sarvāstivāda tradition, also accepted it.⁶ However, already Vasubandhu accepted only three means of knowledge (perception, inference, and verbal testimony), and Dignāga, followed by the entire Epistemological Tradition, only two (perception and inference).

The minor position of *upamāna* in philosophical texts can be contrasted with its prominent position in *Alaṅkāraśāstra*. As GEROW 1971 (p. 140) points out, among the hundred or so known *alaṅkāras*, about half are reducible to a basic simile.⁷ One author, Vāmana, even attempted, albeit not convincingly, to reduce all figures involving meaning (*arthālaṅkāra*) to *upamā*. Unlike what one may expect, the reason why *upamāna* was rejected as an independent means of knowledge, or even when accepted, hardly ever used in philosophical discourse, is not that arguments based on analogy or comparison were considered uncertain. Rather, *upamāna* in philosophical texts means something different; it cannot be understood as analogy or comparison in the usual meaning of these terms, and it is, if its definition is followed, quite useless.

Bhāsarvajña's main thesis on *upamāna* is that it is included in verbal communication and thus does not constitute an independent means of knowledge. The discussion is divided into two parts, the first directed against the Mīmāṃsā, the second against the Nyāya. One has to note perhaps that he does not identify his opponents by name or school affiliation, but their identity is clear.

That Bhāsarvajña's first opponent is a Mīmāṃsaka is obvious already from the terms of discussion. For instance, he refers to the division of Vedic sentences into injunctions, narrations and repetitions (*vidhi*, *arthavāda* and *anuvāda*, NBhū, p. 417, ll. 23-24), uses the typical Mīmāṃsā example for verbal communication (in a context of sacrifice) "Bring fire" (p. 417, l. 24), brings presumption (*arthāpatti*) into play, and mentions the typical Mīmāṃsā pair of terms *niyoga* and *pratiṣedha* (p. 419, l. 12).

Bhāsarvajña presents his argument as a formal inference:⁸

⁵ Within the Mīmāṃsā there is a minor variation on the status of similarity (*sādrśya*), which according to Prabhākara forms a category in itself.

⁶ See *Upāyahrdaya* 13.3-4; see also FRANCO 2004, pp. 486-487.

⁷ On *upamā* in *Alaṅkāraśāstra* see also PORCHER 1978, pp. 23-58.

⁸ NBhū, p. 417, l. 22: *yathā gaus tathā gavaya ity upamānaṃ śabdāntarbhūtaṃ, vākyarūpatvād, agnim ānayetvādivākyavat.*

Thesis: the *upamāna* “the gayal is like a cow” is included in verbal communication (*śabda*),

Reason: because it has the form/nature of a statement,

Example: like the statement “Bring fire.”

If the Mīmāṃsaka would claim that the special form of *upamāna* justifies its being considered a separate means of knowledge, the same would apply to the injunctions, narrations, etc., and there would be no end to the number of *pramāṇas*.

Before we consider Bhāsarvajña’s argument, it would be useful to take a brief look at the Mīmāṃsā theory of *upamāna*. Śābara himself does not mention *upamāna*. As is the case with other means of knowledge, he contents himself with citing an earlier commentary by an anonymous Vṛttikāra. For the latter too, *upamāna* does not seem to have been a major concern and in the quoted passage it is only briefly defined and illustrated (ŚBh 32.4-5):

upamānam api sādṛśyam asannikṛṣṭe ’rthe buddhim utpādayati, yathā gavayadarśanam gosmaraṇasya.

Upamāna, [i.e.] similarity, produces a cognition with respect to an object that is not in contact [with the senses].⁹ For instance, seeing a gayal for someone who remembers a cow (*gosmaraṇasya*).

No matter whether *gosmaraṇa* in this sentence is taken as a *bahuvrīhi* or not,¹⁰ it is clear that the word *smaraṇa* posed a problem to the later Mīmāṃsakas, for recollection is not accepted as a means of knowledge. Although it is not quite clear what the Vṛttikāra meant, the later Mīmāṃsā tradition (both Bhāṭṭa and Prābhākara, and the Vedānta as well)¹¹ is unanimous that he could not have meant that *smaraṇa* simply means recollecting. Kumārila, who is probably¹² Bhāsarvajña’s main adversary in this section, gives two interpretations: the object cognized by *upamāna* is either the cow qualified by the similarity to the gayal, or the similarity qualified by the cow.¹³

⁹ Or perhaps: *upamāna* is similarity; it produces a cognition with respect to an object that is not in contact [with the senses].

¹⁰ It is not entirely certain that *gosmaraṇa* has to be taken as a *bahuvrīhi*. Thus, one can also translate it “for the recollection of a cow.”

¹¹ BHATT 1962, p. 290.

¹² Note that the discussion does not follow closely the one in the ŚV. Contrast for instance with the discussion in NM.

¹³ ŚV, *Upamāna* 36: *tasmād yat smaryate tat syāt sādṛśyena viśeṣitam | prameyam upamānasya sādṛśyam vā tadanvitam* ||. See also Jha’s translation (JHA 1909, p.

Now, the Mīmāṃsakas argue that a cognition which has the form “my cow is similar to this gayal” cannot be subsumed under any other acceptable means of knowledge. It is not perception because the person in the forest who has this cognition cannot perceive his cow at home. Bhāsarvajña is not explicit as to why the opponent considers that the cognition cannot be inference or verbal communication, but this is clear. It cannot be subsumed under inference because is not conditioned by concomitance (*vyāpti*) and so on. Nor does one need a previous verbal communication in order to see the similarity between the two animals. This is, of course, one of the main differences between the Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya theories of *upamāna*.

Thus, the Mīmāṃsā objection against Bhāsarvajña’s inclusion of *upamāna* in verbal communication amounts to a denial that the reason “having the form/nature of a statement” occurs in the subject of inference (technically, the inference contains the fallacy *svarūpā-siddha-hetu* or *āśrayāsiddha-hetu*). *Upamāna* is something completely different, as is apparent from the following illustration: someone who owns a cow goes to the forest and encounters a gayal. He sees the similarity of the gayal to his cow, and has the cognition “my cow is similar to this gayal.” Verbal communication plays no role in this example.

Bhāsarvajña rejects the Mīmāṃsā claim at first appearance by a surprising move. The cognition “the cow is similar to this gayal” was experienced before and is therefore nothing but recollection. And of course recollection cannot be the result of a means of knowledge. This point is generally accepted,¹⁴ but the Mīmāṃsakas are especially sensitive to it because of its ramifications to the relationship between *smṛti* and *śruti*.

The opponent retorts that the cow was seen, but the similarity¹⁵ between the two was not seen before. However, this is precisely what Bhāsarvajña claims. The cow was already perceived with its similarity to a gayal (even before the gayal was seen!) because this similarity is something visible (i.e., a visible property of the cow).

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¹⁴ The only philosophical tradition that admits memory as means of knowledge is that of the Jainas.

¹⁵ This clearly refers to the definition of *upamāna* in ŚV, *Upamāna* 36 quoted above.

Or if it were not visible, it would never be perceived, even after the gayal is seen.

Further, the reverse cognition (i.e., the *upamāna* as means) is also produced: “This gayal is similar to my cow.” But such a cognition is not produced by the sense faculty alone or assisted by a recollection of any old thing. So there must be something already perceived in the cow that triggers its recollection when the gayal is seen. If the Mīmāṃsaka admits that the *upamāna* is produced by a sense faculty assisted by a recollection of something specific, he must admit that the cow was seen as similar to a gayal. Otherwise one would not recollect the cow rather than, say, a buffalo. The recollection presupposes that something specific was perceived in the cow which was not perceived in buffaloes, etc. So the similarity to the gayal was perceived before. Thus, both *upamāna* (the gayal is similar to the cow) and *upamiti* (the cow is similar to the gayal) are rejected as recollection.

But how is it possible to perceive the similarity to the gayal before perceiving the gayal itself?

It is possible because this perception does not mean that one can ascertain the similarity to a gayal. Rather, when the cow is perceived for the first time by a non-conceptual cognition, that is, in an undifferentiated manner, its similarity to the gayal is also perceived, more precisely, what is later called the similarity to a gayal is also perceived, we would say intuitively, just as the universal cow-ness is perceived when seeing a cow for the first time (even though it can only be ascertained upon the perception of further individuals of the same species).

The upshot of the argument is this: similarity means to have a common property, and this (exact same) common property resides in both the cow and the gayal. Therefore, even though the gayal itself is seen for the first time, its similarity to the cow is not perceived for the first time because it was perceived when the cow was perceived. Thus, its similarity is recollected. Bhāsarvajña construes an analogous case to the perception of universals. Once the universal cow-ness or bovinity is seen, even when an individual cow is seen for the first time, the bovinity that resides in it cannot be said to be perceived for the first time because it was perceived before in other cows (otherwise one would not recognize the cow as cow).¹⁶

¹⁶ In other words, when one sees a cow etc., for the first time, one perceives the

The opponent continues: the cognition that qualifies¹⁷ the gayal, “the cow is similar to it,”¹⁸ cannot be a recollection because it arises for the first time when the gayal is seen. Otherwise the conceptual cognition (which associates a perceived individual with a concept) would also be recollection.

Bhāsarvajña replies that this cognition can be proved by two other means of knowledge: *arthāpatti* and inference.

The proof by *arthāpatti* (NBhū, p. 418, l. 23) is this: if the cow were not similar to this gayal, it would not have been perceived as similar to it because the similarity resides in both. But the gayal is perceived as similar to the cow, therefore, the cow too is similar to it.¹⁹

Bhāsarvajña also formulates an inference to the same effect that could have been lifted straight from a Navya Nyāya text:

The cow is similar to this gayal because the gayal is delimited by the similarity of the cow. (NBhū, p. 418, l. 26: *prayogo 'pi: anena sadṛśī gauḥ, svasādrśyenāsyāvachchedakatvāt.*)

Vyāpti: whatever A delimits B by its own similarity (i.e., by the similarity of A), that A is seen as similar to B, for instance, one brother to another. (NBhū, p. 418, l. 27: *yat svasādrśyena yasyāvachchedakaṃ, tat tena sadṛśaṃ dr̥ṣṭaṃ, yathā bhrātrā bhrātrantaram.*)

A complicated statement, but trivial when understood. It amounts to an assertion that if A and B share a common property, that property resides also in B.

Further, if a different *pramāṇa* is assumed for such a case, this will lead to the assumption of an indefinite number of *pramāṇas*. Consider the following cognition: “Something seen before is longer

universal cow-ness too, but one is not aware of it as such. However, after perceiving further cows, one becomes aware of it as well as of the fact that it was already seen when perceiving the first individual cow.

¹⁷ The qualification is understood to be already verbal/conceptual. In *nirvikalpa-ka-pratyakṣa* the differentiation between the qualified and the qualifications is not yet done.

¹⁸ Should one expect, “the gayal is similar to the cow”? According to Bhāsarvajña, this same content can be a qualification of the cow or the gayal.

¹⁹ I am not sure about the purpose of this statement. Perhaps Bhāsarvajña tries to show that both *pramāṇas* make *upamāna* superfluous.

than this object seen now.”²⁰ This cognition is not *upamāna* because its object is not similarity. Nor is it perception, inference, etc., for the same reasons that the opponent refuses to subsume *upamāna* in them. Thus, a further *pramāṇa* would have to be assumed for such cognitions. This example is important because it clearly shows that the translation of *upamāna* as comparison is inaccurate.

When someone is asked, “how do you know that the cow that is at home is similar to the gayal present here?”, he answers: “I saw the cow before by perception.” For the same reason cognitions such as “this is bigger than that” should be considered as recollections, that is, because the size was perceived before, albeit in a non-differentiated manner by a non-conceptual cognition.

A final attempt is made by the Mīmāṃsaka to save his position by pointing out that inasmuch as the recollection imitates the experience, one cannot have a conceptual recollection on the basis of a non-conceptual and non-differentiated experience. But Bhāsarvajña denies that. One observes that conceptual recollection arises also from non-conceptual experience. (Although it is not stated here, recollection is generally considered to be always conceptual). That’s the way things are and one cannot forbid them to be so.

This concludes Bhāsarvajña’s arguments against the Mīmāṃsā. He now turns to his main or more important adversary, the Nyāya. The Nyāya defines the object, i.e., the result, of *upamāna* as the cognition of the relation between a term and a designated object (*saṃjñāsaṃjñīsambandha*). Consider the following situation: one learns that for a certain sacrifice a gayal is required. The person who wants to obtain this animal hears a forest inhabitant saying: “The gayal is like a cow,” and goes to the forest to look for a gayal. He sees an animal similar to a cow, but with a round neck, i.e., without the dewlap, and understands: “This is a gayal.” In the same manner, someone is sent to the forest by a physician to bring some medicinal plants he has never seen before and is told for instance, “the plant called pea-leafed (*māṣaparṇī*) is like the sheaf of peas.”²¹ One goes to the forest, finds the plant and brings it to the physician. So *upamāna* as means is the cognition of similarity produced by a sense

²⁰ Cf. NBhū, p. 418, ll. 28-29: *pūrvadr̥ṣṭam vastu etasmāt sthūlam, etasmād dīrgham, etasmād hrasvam.*

²¹ I am not sure what the word *stamba* in NBhū, p. 419, l. 18 means. A similar example appears in NBh on 1.1.6., but the word *stamba* does not appear in it.

faculty, assisted by recollection produced by mnemonic traces, produced by a cognition, produced by a statement (NBhū, p. 419, ll. 20-21): *vākyajajñājanitasamśkārajanitasmṛtisahakāriṇendriyeṇa janitaṃ sārūpyajñānam upamānam*.²² The result (*phala*) of *upamāna*, as just mentioned, is the cognition of the relation between a word or a term and the object it designates.

But that is not correct, says Bhāsarvajña. The relation between a term and a designated object is known from the moment one hears the statement. When the *gayal* is seen, the relation is only remembered. Again, if asked “How do you know that this is a *gayal*?”, one would answer: “I understood it from the statement of the forester.” One would not answer: I know it from *upamāna*. In everyday practice we see only three *pramāṇas* being used, for instance, “I see a pot by perception,” “I infer fire from smoke” and “I know about heaven from sacred writings.” One never sees anyone saying “I know this by *upamāna*.” Indeed, one should add here, that in philosophical texts too, *upamāna* is, to my knowledge, never used. I’ll return to this point below.

Now, the opponent argues, of course, that as long as the *gayal* is not seen, the relation between the term and the designated object is not perceived or understood (for one cannot perceive a relation, if one of the *relata* is not perceived). That, says Bhāsarvajña, is simply not true. For instance, one apprehends a relation between an invisible god like Indra and his name Śakra. Another example: one can name a child before it is born.

Now the Naiyāyika objects that in these examples there is a cause of linguistic understanding (I understand *nimitta* here as in *vyutpat-tinimitta*) which allows the understanding of a term such as “thousand-eyes” in respect to Indra, but this is not the case for *gayals* etc.

Bhāsarvajña retorts that in such cases too there is a *nimitta*, namely, the similarity to the cow. The word “*gayal*” (*gavaya*) is understood by having recourse to a *nimitta*, namely, the similarity to the cow.

The opponent objects that the similarity is not the *nimitta*. Rather *gayal*-ness or being a *gayal* (*gavayatva*) is the *nimitta* for the usage (*pravṛtti*) of the term *gayal*. When the latter is not apprehended, one cannot use the term.

²² This seems like a modification of Vātsyāyana’s statement in NBh, for whom *upamāna* seems to be the statement.

Bhāsarvajña retorts that this is not a problem because the gayal-ness too is understood from the statement that the gayal is similar to a cow. For instance, by showing a form in a picture, someone can explain: this is a camel, this is an elephant, and so forth. Or one can explain by words. One can explain a camel by saying that his neck has a special form and so forth, an elephant by saying that it has special teeth, and so on. Thus, from words alone one can understand the camel-ness and elephant-ness. When explaining the words camel and elephant by means of neck, teeth, etc., one can make them known, and no other means of knowledge is possible in this case.

Now, the Naiyāyika has to consent to that, but objects that the cognition that arises from a statement is afflicted, *upapluta*. This is a rather unusual term, but interestingly also used by Jayanta in the NM in the same context.²³ However, we cannot assume that Bhāsarvajña refers to Jayanta. It seems rather that both use the same earlier source, undoubtedly lost now, Jayanta adopting it, Bhāsarvajña rejecting it. It is also clear that the relationship between the cognition that arises from the statement and the one that arises when seeing the gayal was perceived as a problem before Bhāsarvajña and Jayanta dealt with it, and one of the former Naiyāyikas must have suggested that the cognition based on the verbal communication is in some way defective or flawed, and that it becomes “corrected” only upon the actual seeing of the individual. Only when the relation between the term and the object is apprehended from *upamāna*, it is established in respect to a particular individual and the cognition stops being “afflicted.”

But what could this affliction be?²⁴ It is not the falsity of cognition, because the cognition is not false. Nor is it a doubt, because the cognition does not take the form of an alternative such as “is it a man or a pillar?”. As the cognition “the gayal is similar to a cow” is actually a *pramāṇa*, there can be no affliction. The fact that the cognition is not related to an individual animal cannot be considered an affliction. Otherwise, the cognition of the fundamental entities of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, which are known only from inference or sacred

²³ E.g. NM, vol. I, p. 389: *yathā naiyāyikānām atideśavākyavelāyām sopaplavā saṃjñāsaṃjñīsamandhabuddhir upamānān nirupaplavābhavati...* On *upamāna* in the NM see also BIJALWAN 1977, pp. 187-213.

²⁴ As far as I understand, the “affliction” is a somewhat metaphorical way to say that the cognition based on verbal communication is not as clear and distinct (*vispaṣṭa*, cf. NM, vol. I, p. 379, l. 2) as the one that arises when the gayal is in front of one’s eyes.

writings, would be afflicted, for instance, the Self, the mind (*manas*), *dharma* and *adharma*, and so on. They too are not related to an individual entity perceived by the faculty of vision, for instance, the Self is that in which desires inhere; the atom is the smallest thing; the mind exists because two cognitions do not arise at the same time.

Bhāsarvajña looks at the problem from another perspective. What is the difference between *upamāna* and a convention (*saṃketa*) that a certain word designates a certain object (i.e., when one learns the word *gayal* for the first time)? The Naiyāyika opponent agrees that when there is a verbal convention, the *upamāna*, i.e., the statement on the similarity, is not a different *pramāṇa* (i.e., is included in *śabda*).²⁵ In the convention one says “the *gayal* is that in which there is similarity to a cow²⁶; the term *gayal* [is used] for that [animal].” However, when one hears “the *gayal* is like a cow,” mere similarity is perceived, not the relation of the term with the designated object.²⁷ For this reason *upamāna* is accepted as having this relation as its object.

The argument seems almost gratuitous. Bhāsarvajña says that if the relation is not perceived from the statement, the statement is superfluous. Mere similarity is perceived even by someone who does not hear the statement.²⁸ Therefore, one and the same thing is perceived in statements such as “the *gayal* is similar to a cow,” “such an animal is called *gayal*,” or “the term *gayal* is used for such an animal.” Otherwise one would need two different *pramāṇas* when saying in *saṃketa* “this is a cow” and “the word cow is used for this animal.”

²⁵ The convention here seems to be done without seeing the animal. The term *saṃketa* is usually used for the initial agreement, often attributed to God or the Rishis, which fixes the usage of words. But here it seems to refer to a situation where one learns a new word.

²⁶ Of course, *saṃketa* usually does not involve similarity, but a direct indication: this word designates that object present here.

²⁷ It is not clear to me what the difference, if any, should be between the two formulations: *yatra gośādrśyam asti sa gavayah*, and *yādrśo gaus tādrśo gava-yah*. The first formulation looks more like a definition, but since the definition is based on similarity, it is not clear why the opponent claims that in the one case *upamāna* is not another *pramāṇa* and in the other it is. Perhaps what the opponent means is that in *saṃketa*, in addition to the statement of similarity, there is also a statement about the word applying to its object, and that this additional element is lacking in *upamāna*.

²⁸ Indeed for the Mīmāṃsaka hearing the statement is not necessary for *upamāna*; cf. above.

One may object: when one understands in the forest that the word *gayal* is the term for this animal, one perceives an individual. Before that, the perception of the individual does not arise. But if so, one would not be able to apply the convention to further individuals of the same species, and a new *pramāṇa* would have to be assumed each time a new individual cow is recognized. But this is not the case. Even without saying it in so many words, the speaker intends and the hearer understands that the word *cow* is applied to every such individual.

The opponent attempts to save his position by claiming that this is understood by implication (*sāmarthyā*). But the same would apply to the so-called *upamāna*. One says that the *gayal* is similar to a cow and one understands by implication that the term *gayal* applies to such an animal. Even when what is said explicitly differs from the intention, one understands from the context what is meant. For instance, sayings “eat poison; don’t eat at his house.” One understands that this is not an invitation to eat poison, but a warning that eating in that house is to be avoided at all costs. In the same manner, even though it is not explicitly stated, when one says that the *gayal* is similar to a cow, one also understands that the word *gayal* designates an object similar to a cow.

This brings to a close Bhāsarvajña’s arguments against *upamāna*. His next task is to show that the Sūtrakāra also did not accept *upamāna* as *pramāṇa*, in spite of very clear statements to the contrary. But I will not go into that here.

Bhāsarvajña’s argument against the Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā is basically the same: in both cases *upamāna* and its result are nothing but recollection, that is, a mere repetition of a previous experience. As the theories of the two schools differ, so do the relevant recollections. For the Mīmāṃsā it is a recollection of a previous perception, for the Nyāya of a statement by a trustworthy person. But in both cases, Bhāsarvajña claims, they bring nothing new. It seems to me that we have to agree with this opinion as far as the Mīmāṃsā is concerned. It is less obvious about the Nyāya.²⁹

For the Mīmāṃsā, as we have seen, *upamāna* is reduced to a trivial inference based on the reversibility of the relation of similarity,

²⁹ This is not necessarily Bhāsarvajña’s original opinion. He certainly relies on Mīmāṃsā arguments against the Nyāya and vice versa. Since this is often the case, and given that most philosophical texts of classical India are lost, the original contribution of individual authors is difficult to ascertain.

namely, if A is similar to B, B is similar to A. The perception of the similarity of the gayal to the cow brings about the apprehension that the cow is similar to the gayal. Our understanding of the Mīmāṃsā *upamāna* as a trivial inversion is hardly new. As Govardhan Bhatt has pointed out in his foundational study of Kumārila (BHATT 1962, pp. 294, 304): “In Mīmāṃsā *upamāna* is a form of immediate inference in which from the similarity of A to B we infer the similarity of B to A. [...] The conclusion ‘the cow is similar to the *gavaya*’ follows from a single premise, viz. ‘the *gavaya* is similar to the cow’[...].” Hardly something to write home about. And it is clear that *upamāna* cannot be translated as an “analogy” or “comparison” in this context; indeed Bhatt leaves it untranslated throughout the discussion.

When we come to the Nyāya theory of *upamāna*, things do not look much brighter. For the Nyāya, *upamāna* has to do with an identification of an object, but it is identification under extremely narrow conditions. It has to be based on a statement by a reliable person, the statement has to express similarity between two objects, one of the objects has to be unknown, and the identification should consist in relating a certain word to that unknown object.³⁰ Furthermore, even though it is not stated explicitly, there is some evidence to suggest that the object has to belong to an unknown species.³¹ In other words, if I point out to the way to identify Yigal to someone who has never seen him before, by saying “Yigal is similar to Clark Gable,” that would not count as *upamāna*, because the species of being human has already been seen by that person. But even if we ignore such doubtful cases, it is clear that the requirements of *upamāna* make extreme restrictions on its use as identification. It is for this reason that Uddyotakara suggested that dissimilarity³² too should be included in *upamāna*.

³⁰ That the identification is required to be based on similarity clearly limits its use, and in fact leads to unreasonable distinctions. If I say, for instance, the plant whose leafs form perfect triangles is called X, that would not count as *upamāna*. I would have to say “the plant whose leafs are like the perfect triangles that you see here.” Further, an identification can also be done by having recourse to dissimilarity and other means. These too cannot count as *upamāna*. To avoid this corset, some have attempted to include “dissimilarity” under similarity. See BHATT 1962, p. 297.

³¹ Cf. ŚV, *Upamāna* 13.

³² That is, when one is informed: A is dissimilar (or in some respect opposite) to B.

The story of *upamāna* in philosophical literature is a sad one. Even the few schools that accepted it trivialized it and narrowed its scope to such an extent as to make it useless. It is, therefore, not surprising that *upamāna* was never actually used in the Indian philosophical discourse; at least I cannot recall even a single case. When Kumāriḷa once attempted to show that *upamāna*, in the true sense of analogy, could actually be used in reasoning about Vedic ritual, the Naiyāyikas were quick to point out that such a usage of *upamāna* goes well beyond its definition (see NM, vol. I, pp. 392-395, see also BHATT 1962, p. 307). To use Bhatt's example again (ibid., p. 308), from the fact that I perceive a woman to be similar to my wife, I can conclude by *upamāna* that my wife is also similar to her, but I cannot conclude that I can use that woman as a substitute to my wife.

In trivialising *upamāna* and taking it away from its original meaning of analogy and comparison, Indian philosophy deprived itself of a most powerful tool of thought. We all know how persuasive analogies and comparisons can be. We know how a new example can open up a stilted discussion, give it a new perspective, lead to unexpected developments, or make things vivid and accessible (think of Plato's cave or Wittgenstein's family resemblance³³ or Chuang Tzu's butterfly and fish, or, to take at least one example of the Indian tradition, Dharmakīti's glow of the jewel through the keyhole³⁴).

Of course, it is not the failure to develop *upamāna* into a significant means of knowledge that can account for the poverty of examples in Indian philosophy (examples in inference are not really examples, but instantiations of the property to be proved; they require neither creativity nor imagination, and indeed some logicians maintain that they are superfluous and argue that they should not be stated). But perhaps had it been developed, it could have facilitated the development of philosophy in India in more original directions. Actually, the treatment of *upamāna* itself is symptomatic to a more general avoidance in the Indian philosophical tradition of using new examples. It is disconcerting to observe that the example of the cow

³³ To respond to a question by one of the participants in the conference, the example of the two brothers above has nothing to do with Wittgenstein's family resemblance.

³⁴ On the way this example prompted Śākyabuddhi to further philosophical developments see FRANCO 2014, pp. 22-23.

and the gayal appears already in relation to *upamāna* in the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali,³⁵ and it is being repeated literally for more than two thousand years, while further examples are hardly ever mentioned or thought about seriously. And there is no doubt that the thinking always along the lines of this single example of the cow and the gayal has not facilitated creative philosophical developments. In addition, the adherence to the old definitions in the *Nyāyasūtra* or *Śābarabhāṣya*, that are clearly inappropriate to capture the breadth of comparisons and analogies, has further contributed to a reduction of the scope of *upamāna* and prevented its interpretation and development as real analogy or comparison. Perhaps the most regrettable point in relying on these definitions is that they prevented many employments of analogies or comparisons in respect to well-known things, but nevertheless expressing something genuinely new, unexpected, illuminating a subject matter from a different perspective. This does not mean of course that Indian philosophers have, in practice, forgone analogies altogether, but they certainly used them to a smaller degree than in European and Chinese philosophy, and a theoretical reflection about them has not been developed.³⁶ The Ālaṅkārikas have far surpassed them in their insightful analysis of analogy.

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³⁵ See also OBERHAMMER ET AL. 1991-2006, s.v. *upamāna*.

³⁶ Interestingly, the fallacy of tu quoque, known also as the douchebag fallacy (i.e., I can be an idiot because you are an idiot), is not seldom used in Indian texts and to my knowledge has not been recognized as false.

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