



AFTER APPROPRIATION: EXPLORATIONS IN INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

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The connecting *manas*: inner sense, common sense, or the organ of imagination

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Together may your minds know. (*saṃvo manāmsi jānatām*)

— *Atharva Veda*

There is always more pleasure to be gained from combinations than from simplicity.

— St. Thomas Aquinas's Commentary on *De Anima*, 426b7

Quite a few of us had to read both Plato and the *Upaniṣads*, both Aquinas and Udayana, both Kant and Dharmakīrti, both Wittgenstein and Nāgārjuna, Quine and Bhartṛhari, as we were taught how to philosophize. Long before one was aware of the 'dangerous liaisons' of international academic politics (where colonialism still rules under the garb of the post-colonial), not just one's thought and talk, but even one's everyday sensibilities had become incorrigibly 'comparative.' Now, when one

painfully finds out that in the insular power-enclaves of philosophy even a mention of non-Western theories of mind, knowledge, or truth is punished by polite exclusion, well-preserved ignorance about other cultures, and mono-cultural hubris define the mainstream of professional philosophy in Euro-America, that the discovery of exciting connections, sharp oppositions or imaginable dialogues between some ancient or modern Eastern and ancient or contemporary Western ideas is going to be greeted with condescension or cold neglect, it is already too late. While lamenting the misfortune of our purist (and power-blinkered) colleagues who are missing out on this fun, one of the best ways to deepen the collective celebration of culture-straddling contemplation is to reflect, critically and analytically, on the *sense-organ* or cognitive instrument. It is this organ or instrument with which we compare, connect, imagine, re-arrange, choose to focus on, desire to ignore or investigate, will to change, like and dislike, – or even try to witness without attachment or aversion – disparate traditions of thinking. In this essay, we shall engage in such a paradigmatically philosophical reflexive exercise of thinking about the very idea of a sense-organ for thinking and cross-sensory comparison, comparatively. In a nutshell, that is the agenda of this paper.

In Sanskrit, the cognitive and active instrument or faculty is called “*manas*.” That word is standardly and not wholly without justification translated as “mind.” But for all sorts of well-known reasons, having to do with a Mind/Self confusion in Western thought, it is safer to translate it as “inner sense.” Whatever else it is, the *manas* is never the *ātman* (soul).

In the most ancient *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* (I. 5. 3), *manas* is functionally defined in terms of desire, resolution, doubt, memory, and introspection. In Sāṃkhya, Vedānta, and Nyāya, it becomes a distinct sense-organ responsible for attention, cross-modal comparison, and reflexive awareness of cognitive and hedonic states. In Aristotle’s *De Anima* (425a–426b), such a sixth inner sense is proposed and rejected, but the idea of a “*sensus communis*” is taken seriously. In Kant, inner sense has a very crucial role to play, but it is distinguished from the common sense that is central to aesthetic reflective judgment. This paper will go through six main arguments for the existence of *manas* and show how it does both the jobs of inner and common sense, suggesting a richer theory of a sixth common sense-organ for imaginatively perceiving possibilities. We shall

end with the soteriological role of the inner sense, in binding as well as liberating the embodied self.

Philosophy, in both East and West, is uniquely characterized by this inward reflexivity of noticing its own practice and presuppositions, analytically and phenomenologically. So, that is what we shall do in this paper: *reflect comparatively on the cognitive and motor organ of comparison.*

THE AGENT-INSTRUMENT-OBJECT MODEL OF ACTION

An action performed by an embodied being requires an agent, an instrument, and an object. The very grammar of our thinking about an action seems to demand an answer, initially, to three questions:

- who does it?
- with what?
- to what?

A tailor could be the agent of a particular act of cutting, its direct object – a piece of cloth, and the tool – a pair of scissors. The act of seeing or hearing, thus, requires, besides the self or embodied person who sees or hears and the colours or sounds seen or heard, a visual or auditory organ, distinct from both the seer and the seen, from both the hearer and the heard. This, in brief, could be the conceptual root of the idea of a sense-organ (*indriya*), a central idea of Indian philosophies of mind.

Just like tearing and touching, talking and tasting, even thinking, remembering, imagining, desiring, looking within oneself, attending to the fact that one is tearing or touching, trusting or doubting something, also seem to be cognitive mental acts. They also require an inner instrument or faculty, besides the thinker, or the agent of volition, desire, attention, or introspection. This job cannot be done by the outer senses. Hence, a sixth sense of a different level is postulated.

It is not easy to determine what exactly a sense-organ is, especially if we are seeking to map them onto contemporary neuro-science of perception. Even within the classical Indian metaphysics of the mind, there is considerable disagreement as to what the sense-organs are made of. While everybody agrees that the eyeball or the retina is not the visual sense-organ, but rather the subtle function or power to see which is realized by

those organs, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika postulates that the sense-organ has to be made of the same material element as what it can receive. Thus, the visual organ has to be made of fire/light, olfactory organ out of smelly earth, and the auditory organ out of “*ākāśa*” – the vacuum where sounds can emerge. The Sāṃkhya-Vedānta camp construes sense-organs as (unconscious but) immaterial, having emerged out of the transparency-dominated aspect of the ego-maker (*sāṃvika abhikāra*). But, about the *manas* – the inner sense that receives qualities and acts of consciousness – both camps agree that it has to be immaterial. Surely, even the grossest materialist will not insist that we can find out with our eyes that we are pleased, or that we can figure out by touching that we are willing or imagining things. So we need an internal sense-organ. This is what is called *manas*, one of the three constituents of the group of faculties collectively called *antahkaraṇa* (inner instrument) in Indian psychologies.

Are we conflating the idea of an “organ” (a body part, e.g., a hand) and the idea of an “instrument” (a tool, e.g., a hammer or an axe) here? Such an objection actually helps us penetrate deeper into the general concept of an *instrument* as something in between the patient of an action. Thus, if we think of the disembodied soul as the agent and the external world as the patient, the body itself is an instrument (like a chariot) which the soul or consciousness (*jñā*) wields in order to get things done in the world, but if we think of the embodied organism as the agent and the knife or the brake as the patient, then the hand or the foot is the instrument by means of which the organism moves and uses the tool. If, on the other hand, we regard the hand as the agent and the tree as the patient, then that which mediates the former’s action on the latter – the axe, itself becomes the instrument. Thus, an instrument literally is the “means,” that which operates in the middle.

On the basis of this concept of the “means,” the orthodox (Sāṃkhya) Indian philosophers make deeper and deeper use of the agent-instrument-object model of action. It first generates an external organ (e.g., hands), which is more agentive than the tool (spoon), which we wield to catch, cut, move, or grab an object, and then generates an inner sense that is more agentive than the external organ, which then becomes in a sense an object manipulable by the inner sense. Thus, the instrument in the middle partakes of both the ends. The most abstract notion of an “instrument” (*karaṇa*) seems to be something that is both an agent and an object used

by the agent, as well as functions as a connector between them: Thus, between self and external senses, there is the *manas*, and between *manas* and the material tool, there is the external – motor organs, between the external motor senses and the objects, there is, in some cases, a physical tool.

Unlike the Vedānta or Vaiśeṣika metaphysic of the mind, the early Buddhist meditational psychology has a very different conceptual cartography of the sense-organs as well as of the *manas*. In the list of twelve *indriya*-s the *manas* occurs side by side with separate organs for pleasure, for depression (*daurmanasyendriya*), for memory, etc. – a list that would look horribly guilty of cross-division from the Nyāya Vaiśeṣika perspective! The distinctions between *citta* and *caitasikā* harma-s, and the reflective *mano-vijñāna* are all fascinating research topics for any serious engagement with Indian psychology. Though, as I shall show at the very last section, even the Vedic *āstika* schools study the *manas* with a view to liberation, the **Abhidharma psychology is much more closely a phenomenology of meditational practice**, and its taxonomies are also openly ethically loaded. Thus, one type of ego-erecting mental function is called: “The sick (*kliṣṭa*) *mano-vijñāna*”! In this chapter, I shall not discuss this complicated and obscure Buddhist theory of *manas*.

From the Sanskrit philosophical texts of the orthodox schools, at least six or seven different arguments can be culled for the existence of an inner sense-organ. Let me state them briefly in what I consider their order of importance.

FIRST: THE ARGUMENT FROM ABSENT-MINDEDNESS

It is empirically well-established that sometimes normal subjects whose eyes and ears are wide open cannot see or hear what is right in front of them. If the well-functioning external sense-organs and their proximity or exposure to *their* appropriate objects were sufficient conditions for sensory perception, then such non-perception would be inexplicable. Hence, there must be an additional faculty or organ, due to the absence or non-operation of which externally stimulated sense-organs also fail to register their given objects. And this additional sense is the *manas*. If the *manas* is disconnected from the appropriate sense-organ where the relevant

stimulus strikes, being caught up somewhere else, then even things presented to open healthy eyes or ears are not registered.

This argument occurs for the first time clearly in *Bṛhadāraṇyakaśad* (I. 5. 3; ca. 800 B.C.E.; hereinafter “B.U.”), where it is immediately followed by a fascinating empirical detail. When a man is touched on his back by another person, the first man is able to tell without looking back whether it is a touch of a hand or a touch of a knee. The tactile organ itself does not make those distinctions since as sheer touch they might feel qualitatively pretty similar. After all, the concept of a knee or the concept of a hand are far richer than merely cutaneous concepts; they require the articulate recognition of different functionally distinguished body parts conceived in a partly first-person fashion. It is the *manas* which, at an imperceptible but now perhaps measurable speed, reflects upon and discriminates between the tactile sensations in terms of remembered and conceptualized body-schema of other people. The direct relevance of this keen observation to the proof of the existence of *manas* may be unclear. But it surely reminds us of the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and, more recently, Mark Johnson,¹ which talks about our processing external sensory data through an internalized body schema.

Sāṃkara’s commentary here is very succinct: “If the discriminator inner sense-organ were not there, then how could skin (the tactile sense) alone make such discriminations? That which is the cause of knowledge of distinctions is the inner sense” (*yadi viveka-kṛṇ mano nāma nāsti, tarhi tvan mātrena kuto viveka pratipattih syāt? yat tad viveka-pratipatti kāraṇam tan manah*) (Commentary under B.U. I. 5. 3).

SECOND: THE ARGUMENT FROM NECESSARY NON-SIMULTANEITY OF ALL COGNITIONS

Sensory data as well as thoughts and acts of imagination come to us necessarily in a successive manner, one after another. This rule of successive-ness of all mental representations, shared by Nyāya and Kant, has almost the status of an a priori principle, for untrained introspection seems to claim feeling and perceiving and thinking many things simultaneously. But logically, unless two events are perceived at distinct moments of time, how are we ever going to tell them apart as two distinct events, especially

when spatial locations are not relevant? Thus perception of succession is impossible without succession of perceptions. Now, take our hearing of a sentence uttered, even at a great speed. Unless we hear its constitutive phonemes one after another, with proper pauses, it would all get jumbled up as one noise and we would not know where one word ends and another begins. The same is true, as has been shown by Kant, for our visual perception of an extended thing or a long line. Without a sequential perception of different parts of it, we would have no sense of its expanse or length. Now, as far as the visual or tactile sense-organ is concerned, they could easily function together, and a whole range of objects (with colours, textures, sizes, shapes, and perhaps varying temperatures) are simultaneously available to our skin and our visual range. Why is it that we can go through them only one at a time? What breaks up the process to a sequence, so to say? The explanation of this is provided by this additional instrument of focusing attention, the *manas*, a tiny pinpointed organ, which cannot hook up with more than one sense-organ object at a time.

A counter-example is standardly produced to this basic rule of “non-simultaneity of awarenesses.” When one eats a long twisty fried pastry (*dirgha-saskuli*), one may feel that one experiences five sensations at once through the five senses: that it smells good, that it is cold to touch, that it is elongated in shape, that it tastes sharp, and that it even makes a crisp sound as we munch on it! Vyoma Śiva and Jayanta Bhatta takes care of this counter-example by the famous example of a needle going through a hundred petals of lotus. It may look as if the needle goes through all the petals at once. But of course, that is physically impossible. It has to go through them one after another. Thus quick succession of the attention-function of the *manas* switching on and off from one sensory datum to another creates the illusion of a manifold perceptual data all presented at a single time.

Kant spent a very crucial part of his “Transcendental Deduction of Categories” (in the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*) on the three steps of this process of synthesis, including “synthesis of reproduction in imagination.” For experience to be possible, the manifolds of intuition have to be run through and bound together in an ordered sequence. And he was also postulating inner sense, parallel to the outer sense, calling time the “a priori given form” of inner sense. But Kant thought that all synthesizing action has to be done by “thinking” or the apperceptive ‘I think,’ so inner sense could not do the job of binding and ordering. Committed

to a sacrosanct distinction between thinking and sensing, Kant would not draw the metaphysical conclusions drawn by the Nyāya phenomenologists from these undeniable facts of subjective synthesis of external data that goes on behind the curtain of our concept-formation and our knowledge of “objects” rich with qualities accessible to multiple sense-organs. What Nyāya philosophers deduce from the same evidence is that there is a fast-moving, constitutionally restless, atomic, unconscious, but immaterial substance, other than the external sense-organs but equally able to control the functioning of all of them. It is non-specific to any particular external sense but unique to each individual conscious body.

Not only is the co-operation of that substance needed for the occurrence of any cognition in a body, the very life of a conscious animal is nothing but this activated contact between the self and the internal organ, thanks to the accumulated karmic residues undergoing the process of natural maturation (*vipacyamāna karmāśya sahita ātmamanha samyogo jīvanam iti vadānti – Nyāyamanjari, Āhnikas²*).

The self in Nyāya is regarded as all-pervasive on systemic ontological grounds. Such an all-pervasive self enjoys and suffers experiences only in those regions of space where a particular *manas*, in touch with the tactile sense-organ spread nearly all over the inside and outside of a specific *karmically* earned body, keeps contact with this individual self.

THIRD: THE ARGUMENT FROM THE PERCEPTUAL CHARACTER OF OUR KNOWLEDGE OF HEDONIC STATES

Our immediate and unerring awareness of our own pleasure and pain is direct and perceptual. Every perceptual awareness requires an appropriate sense-organ as its proximate causal condition, just as visual perception requires the eyes. The inner sense is that special organ through which the self perceives its own pleasures, pains, desires, etc. We cannot say that pleasure is nothing but a mode or intrinsic feature of other external sensations, such as a delightful colour or a pleasant sound or a pleasing taste, so that it is received by other external sense-organs and does not require a special internal sense-organ. Such a reasoning can also reduce external qualities such as colours, textures, and sounds into intrinsic forms or modes of cognition; in that case, there would be no perception of blue

colour or of a loud sound but only a bluish cognition or a noisy awareness, all objects becoming merely adjectival to the cognitions, just as pleasure and pain were supposed to be.

Since we cannot tolerate such an adverbial reduction of external perception (e.g., “I see a red patch” to be read as “I am perceiving redly”), we cannot also reduce inner perception of pleasure to having some other external perceptions just in a pleasurable manner. Pleasure must be independently perceivable. So, the need for a sense-organ is parallel in the two sorts of perceptions, outer and inner. And we cannot introspect with our eyes or ears. We need the *manas* to do that (*sukhadi pratītir indriya-jā; sāksātkāri-pratītitvat, rupādi-pratīti-vat/ na ca śātādyākaro jñānātmā eva iti vācyam, nilādi-bodhe ‘pi tathābhava-prasangāt*).³

FOURTH: THE ARGUMENT FROM CROSS-MODAL COMPARISON BY A “COMMON SENSE”

External sense-organs cannot do the explanatory work done by the inner sense because each of them is limited to a specific kind of quality of physical objects. Eyes cannot smell perfumes, the tongue cannot taste sounds. But we make cross-modal comparisons through very short-term memory such as: “This sound is more interesting than that sight,” “The freezing touch of this ice-cream is not as pleasant as its nice flavour,” etc. It is on the basis of these quick cross-modal comparison that a subject reflexively takes the decision as it were to switch attention, that is, attach one’s *manas* to a particular sensory stimulus to the neglect of another of a totally different modality.

Obviously, this comparison cannot be done through either one of the mode-specific external senses. The ears do not help us remember the colours; neither does the olfactory organ mediate our recall of the touch. So there has to be an over-arching non-specific instrument of such sensory comparison. That is the *manas*: it is *anīyata-visayaka*. It also helps us feel bodily sensations such as thirst and excitement, which are not specific objects of any one of the five external sense-organs.

Karl Potter’s description of the function of *manas* is very accurate:

... it acts as a sort of secretary for the knowing self, passing on one sensation at a time so that the self will not be swamped

with too many data at once ... the time it takes the self to synthesize its awareness of an object from the data gathered by the senses is due to the time it takes for the internal sense-organ to get into and out of contact with each of the several organs.⁴

In his *De Anima* (Book III, 425a–b), Aristotle argues against a common sixth sense. He first admits that there seem to be “common sensibles” such as motion, number, unity, etc., which are not specific to any particular mode of external sensation. We can count colours as well as sounds, we can even detect a smell to be moving. But the non-specific recognition of these common qualities can be easily explained by a co-operation of several senses, by one external sense, “incidentally” drawing our attention towards the quality accessible to another external sense, as in synaesthesia. The sight of sandalwood may evoke in us an olfactory perception of its fragrance. The sight of a pickle may make our mouth water. Even Nyāya has an account of such incidental non-ordinary contact between the sense of sight and a smell or taste.

We don’t need to postulate a “common over-arching inner sense” for the sake of explaining this. But how can the eyes alone, while making us aware that the wall is white, also make us aware that we are seeing that white wall? Surely our cognition of white does not cast an image on the retina as the white wall does! Here Aristotle gives a pretty smart argument, first anticipating the hypothesis of an inner sense-organ and then rejecting it:

Since it is through sense that we are aware that we are seeing [notice that he is talking about awareness of seeing or *anuvyavasaya* here, and not of seeing] ... it must be either by sight that we are aware of seeing or by some sense other than sight. But the sense that gives us this new sensation must perceive both sight and its object, viz. colour: so that, either (1) there will be two senses both percipient of the same sensible object or, (2) the sense must be percipient of itself. Further, even if the sense, which perceives sight, were different from sight, we must fall into an infinite regress, or we must somewhere assume a sense, which is aware of itself. If so, we ought to do this in the first place.⁵

Thus, he makes each sense-organ self-perceiving, thereby dispensing with the need for a meta-sense-organ like the Indian *manas*. The Nyāya Vaiśeṣika psychologists are very much aware of the difficulty that, if *manas* does the job of a meta-cognition or apperception of the seeing, then it has to grasp both the visual awareness as well as the colour that is the object of the visual awareness. But if the inner sense can “see” colours in this incidental fashion (through a *jñānalakṣhana* link), why can’t we say the reverse, that the outer senses can also perceive cognitive inner events such as seeings and hearings and that the visual sense-organ apperceives itself? But there is a subtle difficulty here in Aristotle’s position, which is not there in the Nyāya position. Once we have given an account of a direct normal perception of a kind of sensible object or quality through its own appropriate sense-organ, we can then complicate that story with another sense-organ accessing it in an incidental or associative non-ordinary way. Thus, once sandalwood is smelt through olfactory sense, later on, even visually perhaps, one could perceive its smell. But Aristotle refuses to give us any account of the direct, non-incidental perception of one’s own cognitions and expects the special senses to pick up their own cognitive episodes as they are picking up colours and sounds and smells. He himself feels uncomfortable in the very next paragraph about eyes seeing colours as well as seeing *of* colours, but solves it by distinguishing two senses of “seeing,” one of which applies even to perception of darkness where we have to be aware that we are not seeing anything. (According to Richard Sorabji, Aristotle does believe in a “common faculty” residing in the heart and asserts this in his short work *On Sleep*.)⁶

The reason why Indian psychology can never admit the external senses to be self-revealing or introspective goes very deep into its Vedic roots: The *Upaniṣads* announce that the Self-born Creator had cut out the sensory holes in such a way that they only open outward but cannot see the self inside or their own functioning. Hence the doctrine that the sense-organs are themselves imperceptible. Only a *manas* can infer its own existence; even the *manas* is not accessible directly to itself. The only self-lit (*svayaṃjyotiḥ*) or reflexively self-aware entity is pure consciousness or Atman. In Nyāya, even the Self is not independently self-luminous; it needs the *manas* to know itself. Aristotle’s infinite regress problem does not daunt the Nyāya epistemologist because every act of perception need not be necessarily perceived. But there is a need for an explanation of our

direct acquaintance with our own mental states, and Aristotle could not coherently make eyes or ears or the tongue do the work of informing a thinker or a wisher that he is thinking or wishing. So, he too ended up admitting a common sense.

FIFTH: THE ARGUMENT FROM DEEP SLEEP

During deep sleep, we breathe through our nostrils and keep our ears open, and, of course, our skin touches a whole lot of things, yet we neither smell, nor hear nor feel anything. What is missing could not be the self or its occupation of the body, for we are not dead. So it must be a disconnection between another common cause of all sensation which, during such sleep, leaves all the sense-organs and takes rest in a special place. The ancient Indian physiology gave it a name “*puritat nadi*,” and it could be a part of the central nervous system where the *manas* remains in a standby off-line position.

SIXTH: THE ARGUMENT FROM MEMORY AND IMAGINATION

Suppose I am pondering how it would be if we could taste colours or hear textures. Even if the result is to recognize the impossibility of such a perception, we would need a cross-modal over-arching sense-organ to feel this impossibility with. Similarly, intuitively grasping the metaphorical meaning of a statement such as “Van Gogh could feel the golden yellow of the Sunflowers on his tongue like a hot sauce!” would require an organ of knowledge that can provide the sensory support for such a cross-modal imagination. This must be a sixth sense!

Not only does the man who has now gone deaf remember sounds, he is sometimes able to imagine a hitherto unheard combination of notes. We must not forget that Beethoven composed music after going deaf. The hearing organ or faculty, which is absent in those cases, cannot explain such recall and imagination. So we need an inner sense to do the work. Even the somewhat strange list of “nine properties” of the *manas*, found in *Mahābhārata* mentions imagination:

Holding attention, finding justification or reason, recollection, error (reversing the order of things), imagination, forgiveness, goodness, badness, and swiftness – these are the nine qualities of the *manas*.

(*dbairyopapatti vyakti ścāvisargah kalpanā kṣamā
sad asad cāśuta caiva manaso nava vai guṇāh.*)
(*Mahābhārata* XII.255.9).

When we read or listen to poetry, we have to figure out the meaning of such sentences as:

At midnight, butchers convene a conference.
To make sure the proceedings are free from all bias,
They invite a cow to chair it.

[Translated from Bengali: Abalupta caturtha caraṇa,
by Sisir Kumar Das (Calcutta,1986)]

In Navya Nyāya semantics, the resulting understanding of meaning is not classified as knowledge by testimony (*śābdabodha*) or information gathered from words, but a make-believe awareness generated by the *manas* (*āhārya-mānasa bodha*), which can creatively put together a cow and chairing, otherwise thought to be incongruous. The Dvaita school of Vedānta goes to the extent of classifying memory as a kind of inner perception of the past by the internal sense-organ!

SEVENTH: THE ARGUMENT FROM RESOLUTION, INTENTION, AND DESIRE

Close to imagination is another fundamental job of the *manas*: resolution or intending: “*sāṃkalpa*.” The verb for imagination “*kalp*” is present in “*sāṃkalpa*” as well because in order to intend to accomplish a project we have to first imagine it. The assignment of intent to the *manas* is at least as old as the Yajurveda. Even today, in the beginning of a Vedic ritual one must first resolve: “This is the ritual I am going to perform,” to prepare the body-mind of the performer for the entire sequence of actions that is to follow. The following mantra from the Yajurveda is called the

“*sāṃkalpa-sukta*” – the hymn of resolution – because it tries to focus the internal organ of attention to the task at hand:

That which goes up and far ahead for a person who is
awake,
That which returns back to him when he is asleep,
That light of all lights, which travels very far,
May that *manas* of mine have this good resolve.

– Śukla Yajurveda, XXXIV, 1–6

When the Upaniṣad gives the above-mentioned argument from absent-mindedness, in that context, it also mentions the following processes: “Desire, resolution, doubt, trust, distrust, forbearance, lack of forbearance, shame or modesty, wisdom, fear – all of these are nothing but *manas*” (B.U., 1.5.3). The language of the original is worth noticing here: “*etat sarvam mana eva*,” as if these functions themselves constitute the *manas*. This functional concept of the inner organ seems to me to be more defensible in modern terms than the Nyāya concept of a fast-moving atomic substance running around the body hooking up with one sense-organ at a time. Actually, the Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Vedānta concepts of *citta* or *antahkarana* are concepts of a fluid substance capable of assuming the form of objects and also reversing its flow. As the Yoga-bhasya beautifully comments: “The river of *citta* flows both ways, it flows towards evil, it flows towards the good also.”⁷

The ancient commentary *Yukti-dīpikā* (YD) on *Sāṃkhya Karika* develops the argument for the existence of *manas* simply on the basis of the function of *sāṃkalpa* or motivating resolution which is after all the mother of desire: *sāṃkalpa-prabhavān kāmān*, the *Bhagavad Gītā* reminds us. In fact YD simply identifies resolve with intention, desire, or thirst, and defines the *manas* as that which does this job. (This will not be approved by the Nyāya where desire is the property of the self, but in Sāṃkhya the self is pure consciousness which cannot have desire or even knowledge of objects, all of that being done by evolutes of *prakṛti*.) Neither singly nor together can the external senses do the work of wishful resolution, since the outer senses can only grasp what is given to them at the present time, “whereas the resolve-making organ has to deal with the future and the past.” Next month I intend to present the paper that I wrote last year. In

making that resolve, the *manas* has to make both the past and the future its object. Because of this capacity to access the data of all the senses and also the past and the future, the *manas* has to be postulated as a special organ of intention. Even life-sustaining functions like breathing are generally attached to all sense-organs, one may say, why can't they help the special senses to make motivating resolves? YD answers this objection by remarking that breathing, etc., cannot perform the intentional job of resolving because they simply happen in the body but do not take "objects" like a sense-organ does. So we need the inner sense-organ. Even breathing seems to become intentional when you put your *manas* to it by attending to it as in *prānāyāma*. But then it is actually the intention of the *manas* and the breathing is its object. Since most of our resolutions involve both our inner and outer life (these being seamlessly continuous), the *manas* stands in between the so-called self and the body, so much so that in Sāṃkhya it is categorized as both a *karmendriya* and a *jñānendriya*, a motor as well as a sensory organ, an initiator as well as a receiver. The *manas* calls into question a rigidly drawn distinction between the sensory and the motor in neuro-psychology, between receptivity and spontaneity in Kantian psychology.

Of course, many problems remain unsolved. The idea of self-awareness, with or without the inner sense, raises the toughest philosophical problems. How can the self know itself, making itself both the subject and object, agent and patient, of the act of knowing? How can the agent of introspection get passively and empirically affected by itself? And even if that happens, how can it end up only knowing how it appears to itself and not the real self?

CONCLUSION: WHAT WE CAN MAKE THE MANAS DO AND UNDO

Let me conclude by pointing at an important eighth explanatory function of the concept of an inner sense. Just as, for fidgety distracted people like us, the *manas* is constitutionally vacillating, restless, and constantly getting attached to and desiring to get attached to this or that external sense-organ, escaping to a distracting stimulus when we are trying to focus on something "*asamsayam mahābāho mano durnigraham calam*"

(*Bhagavad Gītā*, 6.35), there is no doubt that the *manas* is hard to control and perpetually moving – to try to ‘contain’ it seems as absurd as trying to restrain air; for a Yogin, the *manas* itself is an aid to detachment and control. Kaṇāda, the ancient author of *Vaiśeṣika Sūtra*, defines liberation in this fashion:

When the internal organ abides in the self but not in the senses, there results the absence of pleasure and pain, which is called Yoga. In the absence of *adr̥ṣṭa* which causes transmigration, there is the absence of contact between the internal organ with the self (which results in life), and also non-appearance of another body: this state is liberation.⁸

This brings us to the fundamental spiritual underpinning of Indian psychology. Again, spirituality must not be taken as a denial of the life of the body. Indeed, the *manomayakosa*, the internal organ, along with the cognitive sense-organs, is, after all, a very important body that we need to take care of in order to lead a flourishing spiritual life. The spiritual “use” of the theory of inner sense defies the Cartesian division between mind and body since even the most elementary yogic postures require focusing of the inner sense on parts of the body and on the most spiritually significant bodily function of breathing!

Just as much of Western psychology is proudly applied in nature, being usable in human resource development, management, clinical practice, education, etc., much of Indian psychology too is for the sake of application. But the goal of that application is not utmost exploitation of what is called ‘human resources,’ as if human beings are like coalmines or oil fields to be harvested for material productivity. The goal is a healthy, unsuffering, ecologically and interpersonally harmonious life, ultimately ending in freedom from frustrating desires. For that purpose, the *manas* is first diagnosed as the cause of distraction, sick desires, doubt and error, and then explored as a possible tool of focused attention that cures those pathological states. There must be such an internal tool of involvement as well as withdrawal, if ultimate tranquility and freedom of the self is possible. And the very restlessness and far-imagining nature of the *manas* shows that the human person seeks such a freedom in the fullness of God

or in Omnipresent Self. Since liberation is possible, and concentration is a means to it, the first instrument of concentration, *manas*, must exist.

In this context the words of the *Maitrayani Upaniṣad* clearly bring out the value-orientation of most traditional Indian theories of the inner sense:

Manas is of two kinds: pure and impure. The impure *manas* is filled with resolves to get what is desired. The pure *manas* is content, it has no desire. When, being made waveless without wants and distractions, the *manas* is well-fixed, then it ceases to be a *manas* – and that is the ultimate state to be in. The *manas* has to be held fast in the heart only as long as it is still there. This knowledge is *mokṣa*, all the rest is proliferation of theories and books. The *manas* that has washed away all its dirt with *samadhi* enjoys a bliss which cannot be described in words, only the inner organ can feel it (just as it is about to disappear). Just as water cannot be separated from water, fire cannot be seen apart in fire, sky cannot be distinguished from the sky, an inwardized *citta* vanishes from the sight of the self. It is the *manas* which is the cause of bondage as well as of liberation for human beings. A *manas* addicted to worldly objects makes for bondage and a *manas* that is objectless leads to liberation. (*Maitrayani Upaniṣad*, VI.34: 6–11.)

UNSCIENTIFIC POST-SCRIPT

In his long and middle commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*, Ibn Rushd (Averroës) was deeply concerned with the nature and unity of such a *sensus communis*, which enables us to see the difference between whiteness and sweetness, and therefore could not be identified with the eye or the tongue. But in his acute argumentation for the unity of the common sense, he brings in a comparison with interpersonal judgments of comparison:

If it were possible for that which judges two different things to be itself two, then when I perceived a given object as warm and you perceived something else as white, I could determine that the object which I perceived is different from yours without

having your perception, which is absurd... Just as it is necessary that one and the same man be the person who says that “a” is different from “b,” so it is necessary that the faculty whereby this individual judges that sweet differs from white be one and the same.⁹

What is most uncanny is how intra-sensory comparison is understood in analogy with inter-personal comparison. For, the most controversial original idea that Averroës had about the mind is that there is a single Material Intellect, which is the same for every human being, and individual human intellects and imaginations are parts or fragments of that. Almost no other Hellenistic, Arabic or Christian commentators supported him in this hypothesis. But the concept comes pretty close to that of a common collective inner sense, or cosmic intellect (*virāt* or *mahān*), found in the Vedic, Puranic, and Sāṃkhya-Vedāntic metaphysic of the mind. The following metaphor used by Ibn Rushd resonates deeply with many Sāṃkhya-Vedānta pictures of Divine and human intellects:

Our bodies are like dew-drops, varying in size and shape. The quantitative differences of the glassy surfaces, observable on the dewdrops, may be compared to the passive intellect, that is, to our different individual dispositions. When the Sun, the active intellect, sends out his rays on the dewdrops, the smooth glassiness of these drops becomes luminous, capable of mirroring external objects, and this luminosity, a common character in every dewdrop, may be compared to the material intellect. The material intellect, in our comparison the sunny luminosity, is not an emergence from the dewdrops, Water can never turn into sunshine. Rather the material intellect is to be conceived as identical with the sun which radiates actively and is luminous passively, although its luminosity can come into existence only in the presence of the dewdrops.¹⁰

With the de-individuation of the organ of imagination and emotional cognition, *sensus communis* can then re-emerge in the Kantian sense of that common aesthetic sensibility which is the transcendental condition of our claims of taste being compelling across private personal judgments. Such

a common inner sense, then, not only tastes the first-order pleasures of contact with desired objects, but it also feels its own free-play of imagination, its sheer purposeless delight in re-arranging possible sensory-motor representations. In this, the inner sense becomes an inter-personal creator and spectator of beauty, and indeed of divinity. And the root “*div*” from which “*deva/devi/devatā*” (deity, divinity) comes, Abhinavagupta reminds us, primarily stands for play or sport (*dīvyati* = *krīḍati*). When freed from its egoistic individual boundaries and interests, our *Manas* is not only the instrument with which we worship God by sacrificing our breath in sacred speech or sacrificing our speech in meditative silence, but it is also the Divinity whom we worship. Both Sāṃkara and Abhinavagupta tell us, in different contexts, that the deities are just the universalized sense-organs in our bodies. The comparing common sense relishes its own playfulness in a divine spilling and crossing over of its own personal and regional limits.

Notes

- 1 Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
- 2 *Nyāyamanjari*, of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, ed. K.S. Vardacharya, 2 vols. (Mysore: Oriental Research Institute, 1983), 412.
- 3 Nyāyachārya Vallabha, *Nyāya Lilāvati*, ed. Pandita Vindhyaesvari Prasad Dvivedi (Benares Sanskrit Series, n. 151, 1910), 35.
- 4 Karl Potter, ed., *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, vol. II: *Indian Metaphysics and Epistemology: The Tradition of Nyāya Vaiśeṣika, Up to Gangesa* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 94.
- 5 Aristotle, *De Anima*, III, In *Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1971), chap. 2, 425b.2.
- 6 Sorabji, Richard, *Aristotle on Demarcating the Five Senses*. Reprinted in *Articles on Aristotle*, vol. 4: *Psychology and Aesthetics*, ed. L. Barnes, M. Schofield, and R. Sorabji (London: Duckworth, 1979), 65–75.
- 7 Swami Hariharananda Aranyaka, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, trans. P.N. Mukerji (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 2000).
- 8 Karl Potter, ed., *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies*, Vol. II: *Indian Metaphysics and Epistemology: The Tradition of Nyāya Vaiśeṣika, up to Gangesa*, 217.
- 9 Averroës, *Long Commentary on the De anima of Aristotle*, trans. Richard C. Taylor (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 268.
- 10 Stephen C. Tornay, “Averroës’ Doctrine of the Mind,” *Philosophical Review* (May 1943): 270–88.