Is there a continuous self? Buddhism and its Indian opponents
Professor Richard Sorabji FBA and
Professor Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad
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How many people feel that they have, or are, a continuing self? I do, and yet this idea has been denied in at least three traditions. In Continental Philosophy, Heidegger [1] cast doubts on the self and self-awareness, which have influenced the French tradition. The Buddhists have been in conflict for centuries with other Indian schools over their view that there is no continuing self, and I shall return to that controversy. In English-speaking Philosophy, David Hume notoriously said in the 18th century that when he looked inside himself, he could find many perceptions, but no self, linking them together [2]. This has influenced the English-speaking tradition of Philosophy and a self has been denied in this tradition also by Wittgenstein [3], Elizabeth Anscombe [4], Norman Malcolm [5], Tony Kenny [6], Daniel Dennett [7], Galen Strawson [8], and Derek Parfit [9], to name a few. I shall return to Parfit.

What is the self and why do we need the concept?

But what do I mean by 'self', when I say that I believe in the self? I will take this question in three stages. First, questions of Self do not arise at all, unless there are beings like humans and animals. So it is a prior question what it is for a human or animal to exist. And this discussion can be conducted without bringing in 'I' or Self at all. Humans and animals are embodied beings with psychological characteristics. That is the simple answer, but we might have to qualify it in connexion with one of the questions raised by both ancients and moderns, whether humans could survive after death without a body. In that case, the present embodiment would have to be seen as a phase in a longer history, like that of a caterpillar, chrysalis and butterfly. We would not after all be simply biological human beings, but beings of a more varied sort whose initial phase was necessarily that of an embodied humanoid.

It is in the second phase of my account that the notion of self comes in, because humans and animals could not cope with the world at all, unless they saw things in terms of I. The notion 'I' belongs to the same group of notions as 'now', 'here', 'yonder', 'this', 'that', 'today', 'past', 'present', 'future', 'ago', 'hence'. I have discussed the temporal ones elsewhere [10]. What I would emphasise is that these words and the corresponding ideas have an irreplaceable importance, because they have a unique ability to guide action and emotion. If Adam Smith knows, 'An arrow gets to be fired through the window of Adam Smith's study on May 1st 2004', he will have no idea whether precautions are called for, except insofar as he can also judge, 'I am Adam Smith', and 'Today is May 1st 2004'. Otherwise Adam Smith might be anybody, and 2004 thousands of years into the past or future. These words therefore have a special action- and emotion-guiding force, which can be retained by paraphrasing them in terms of each other, 'I', for example, by 'the thinker of this thought', or 'this person', but not by replacing them with terms from outside the group. The terms have been variously called egocentric, or token-reflexives, according to the different analyses that have been given of them.

'I'-thoughts do not postulate an extra entity besides the embodied human with its various aspects. But they do have a meaning additional to that of 'Adam Smith'-thoughts, and a meaning that is essential for Adam Smith, if he is to cope with the world. The conditions under which 'I'-thoughts will be true can be stated, without using any token-reflexive expressions, just as others have shown to be the case for 'now'-thoughts [11]. Thus an 'I'-thought is true if and only if it is true of the thinker of the thought. But nonetheless when all the non-token-reflexive facts about Adam Smith have been stated, there are still some further facts that he

urgently needs to know, including, 'I am Adam Smith'. I am speaking of further meaning and further facts, but not of further entities, or further truth conditions.

I come now to the third aspect of my account. The meaning that I have ascribed to the word 'I', though vital, is a thin meaning, paraphrasable, for example, as 'the subject of this awareness', or 'this person'. But since 'I' refers to the embodied being which is rapidly acquiring a unique history, the reference of 'I' is a thick one. Moreover, the speaker's meaning on any given occasion may be much thicker than the strict meaning of the word itself. He may intend to draw attention to more or less of his personal history and circumstances and of his character as an embodied human being. As we pass beyond infancy, we tend to develop an autobiographical picture or pictures of ourselves. A thicker picture is also employed in making decisions and in reacting emotionally. For decisions and emotional reactions may depend on one's being aware of oneself as a person with a certain standing, past history and aspirations.

None of this implies that a self is an essence. That is not the conception of self that I am propounding. The thicker descriptions we give of ourselves may be extremely important to us, but there is no suggestion that we would cease to exist without them, or that they could not change, as would be true of an essence.

I have said that 'I'-thoughts have a unique action- and emotion- guiding force. But I want to say more. They must enter also into our perceptions. The point about perception was made by the psychologist J.J.Gibson, and developed by Ulrich Neisser, Colwyn Trevarthen and a good number of others [12]. Infants do not, and cannot afford to, see the world as mere spectators perceiving patches of colour. They need to see the world, if they are to cope with it, in relation to themselves. They have to see things as within reach or out of reach of themselves, as likely to support them or not, as in danger of colliding with them. And the same applies to animals.

In discussing animal perception, in an earlier book [13], I made use of the seminal idea of Gareth Evans and Christopher Peacocke that the content of perception does not have to require the possession of corresponding concepts. To take an example of Peacocke's, one can see a mountainside as having a distinctive, but complicated crinkly shape, without having the concept of that shape. Of course, whether one should be said to have a concept depends on how concept-possession is analysed. Peacocke has his own analysis [14], and Aristotle, as I have explained in my book [15], gives an account of rudimentary concepts in Posterior Analytics 2.19, that would extend them to animals. But it is not very plausible intuitively to ascribe concepts to very young infants or animals. So it may be much better to say that they see things as within reach of themselves, without yet necessarily having a concept of themselves. I am very glad to find Jose Luis Bermudez has both defended the non-conceptual view of the infant's awareness of itself, and narrated the psychological literature in a way that brings out its philosophical relevance [16]. Part of my suggestion was that, even though the infants themselves do not have words or concepts, adults may need as third parties to use words and concepts, in order to do justice to the way the infants are seeing things [17].

A little later the infant can navigate its way back to a recognised place. It then sees the place as one where it has been before, and so is aware of itself as something with a history enduring through time.

At this stage, it is its bodily self of which the infant is aware, and in general the body is very central to how we see ourselves even as adults. Another part of J.J.Gibson's view about perception was that our face, eyebrows and nose supply a frame by reference to which we perceive how the world is relating spatially to our bodies. As part of the scene before us streams towards the edge of the frame, we see ourselves as about to move past that part, and this keeps us safe by telling us how our bodies are currently related to the world. The Stoics, as I have explained elsewhere [18], followed by Galen, were very interested in the knowledge that newborn animals have of their bodily parts and of the use to be made of them, whether for attack or defence. A modern version of this interest is supplied by Brian O'Shaughnessy, who describes in his book on the will [19] how, in order to scratch an itch, one must be aware of where the itch is, of where one's scratching hand is in relation to that, and that one has such bodily parts. In his view, one starts with awareness of one's mouth in relation to the breast, and expands one's awareness from there.

But what about awareness of ones psychological attributes? A dramatic change, many psychologists say, comes after 9 months. Up to then, the infant has been aware of itself as a material object in relation to which other material objects are seen or felt. But now it begins to be aware of itself as a being with mental activities. And this happens in a way opposite to that which Descartes would lead us to expect. On Descartes' view, we can be certain of our own minds, but can only infer to the minds of others. What these psychologists find, on the contrary, is that infants become aware of themselves as conscious beings only as they become aware of their carers as conscious beings. What happens is that they notice the

divergence between their own attention and their carer's attention. This can happen after 9 months in games of 'look with mother'. The infant wants to align its gaze with its mother's or carer's, so as to be looking at the same thing. The phenomenon has been called 'shared attention'. This may be unique to humans, for although young chimpanzees have been found to follow a gaze, even into the space behind them, and without any warning shift of gaze, there is said to be evidence that they do not recognise gaze as a sign of attention [20], although observations in the wild may be different. In the story I shall mention below about a chimpanzee looking away, to conceal its interest in the contents of a banana box, it expected its orientation to be taken by another chimpanzee as a sign of its own attention. For the infant, at a further stage, not only attention to gaze, but also intention and action are involved, as the infant tries to make the carer align his or her gaze with its own, and thus experiences the pleasures of successful agency. The pleasures of agency are further developed in other games, and they involve the idea of one party's action getting aligned with the other party's intention. The alignment and non-alignment of gaze, or intention and action, involves for the infant awareness of its own mental states, but only insofar as they need to be aligned with those of others.

I have seen in a grandchild the following phenomenon. My wife blew a pipe that made an unusual sound that he found very striking. But he looked first to me to see my reaction before feeling able to indulge in pleasure at it. In this much observed sort of case, another alignment is sought, the alignment by the infant of its action or emotion with the approval of a carer: 'would this be the right thing to do?'. This too involves the infant in awareness of possible divergence between its reaction and another's. This phenomenon in children has been called social referencing [21]. I suppose that another case of seeking alignment would be deliberately crying in order to get attention. Here too, presumably, there is an awareness of the need to align directions of attention. In fact I have seen some of these attitudes in a granddaughter of 8 months, and I suspect that quantitative studies will eventually confirm earlier and more widespread examples. At 8 months, I have seen apparent attitudes not only of 'is this the right thing to do?', but also of 'look at me' and of 'no, I am not going to perform for you'. I am not aware of these latter attitudes having been studied.

In my earlier book on animals [22], I reported a case in which a chimpanzee lifted the lid of a box, to help itself to a banana in a compound. But then it saw another chimpanzee in the compound, and hurriedly shut the lid, pretending that there was nothing of interest there. The deceiving chimpanzee then left the compound, but looked back through a crack in the fence, to see if the other chimpanzee had discovered the secret. Here was an intense awareness of the need to keep knowledge un-aligned, and a monitoring for possible alignment.

A more austere view might be taken about how we should describe the infant's mental content in some of the first examples I gave. Perhaps the infant should be described as seeing things simply in terms such as 'within reach', 'likely to support', 'likely to collide', without any specification of 'me', since there is no contrast in the infant's mind with somebody else who might suffer the collision instead. Similarly, the infant might be more economically described as seeing a place in terms of 'safe', 'familiar', or 'dangerous', rather than in terms of 'where I was before' [23]. If so, the need for the infant to see the world in terms of 'I' would first come in with the interaction with other human beings, e.g. in the games of look with mother or carer. But this would not radically affect what I have been saying, especially as even the banana-loving chimpanzees to whom I was referring would need to see the situation in terms of 'I'. Even the shared attention phenomenon has been re-described by John Barresi and Chris Moore in terms of 'we', rather than 'I' [24]. The child is thinking in terms of, 'have we got we-ness?' But this too would not affect the spirit of what I am saying. 'We' still belongs in the group of token-reflexive words along with 'I', and my idea is that infants need to see the world in terms of 'we' or 'I'.

'I'-thoughts enter not only into perceptions but also into intentions, and emotions. Emotions are not only guided by 'I'-thoughts; they typically include them and involve the idea, 'Harm/ benefit is at hand for me/mine. I should react accordingly'. Admittedly, there may be some helpless spectator emotions, in which one thinks, 'Harm is coming to Adam Smith. Somebody should help him'. These do not so obviously involve 'I'-thoughts, as do emotions about what is happening to oneself or one's dearest. But even here the thought is likely to involve 'the Adam Smith I know', and 'Somebody other than me should help him'.

An intention also involves many 'I'-thoughts. Suppose I intend to shout at someone, in order to draw his or her attention. Then, to follow an account once given orally by Paul Grice [25], I want to shout, because I want to draw their attention. I believe I will shout, and I believe that the shouting will be because of my want. If I carry out the intention, I do so because of these wants and beliefs.

If I am right that 'I'-thoughts enter into intentions, they will enter also into our linguistic communication. For I accept Paul Grice's further view [26], that for a speaker to mean something, except in the special case of soliloquy, is to intend to produce an effect in the hearer. One intends to produce the effect not by automatic means, as one might intend to make someone jump by shouting 'boo!' in a startling way, but by getting them to recognise one's intention. In Grice's view, the effect intended is always psychological. For example, if one quietly instructs someone to jump, one intends that they shall believe that that is what you require of them. There are many thoughts here about divergence and convergence between what I think and what the other person thinks. But the important point for now is that linguistic communication involves intending, and intending 'I'-thoughts.

Michael Tomasello has argued [27] that children's learning of speech depends on the prior activities of shared attention. In learning of speech, the child sees itself, the adult and the object under discussion as all being objects of shared attention. In using a novel word, it is trying to direct the adult's attention. This applies not just to naming situations, but also to the cases where the object is being manipulated and the manipulation (e.g. picking up, putting away) is the centre of interest. Apes are said not to reach this stage because they do not progress in the same way with shared attention activities, and the autistic are very poor at shared attention.

Below, I shall consider some ethical concepts of moral responsibility; punishment and compassion, all relevant to Buddhism, to ask what connexion these too may have with thoughts of 'I'.

The deficiency of autism shows the importance for normal development of acquiring a sense of me and you [28]. Autistic children are said not to engage much in activities of shared attention, and correspondingly to be poor at developing language. They tend to have an under-developed sense of self. The deficiency is said to have first been described in 1943. In 1945, there was a study of a patient called 'L [29]'. He did not react emotionally when other children removed his toys, evidently not seeing them as 'his' in a sense that carried its normal emotional implications. He had little sense not only of what he might expect of others, but also of what others might expect of him, as he ran about naked, drumming on his ears. At the age of 15, he could already use the pronoun 'I', but it did not carry the usual awareness of what might be expected of him. Asked what would happen if he shot someone, he made no reference to his own responsibility, but replied that he (the victim) would go to hospital. I earlier said that the words in the 'I' group have a unique ability to guide emotions. But now it appears that some sense of 'I' can be retained without emotion, so that the use of 'I' is not sufficient to guarantee emotion. This patient had a reduced sense of 'I'. The mother of two autistic children reports a variation on this, that her children are not aware of a past and future self. The self of which they are aware lacks the proper span [30]. The damage caused is observable.

My case for our needing to see the world in terms of self has had three stages. First, there would be no room for the idea of self, if there were not animals and persons. So it is a prior question what it is for them to exist. But, secondly, they could not cope with the world, if they did not see the world in terms that those of us who have language would express with 'I'. This emerges in connexion with shared attention, social referencing, perception, emotion, intention linguistic communication and action. Thirdly, I recognise that the notion of 'I', as so far described, indispensable as it is, is very thin. But for our multiple purposes, once we have this notion, we legitimately and rightly thicken it up, according to a third stage of my account, with whatever extra information about ourselves is relevant to the task in hand. And these legitimate thickenings are also of great importance.

Self vs this stream of psycho-physical events (Parfit)

It has been suggested on the other side that we do not need the idea of a continuing self. Instead of mentioning 'I', we could speak of 'this stream of psychophysical events'. The best modern exposition of this theory is by Derek Parfit in Part 3 of his Reasons and Persons. Dropping the talk of self, he urges, makes one less afraid of death and less selfish, two claims made since antiquity also by Buddhism. In Parfit's version, the stream of psychological events is held together partly by such direct psychological links as memory, the carrying out of an intention, or the persistence of a belief or desire. But besides this direct connectedness, there can be overlapping chains of the direct connexions, which give us an indirect psychological continuity [31]. The psychological events in the chain are normally related causally to a particular brain. Parfit has recently modified his view, but in the original version, he held that talk of 'I' was not talk of a further fact beyond talk of 'this stream of psycho-physical events'. All that should really matter to us is the psychological links. The persistence of, and link with, at least a good part of the same brain, not split (as in some of his thought-experiments) between two people, allows us also to talk of the identity of

the same person over time, but such identity should not matter to us, the way the psychological links do.

On this view, if anyone asks for more than the links which Parfit has mentioned, he is guilty of supposing that there needs to be some kind of mental substance, a soul, or a Cartesian ego. In fact, however, when I desiderated the acknowledgement of an 'I' in addition to Parfit's links, the meaning of 'I' carried no implication for me about a mental substance, but only the presupposition of embodied beings with psychological characteristics, without whom there would be no occasion for the use of the concept of 'I'.

In a later statement, Parfit in effect acknowledges this. For he later allowed that there are subjects who own experiences, and that this is after all a further fact beyond the holding of the links among psychological events and brain or body. It is a fact to which we refer when we speak of 'I'. But he refuses to agree that there is an advantage in referring to that further fact. Someone who failed to recognise subjects as owning experiences, and who instead thought of experiences as merely located in a body or brain, would be no worse off, he says [32].

In his earlier version, Parfit freely uses such ethical concepts as responsibility, commitment, compensation, and distributing relief, in the belief that talk of 'this stream of psycho-physical events' includes the concept of 'I', albeit a modified concept. The modification may result in moral values closer to those of the utilitarians, who are more concerned with the total quantity of good and evil, than in the moral status of individual persons. One consequence that relates to something we shall shortly encounter in Buddhism is Parfit's idea that reducing the present quantity of suffering may matter more than relieving the individuals who have suffered longest.

My own view, however, is that, once it is recognised that Parfit's talk of 'this stream of psycho-physical events' does not include reference to 'I', it becomes less clear whether there is room for talk about responsibility, commitment, compensation, and distributing relief at all. Parfit in his second account confronts the problem, and asks whether we can think of mental sequences as having rights, duties, moral responsibilities and normative reasons. If not, can those who think of mental sequences, rather than persons, employ these moral concepts at all? Parfit also asks whether we could feel pity. One cannot feel sorry for a series of experiences, even bad experiences. The latter question is very relevant to Buddhism, for in Buddhism, although suffering is due to illusion, including illusion about self, compassion for suffering is very much to be desired, and would be exercised by the Buddha himself. Could there be compassion if only series of experiences are recognised as existing, and if persons are not so recognised? I shall return to this.

Parfit himself thinks that these questions can be answered, but has not at the time of writing given his answer. Faute de mieux, I will therefore offer a simple description of what analogues might remain for an intention, an action and credit or blame, if we are thinking only in terms of a stream of psychophysical events. Given our normal concepts, an intention involves many 'I'-thoughts. I have said that if I intend to shout at someone, in order to draw their attention, then I want to shout, because I want to draw their attention, I believe I will shout, and I believe that the shouting will be because of my want. If I carry out the intention, I do so because of these wants and beliefs. Now if in place of the talk of myself and the other person, we substitute talk of this stream and that stream of psychophysical events, there will be thoughts in the stream and they will be about what events this or that stream will and 'should' contain. One stream currently contains analogues of beliefs and wants, and they are to the effect that the same stream will and 'should' (it would be desirable) contain a later shouting that is due to the earlier analogue of wanting. There will be other analogues of beliefs and wants to the effect that the other stream currently contains inattention to the 'wants' in the first stream, but will and 'should' contain a later attention that is due to the shouting. 'Should' here means that it would be desirable, but we are not supposed to talk of anybody for whom it would be desirable, but only of the desirability of one stream containing a shouting and the other a resultant attention, presumably because the total situation with its various streams would be more desirable from a rather abstract point of view. But intention, conceived this way, seems to have lost much of its point and motivation precisely because there is no one for whom the outcome would be desirable.

Turning now to credit and blame, what if the attention gaining would, under our ordinary way of thinking, deserve credit or blame? We are not now being allowed to think of a person as deserving credit or blame. Rather it would be the act that deserved credit or blame, and the resulting stream, but in the different sense that it would be more admirable, or less so, just a sunset may be admirable, without anybody deserving credit or blame.

The difficulty about pointlessness seems to affect many other concepts that I discussed earlier, once the idea of 'I' is replaced by the idea of 'this stream of psycho-physical events'. What is so important about whether good or bad experiences are included in this stream rather than that? I said that 'I'-thoughts guide us in our emotions and actions, are involved in our navigating safely, are required for shared attention and social referencing, and for linguistic communication. They are involved in the 'look at me' phenomenon. They enter into the content of our emotions. But would we feel much emotion at all, if our thoughts were not about what was happening or might happen to me and mine, but rather about what was happening or might happen in one stream of consciousness rather than another? Would there be much left of the original point of navigating, achieving shared attention, or social referencing, or being looked at, or communicating? Of course, it is better that the universe should contain good experiences rather than bad, but as to which stream of consciousness they might enter, why should that matter? Perhaps because it is preferable that experiences should occur in some sequences rather than others, since their significance will be altered by the sequence. But this would only motivate a preference for certain types of sequence over others. Detachment would have been achieved, but at rather a high price.

Buddhists vs Indian philosophers of the Nyaya School.

Parfit claims that his view is like that of Buddhism (Reasons and Persons 1987, p.273 and appendix J). There were different schools of Buddhism in different countries using different languages, each with a sequence of commentators trying out different views, over many centuries from the fifth century BC. So I shall only be able to report at second hand, but I think this controversy is much more advanced than what is found in the ancient Greeks. The Buddha of our era, who is considered the most recent Buddha of a series, is dated to c. 563 - 483 BC. The Buddhist doctrine that there is no continuing self of the kind we tend to believe in is expected, as with Parfit, both to reduce fear of the loss of self at death, and to make us less selfish in ethical attitudes and conduct.

As regards selfishness, Paul Williams reports [33] a Buddhist view, which, however, he considers more extreme than normal, propounded by the Buddhist Santideva [ACUTE ACCENT OVER S, LONG BAR OVER 1st A] in the early eighth century AD and his commentators. On this view, because 'we' are an ever-changing composite of impermanent psychophysical components, and a composite is a fiction and in itself nothing at all, pains have no owners. Hence, although pain should be got rid of as something unpleasant, there is no rational distinction between the pain of myself and of others. So no preference should rationally be accorded to relief for myself.

Buddhism includes some views very unlike Parfit's. First, there is karma, punishment, reward and responsibility in successive lives. The belief in previous lives which help to account for our present suffering requires belief at least in some survival of something, if only a stream of events, from the previous life. Secondly, it is not only selves, but also what we think of as physical objects that persist merely as streams. Thirdly, our present suffering depends on an illusion about the nature of self and of other persistent objects, including bodies, and there is a morality couched in terms of these illusions about enduring selves and things. But presumably this morality is eventually to be superseded by the recognition that there are only streams. Fourthly, the Buddha himself, and in principle others, can be liberated from these illusions and hence from suffering. But the Buddha felt a kind of compassion, presumably an illusion-free kind.

In what way are our beliefs illusory? Instead of an enduring self, there is a stream of events held together causally by what the Buddhists call 'dependent origination' [34]. In addition, these events come in five bundles, one of them physical, and four of them being what we should call mental episodes [35]. One idea may be that what really exists is the elementary components, which cannot be divided further in thought, and which are short-lived. When we speak of persons, these are not extra entities over and above the elementary components. On one account, that of the Buddhist Vasubandhu in the 4th century AD, the person is 'conceptually constructed' [36], or alternatively we 'impute' the concept of 'I' [37], on the basis of the five bundles. It is not only our beliefs about selves that are illusory, but also our beliefs about enduring objects in general, including people's bodies. These too are imputed on the basis of one of the five strands.

There was a Personalist movement within early Buddhism, and there are later records purporting to come from a debate on the issue in the 3rd century BC [38]. But the orthodox view was that there was no person who owned or supported the experiences in the stream. The stream sounds like the stream postulated by Parfit, though the denial of a self sound a little less compromising than Parfit's initial supposition, later withdrawn, that the stream provides a legitimate way of referring to self.

The belief in karma continued to be a matter of controversy. One may be punished or rewarded in a later life for deeds in an earlier life. The Buddhist Vasubandhu in the 4th century AD, explains this in terms of a stream or continuum in which the fruit of earlier deeds appears later [39]. But, as is revealed for example by a later Buddhist, Kamalasila in the 8th century AD, the Buddhists' Indian opponents, especially in the Nyaya school, continued to object that such karma would depend on there being a continuing self [40].

What about the Buddha's compassion? If the Buddha has compassion, a state short of the final liberation in which awareness of suffering is absent, he presumably regards suffering experiences as real suffering and real experiences, even though based on illusion about self and other objects. He is also presumably himself free of suffering and of illusion, and this is a perfectly consistent idea. As Max Scheler argues in his book, Sympathy [41], sympathy and compassion concerning a pain does not require the compassionate sympathiser to have a pain. The sympathiser may well be more effective as a helper, if he is not himself distracted by suffering, and infants have to pass through the stage of being distressed at the distress of others, before they can express genuine sympathy [42]. Not that I wish yet to describe Buddha as a helper, an idea I shall discuss shortly. For the moment, I am only saying that compassion concerning the stream of illusion-based suffering need not involve illusion or suffering.

Emotional suffering very often involves thoughts about what is happening or will happen to me. But in feeling compassion about this suffering, the Buddha does not himself have to think this way, but only to think about such thoughts, while regarding them as illusory thoughts.

But what would this compassion need to be like, apart from its being possibly separated from deliberate helping? Would not the Buddha have to consider the suffering as less important, if it consists of items in a stream, and there are no suffering subjects, at least not as extra entities? Perhaps, his compassion would have a certain detachment in analogy with the sympathy that the Greek Stoic Epictetus recommends to his sage in the first century AD. The Stoic sage knows that suffering is due to wrong evaluations about what really matters. All that really matters is your character and rationality, which are under your control. Nonetheless, if someone is groaning about his absent child or lost property, by all means groan with him, so long as you do not groan from within (Epictetus Handbook 16).

But will even this analogy work, for could the Buddha form the intention to groan with someone? Presumably, he could not, like the Stoic, groan with the individual, but only groan through a desire to improve the contents of some stream. Moreover, there would be a further difficulty, that a desire implies a lack and normally creates the possibility of frustration and suffering. Stoic sages avoid lack, frustration and suffering only by devices inappropriate to the Buddha. First, they direct their will largely to things in their own power, such as maintaining their own good character. Although they do also will good character to others, they do not will reduced suffering to them, but merely 'prefer' it, and also 'select' it as a means to the more controllable purpose of exercising their own virtues of character. Further, they would rather that the will of God should prevail, if that conflicts with other objectives, and so they hedge expressions of their own will or 'preference' with a 'God willing' [43]. If the Buddha is to go beyond feeling compassion, and actually offer help, whether in the form of a groan, or anything else, he will need his own methods of avoiding frustration.

Indian philosophers, especially of the Nyaya school, introduced objections of their own to the Buddhists. Some of them drew attention to the interrelations of different psychological activities in one person. For example, the Nyaya philosophers Vatsyayana around 400 AD, and Uddyotakara around 600, draw attention to desiring to possess something of a type remembered. This, they argue, requires a single person to be the former experiencer, the present desirer and the future attainer. The Buddhist Vasubandhu instead analyses memory not in terms of the same person, but in terms of causation and resemblance holding between a past experience and a present one. He gives an example of the sequence involved in wanting something of a kind remembered: recollection, interest, consideration, wilful effort, and vital action. No reference is made to a self [44].

The same Nyaya texts [45] also argue that I touch the very same thing that I see. This is reminiscent of Aristotle's idea that there must be a single faculty that perceives sweet and white, or else it would be like a case of my perceiving one and you the other [46], but here the point is put to the further use of requiring a unitary self, whereas Aristotle was not addressing any controversy about this. A more cautious version of the argument recently defended is that if one does not think of oneself as a unitary perceiver, one cannot think of the sweet and white qualities as belonging to one object. Presumably, the Buddhists would not mind this, because they think of objects as non-unitary bundles anyhow. It has recently been urged that it easier to think of perceivers and objects perceived as both or neither bundles [47]. In fact, there is evidence

that in the English-speaking tradition, Berkeley agreed, and made not only objects perceived, but also minds, into bundles [48].

Further rival arguments are recorded in the text purporting to record a conversation between the Greek king of Bactria in the 2nd century BC, Menander, and the Buddhist monk, Nagasena [49]. On the no-self theory, it is complained, you have no parents or teacher, because the phase that had parents has passed away. And again, the one who is punished is not the same as the criminal. In his reply, Nagasena appeals to the continuing body, but presumably the body itself needs to be reinterpreted as a stream. The Buddhist Kamalasila in the 8th century AD records rival arguments that the self is needed to support the inherence not only of karma, but also of desire, aversion, wilful effort based on past experience and memory, knowledge, induction, recognition, resolution of doubt, conditions of moral rightness and wrongness, bondage and liberation, getting something back, and losing surprise through familiarisation [50].

Finally, the verses of the Nyaya philosopher, Jayanta Bhatta, are currently being translated into English by Arindam Chakrabarti who will talk about them at a Gresham conference next year (2003-4). He tells me that the arguments for a self include appeals to some of the things already discussed, navigating, wanting, recognising an old friend, and commerce with people more generally, and the self-healing of the body. Chakrabarti already has translated in an earlier article Jayanta's appeal to linguistic communication and the understanding of a single sentence, which reveals the level of detail of his argument:

'The successive hearing of different phonemes, a successive understanding of the word meanings with the help of remembered conventional semantic rules, a recollection of all those previously apprehended meanings through the mental trace they left at the time of listening to the last syllable, a synthesising of all the singly understood meanings according to the rules of syntactical relevance among them, all these would be impossible without one abiding subject who runs through the whole process and holds it together to yield a single understanding of the sentence.'[51]

My own sympathies are with the Nyaya side. Where are yours?

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