

Maṇḍana's Theory of Practical Motivation

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I feel thirsty. I look around and see a glass of water next to me. So, I reach for it. Here, my action—reaching for the glass—is intentional. What causes it? A plausible explanation: I perform the action, because I want to quench my thirst, and I judge that reaching for the glass of water and then drinking it will quench my thirst. We might think all intentional actions are like this. That gives us:

The Desire and Belief Theory of Action. If an agent (intentionally) ϕ -s, then her action is caused at least by two mental states: (i) her desire for a state of the world to obtain, and (ii) her judgement (or thought or belief) that ϕ -ing is likely to make that state of the world obtain.¹

In this essay, I show how Maṇḍana Mīśra defends a version of this view in *Vidhiviveka* (henceforth VV).²

Why is Maṇḍana's view worth considering? The **Desire and Belief Theory of Action** is subject to counterexamples. Take:

Zoo. Last week, I promised my nephew that I would take him to the zoo the next Sunday. It is now Sunday. But I do not want to get out of bed. I reason as follows, "I promised my nephew that I would take him to the zoo today. So, I should take him to the zoo." Moved by this thought, and this thought alone, I decide to visit the zoo with my nephew.

Here, my action of taking my nephew to the zoo need not be caused by my judgement that it will (likely) bring about some state of the world which I desire. That is bad news for the **Desire and Belief Theory of Action**. However, Maṇḍana's preferred version of the **Desire and Belief Theory of Action** is not subject to these counterexamples.

¹ Theories of this sort are sometimes called Humean, because Hume seems to defend a version of this theory in *The Treatise of Human Nature* 2.3.3. For a recent defence of a Humean theory of motivation, see Sinhababu (2009, 2017). For defences of such theories in the context of moral motivation, see Railton (1986) and Smith (1987); for opposition, see Nagel (1970), McDowell (1979), Platts (1980), McNaughton (1988), Dancy (1993), Scanlon (1998), and Shafer-Landau (2003).

² Maṇḍana's theory of practical motivation in VV has been discussed by Natarajan (1995) and David (2013, 2015).

Here is the plan for this essay. In §1, I explain why Maṇḍana’s theory of practical motivation, as it is introduced in VV, seems to be a version of the **Desire and Belief Theory of Action**. In §2, I introduce an alternative to Maṇḍana’s theory. This accommodates the counterexamples to the **Desire and Belief Theory of Action**. In §3, I consider an attempt to make that theory epistemologically respectable by appealing to a form of practical insight called *pratibhā*. In §4, I discuss the problems that Maṇḍana poses for this theory and lay out Maṇḍana’s own version of the **Desire and Belief Theory**.

1. Speech and the Origins of Action

Let a practical undertaking (*pravṛtti*) be the (conscious) effort that an agent puts into the performance of an action. In this paper, we’ll focus solely on practical undertakings that are intentional or autonomous (*svatantra*).³ Sometimes, when we hear an utterance of a sentence that prescribes a certain action, we intentionally undertake the relevant action. Maṇḍana’s aim in VV is to explain how this happens.

Like other Mīmāṃsā authors, Maṇḍana focuses on Vedic sacrificial prescriptions like:

- (1) *svargakāmo yajeta* | (He who desires heaven should perform a sacrifice.)

Call (1) an *exhortation* (*codanā*): it exhorts or motivates any agent who desires heaven to perform a sacrifice. How is it able to do so? The answer, according to the Mīmāṃsakas, lies in the structure of the verb “*yajeta*.”⁴ This can be analysed into two elements: a verbal root (*dhātu*) and a verbal ending (*pratyaya*). The verbal root refers to an action-type: for example, in (1), the verbal root “*yaj*” refers to the action-type of sacrificing. The verbal ending “*-ta*” has two properties. The first is a property shared by all verbal endings: quite simply, the property of being a verbal ending (*ākhyātatva*). The Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsakas commonly agree that any verbal ending, in virtue of this property, just refers to the realization (*arthātmikā bhāvanā*, literally object-directed effectuation) of

³ A distinction analogous to the distinction between intentional and non-intentional practical undertakings is present in Praśastapāda’s (5th century CE) *Padārthadharmasamgraha*. There, he distinguishes two distinct kinds of effort (*prayatna*): effort that is based on life (*jīvanapūrvaka*) and effort that is based on desire and aversion (*icchādveṣapūrvaka*).

The former kind of effort gives rise to inhalations and exhalations when we are asleep, and makes the inner sense or the *manas* attach itself to the other senses (thereby making us perceptually attend to things) when we are awake. It is produced by a conjunction (*saṃyoga*) between the self (*ātman*) and the *manas*, which depends on some merit (*dharma*) or demerit (*adharmā*) present in the self. In other words, this kind of effort seems to give rise to instinctive actions, actions which need not necessarily be desired by the relevant agent. By contrast, the latter kind of effort gives rise to actions that are conducive to the attainment of beneficial objects and the avoidance of harmful objects, and also prevents the body from falling down in virtue of its weight. It is always produced by a conjunction between the self and the *manas*, which depends on a desire or an aversion present in the self. For the relevant passages, see PDhS 251.11-253.2. In his commentary *Nyāyakanikā* on VV, Vācaspatimiśra refers to this distinction; see VV^{MG} 216.5-9 and VV^S 571.10-12.

⁴ See Āpadeva’s *Mīmāṃsānyāyaprakāśa* (MNP 193.16-19): *tathā hi—yajetety atrāsty aṃśadvayam, yajidhātuḥ pratyayaś ca | tatra pratyaye ’py asy aṃśadvayam, ākhyātatvaṃ līṅtvaṃ ca | ākhyātatvaṃ ca daśasu lakāreṣu vidyate | līṅtvaṃ punaḥ kevalaṃ līṅy eva | tatra ākhyātatvalīṅtvābhyāṃ bhāvanāvocyate |* For Edgerton’s translation, see MNP 39. For helpful discussion of this theory, see Freschi (2012, pp. 22-6).

an effect, e.g., heaven.⁵ The second property of the verbal ending is more specific. For example, in (1), the relevant ending is “*ta*”, which is an instance of the optative suffix (*lini*). So, this verbal ending possesses the specific property of optativity (*liniva*). It is in virtue of this second property that (1) serves as an exhortation, i.e., motivates people to act.

Sanskrit philosophers adopt a generalised version of this picture. Under this account, all exhortations motivate people to act in virtue of including an exhortative verbal ending, i.e., a verbal ending on hearing which people (under suitable conditions) undertake some action. Typically, the optative, imperative, Vedic injunctive, and gerundive suffixes serve as exhortative verbal endings. But, depending on the context, even subjunctive and indicative suffixes can play this role. Here are some examples. The following imperatives, which include the imperative suffix (*lot*), are paradigmatic exhortations.

- (2) *gām abhyāja* | (Bring the cow.)
- (3) *māṇavakam adhyāpaya* | (Teach the boy (please).)
- (4) *kuru yathābhimatam* | (Do whatever you like.)

Similarly, the Vedic injunctive suffix (*let*) which alternates with imperatives in sentences like (5), can be used in exhortations.

- (5) *pība imām édām, barhīḥ sado mama* | (Drink this, and sit down on this grass of mine.)

Finally, the gerundive suffix (*-tava*) can also play the exhortative role.

- (6) *svādhyāyo ’dhyetavyaḥ* | (One should engage in the study [of the Veda].)

Utterances of all these sentences (under suitable conditions) may motivate agents, who fit a certain description, to perform certain actions. In VV, Maṇḍana wants to offer a causal story about how hearing exhortations make us undertake various actions. The term “*vidhi*” is just a technical name for whatever causes practical undertakings in such cases. It is a *motivating cause*

⁵ For the origins of this theory in Kumārila’s *Tantravārttika*, see the sub-commentary on *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 2.1.1, especially at TV II.339-354. For discussion of these passages, see Kataoka (2001). Maṇḍana himself endorses a version of this theory of object-directed effectuation in his *Bhāvanāviveka*; see BhV, pp. 71ff. For broader discussion of *bhāvanā* in the context of Mīmāṃsā, see Ollett (2013).

(*pravartanā*) of practical undertakings: it gives rise to practical undertakings either by itself or by producing an awareness⁶ of itself.⁷

It is worth getting clear on the causal role a *vidhi* is supposed to play. In the first part of VV, Maṇḍana seems to presuppose that a *vidhi* is an efficient cause (*kārahahetu*)—rather than an awareness-effecting cause (*jñāpakahetu*)—of our practical undertakings. What does the distinction consist in? An efficient cause brings about an effect without making the agent aware of something further. Imagine a cow blown away by a strong wind. Here, the wind is an efficient cause of the cow’s movement: it does not cause this movement by informing the cow about something else, e.g., about why it should move; it just moves the cow by brute force. Since efficient causes do not bring about their effects by informing the relevant agent about something else, they do not require the agent to be aware of any connection between themselves and something else that they might inform the subject about. For example, when the wind blows the cow away, the movement of the cow is produced by the wind independently of any antecedent awareness that the cow may have about the connection between the wind and other things.

By contrast, an awareness-effecting cause typically brings about its effect, e.g., an awareness or an action based on the awareness, insofar as it makes the agent aware of something else. Take the case where I infer the presence of fire on a hill after seeing a wisp of smoke emerging from the hill. Here, the smoke is the reason (*hetu*) on the basis of which I make my inference. But I can make this inference only insofar as I take smoke to be invariably accompanied by fire. Thus, the observed smoke is an awareness-effecting cause: it brings about its effect, i.e., the inferential judgement about fire, by informing the agent about the presence of fire on the hill. Since awareness-effective causes bring about their effects in virtue of informing the relevant agent about something other than themselves, they typically require the agent to be aware of some connection between themselves and the other things that they might inform the

⁶ An awareness or *jñāna* is an experience or thought. In this essay, I am translating the expression “*jñāna*” everywhere as “awareness” or “awareness-event” instead of resorting to the more usual translation “cognition.” This is because, in contemporary philosophy of mind and cognitive science, the term “cognition” is typically reserved for mental states, such as judgements or beliefs, whose contents are accessible for the purposes of verbal reports, practical reasoning, etc. However, according to some Indian philosophers, perceptual experiences that are non-conceptual are not of this sort but still count as *jñāna*. So, it is better to use the more neutral term “awareness” or “awareness-event” for the more general category of *jñāna*.

⁷ As I understand the notion of a motivating cause, it is analogous to the notion of a *motivating reason* often discussed in contemporary theories of practical reasons. For any action that an agent may perform, we can ask, “Why did she do it?” Any answer to such a question would give us a reason that (causally) explains the relevant action; let that be an *explanatory reason*. Some of these explanatory reasons explain the relevant action in virtue of playing a role in the agent’s practical reasoning; call any such explanatory reason a *motivating reason*. Here is a simple way of seeing the distinction. Suppose I snapped at you in a conversation. Why did I do it? One answer could appeal to the neurochemical processes in my brain that make me snap at you. While various facts about these processes may explain the action, they do not do so in virtue of playing a role in my practical reasoning. Another answer could be that I wanted to make you stop talking, and I thought that the best way of doing so would be to snap at you. This explanation does pick out a consideration—i.e., that my snapping will make you stop talking—that plays a role in my practical reasoning. A motivating cause, I will assume, is a factor of this sort.

agent about.⁸ For example, when I infer fire from smoke, the observed smoke causes my inferential judgement about fire only insofar as I am aware of a connection between smoke and fire.

On Maṇḍana's view, a *vidhi* is not an awareness-effecting cause. It does not bring about its effect, e.g., a practical undertaking, by informing the relevant agent about other than itself. That is why, in order to bring about a practical undertaking, a *vidhi* also does not require the relevant agent to be aware of a connection between itself and some further object. Under optimal conditions, a *vidhi*—either by itself or insofar as it is an object of awareness—can bring about a practical undertaking.⁹ Thus, in this sense, a *vidhi* may indeed serve as the efficient cause of practical undertakings. However, if we accept this claim, we should do so with an important caveat in mind: unlike other efficient causes (e.g., the wind that blows the cow away), a *vidhi* does not bring about its effect by brute physical force. Since it makes an agent act intentionally or autonomously, it requires the involvement of some background psychological conditions, e.g., suitable desires, absence of practical akrasia, and so on. But, even with these qualifications, the claim that a *vidhi* is an efficient cause of practical undertakings remains an important one. It suggests that (at least in prudent or practically rational agents) the psychological connection between a motivating cause and a practical undertaking is not contingent on what other background cognitive states the agent may be in: once the motivating cause is present and the agent is aware of it, a practical undertaking does not fail to arise.

Maṇḍana helpfully distinguishes three different approaches to the nature of *vidhi*. According to the linguistic approach (*śabdavidhivāda*), a *vidhi* is simply a linguistic expression, e.g., an exhortative verbal ending (VV^S §3). According to the linguistic operation approach (*śabdavyāpāraavidhivāda*), a *vidhi* is a linguistic operation (*śabdavyāpāra*), performed by exhortative verbal endings, which motivates the hearer to perform certain acts. Bhaṭṭa Kumārila and his

⁸ To be fair, however, Maṇḍana does not think that all awareness-effecting causes are like this. For example, the sense-faculties are an exception. The sense-faculties bring about awareness-events about perceptible objects that are distinct from them, but they do not require the relevant subject to have any background information about the connection between themselves and the perceptible objects.

⁹ This idea plays a crucial role in Maṇḍana's criticism of the view that linguistic expressions like exhortative verbal endings can play the role of a *vidhi*. Since such linguistic expressions require the relevant subject to be aware of a semantic relation between themselves and their meanings in order to bring about an awareness or an action on the basis of such awareness, they cannot be treated as efficient causes of practical undertakings. The first instance of this move occurs in VV^S §3.3, where Maṇḍana says (VV^S §3.3, 45.3-4): "Moreover, an awareness-effecting cause depends on an awareness. And if the nature of exhortative verbal endings were the efficient cause (*kāraṇa*) of practical undertakings, then there would be the undesirable result that even an agent who lacks a suitable awareness would undertake actions" (*jñāpakaṃ ca jñānam apekṣate | linādisvarūpaṃ ca pravṛtteḥ kāraṇam ity anuḥayuktasamvīdo 'pi pravṛttiprasaṅgaḥ* |). For a variant of the text, see VV^{MG} 5.6-8. The move is repeated in VV^S §5.2.2 in response to the proposal that exhortative verbal endings move the agent like wind, etc. (VV^S §5.2.2, 83.18-21): "For, if a linguistic expression were the efficient cause of practical undertakings, the designation of an operation of that linguistic expression would not be a necessary component [of that causal process] even though it exists, because that expression would produce its effect even without designating any operation, since an efficient cause does not require any awareness" (*na hi pravṛtikāraṇatve 'pi śabdasya sad api tadvyāpārābhīdhānam anaṅgam anabhīhitavyāpārasyāpi tasya kāryakaravāt kāraṇasyānapekṣitajñānatvāt* |). For a variant of the text, see VV^{MG} 14.3-5.

followers, presumably, defend a version of this view.¹⁰ Maṇḍana interprets this theory in two ways (VV^S §§4-5). On the first interpretation, this linguistic operation is designated or directly conveyed (*abhidheya*) by exhortative verbal endings: when a linguistically competent agent hears an exhortative verbal ending, she becomes aware of the linguistic operation in question, and thereby performs the relevant action. On the second interpretation, designation (*abhidhā*), i.e., the operation by means of which linguistic expressions directly convey their meanings to linguistically competent hearers, itself is the motivating linguistic operation. It is unclear which of these two views is actually the view Kumāriḷa endorses. Finally, according to a semantic approach (*arthavidhivāda*), a *vidhi* is just an extralinguistic object that constitutes the meaning of exhortative verbal endings and motivates a hearer to act under suitable circumstances (VV^S §§6-7). Prabhākara Mīśra and his followers, arguably, defend a semantic theory of *vidhi*.¹¹

In the first negative half of VV, Maṇḍana considers all three approaches to *vidhi*, and discusses arguments against them. In the second half, he offers his own semantic theory of *vidhi*. In the rest of this section, I sketch his preferred theory of *vidhi*.

Focus just on the imperatives (2)-(4). These are of different kinds: the first is an order (*ājñā*), the second is a request (*abhyarthanā*), and the third is a permission (*anujñā*). Ordinary exhortations like (2)-(4) are issued by an enjoinder (*niyoktr*) who prompts another agent, i.e., the enjoinee (*niyojya*), to act.

Notice that an enjoinder typically uses orders and requests to make the enjoinee perform an action that will promote her own interests. For example, if a farmer orders her assistant to bring the cow (so that the cow can be milked), she does so because it helps her satisfy a standing desire she has. Similarly, if I request you to teach my son, I may do so because that action serves my interests. Things are different with permissions. For example, if my nephew asks me if he can get an ice-cream and I ask him to do whatever he likes, it is not obvious that I am thereby

¹⁰ This operation is sometimes called *śabdātmikā bhāvanā* (literally, verbal effectuation). See Kumāriḷa’s *Tantravārttika* on *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 2.1.1 (TV II.344.14-16): “Of those, that operation, which belongs to linguistic expressions like exhortative verbal endings and which motivates a person towards object-directed effectuation (*arthātmikā bhāvanā*), is the second kind of effectuation (*bhāvanā*), which is a property of linguistic expressions, which has the nature of designation (*abhidhā*), and which is said to be the *vidhi*.” (*tatrārthātmikāyāṃ bhāvanāyāṃ liṅādiśabdānāṃ yaḥ puruṣaṃ prati prayojakavyāpāraḥ, sā dvitīyā śabdadharmo ’bhidhātmikā bhāvanā vidhir ucyate* |)

¹¹ Throughout this essay, I will take the *meaning* (*artha*) of any linguistic expression (roughly, speaking) to be the object that is conveyed to a linguistically competent hearer by that expression. On the Prabhākara view that Maṇḍana presents, the meaning of exhortative verbal endings is *niyoga* or injunction, also referred to as *apūrva* (VV^S §7, or VV^{MG} 36-78). When an agent hears an exhortative verbal ending in the context of an exhortation addressed to her, she undergoes an awareness-event of the form: “I am enjoined” (*niyukto ’smi*). Such self-ascriptions are supposed to track an entity called *injunction*—according to one interpretation, something to be done or brought about—which is not accessible by any means of knowing other than language, and, unlike other entities that are part of the natural fabric of reality, does not exist in the past, the present, or the future. For discussion of this view in its sources, see Prabhākara Mīśra’s sub-commentary *Bṛhatī* on *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 2.1.5 along with Śālikanātha Mīśra’s *Rjvimalā* (Bṛ 319-324) and the second chapter of Śālikanātha’s *Vākyārthamāṅgikā* in *Prakaranapañcikā* (PP 417-450). For discussion of Prabhākara’s view, see Clooney (1990, pp. 245ff) and Yoshimizu (1997, pp. 96ff).

promoting any of my interests. Therefore, requests and permissions typically prescribe actions that serve the interest of the enjoiner, while permissions (at least sometimes) license actions that serve the interests of the enjonee. Next, observe that the enjoiners often use orders and requests to make an enjonee, who is not prepared or willing to perform a certain action, perform that action. When a farmer orders her assistant to bring the cow, her aim might be to motivate an unprepared or unwilling assistant to bring the cow. In contrast, a permission may be used to license an action that the enjonee is already willing to perform. For example, when I ask my nephew to do whatever he likes, I give him permission to do something that he already wants to do, or is about to do. Orders and requests, then, are exhortations for the unmotivated (*aprasthitacodanā*), while permissions quite often are exhortations for the motivated (*prasthitacodanā*).

According to Maṇḍana, an order like (2) or a request like (3) has two features: (i) it is meant to motivate an enjonee who is not prepared to perform the recommended action, and (ii) it prescribes actions that serve the interests of the enjoiner. In contrast, a permission like (4) is supposed to motivate an enjonee who is ready to perform the action that it licenses (and may license actions that serve the interests of the enjonee). However, Maṇḍana thinks that there are other exhortations which, unlike permissions, seek to motivate unmotivated enjonees and, unlike orders and requests, prescribe actions that serve the interests of those enjonees. These are called instructions (*upadeśa*). Consider:

(7) *bhaikṣam cara* | (One should go begging for alms.)

(8) *jvaritaḥ pathyam aśnīyāt* | (He who suffers from a fever should eat a healthy diet.)

(7) and (8) are supposed motivate unmotivated enjonees to perform actions that are in their best interests. Maṇḍana thinks that Vedic sacrificial prescriptions are instructions of this sort: they seek to motivate unmotivated enjonees to undertake actions that promote their desired ends (VV^S §11).

Maṇḍana goes on to explain how instructions can motivate a hearer to act. Unlike the defender of linguistic or linguistic operation approaches to *vidhi*, Maṇḍana does not want to endow linguistic expressions with some mysterious capacity to produce practical undertakings. He thinks that instructions give rise to action, precisely because they tell us how to achieve our desired aims. Here is the story.

Nothing other than the property of being a means to a desired object (*iṣṭābhyupāyatā*) is what brings about practical undertakings (*pravartaka*).

And they say that the property (*dharmā*) that causes practical undertakings is the motivating cause (*pravartanā*) || 2.3 ||

For a motivating cause is some special quality of an action (*bhāvātīśaya*)—called an operation (*vyāpāra*)—which is capable of bringing about a practical undertaking.

Moreover, that is the property that actions possess of being a means to a desired object. For an agent does not undertake any action without being aware of the relevant action as such (i.e., as a means to a desired object). Even a practical undertaking which arises from an order, etc. arises depending only on [the relevant action's] being a cause of a desired object in some way. For such an undertaking is absent otherwise.¹²

The claim is this: the meaning of optative and other exhortative verbal endings is the property of being a means to a desired end. This is entailed by two premises. The first premise: the property of being a means to a desired end is the only motivating cause of action. The second premise: the meaning of any exhortative verbal ending refers to a motivating cause of action. Let consider the premises one by one.

The second premise of the argument is motivated by two thoughts. The first is that a *vidhi* is a motivating cause of practical undertakings, i.e., it is something, which, either by itself or by becoming an object of awareness, causes an agent to undertake an action. The second thought is that linguistic expressions and their operations cannot play the role of a *vidhi*. Only a meaning conveyed by suitable linguistic expressions, e.g., exhortative verbal endings, can. These two thoughts yield the conclusion that the meaning of any exhortative verbal ending is a motivating cause of action.

The first premise is more interesting. It says that the property of being a means to a desired end is the only motivating cause of action, i.e., the only entity, which, by itself or in virtue of being an object of awareness, causes an agent to undertake actions. In his commentary *Nyāyakaṇikā* (NK), Vācaspati Mīśra defends a qualified version of this claim.

Maṇḍana's Claim. An action's property of being a means to a desired object is the only motivating cause of action in prudent (roughly, instrumentally rational) agents, i.e., the only entity which, when recognized by a prudent agent, causes her to perform that action.

Why is this true? Vācaspati explains:

¹² VVS §11.1.2, 477.6-10 and VVMG 173.1-5, 174.2: *pumso neṣṭābhyupāyatvāt kriyāsv anyañ pravartakaḥ | pravrttihetuṃ dharmam ca pravādanti pravartanām || 2.3 | pravrttisamartho hi kaścīd bhāvātīśayo vyāpārābhīdhanāḥ pravartanā | sā ca kriyānām apekṣitopāyatā | na hi tathātvam apratīpadya tatra pravartate kaścīt | yā 'py ājñādībhyañ pravrttiḥ sā 'pi kathañcid apekṣitanibandhanatvam upāśrityaiva anyathā 'bhāvāt |* I have translated the term “*bhāvātīśaya*” as “a special quality of an action” following Parameśvara's *Juṣadhvañkaraṇī* who takes the term “*bhāva*” to refer to action (*kriyā*) and Vācaspatimīśra who takes “*atīśaya*” to refer to a property (*dharmā*) of the *bhāva*, i.e., the action. Similar expressions such as “*ātmātīśaya*” and “*svabhāvātīśaya*” are quite common in certain Yogācāra texts: see, for example, Sthiramati's commentary on verses 1 and 19 in Vasubandhu's *Trīṃśikā* (Triṃ 44.5-12, 118.1-3), and verse 27 in the second chapter (*Pramāṇasiddhi*) of Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika* (PV 2.27). In these contexts, these terms mean something like a special quality pertaining to the nature of the relevant object.

For any physical or linguistic action of prudent persons (*prekṣāvatām*) is based on effort (*prayatna*), and effort is based on desire (*rāga*). Moreover, insofar as desire follows pleasure, it arises neither with respect to pain, nor also with respect to what is not pleasure (*asukha*). For there is aversion and indifference with respect to those two. Furthermore, the experience of the ordinary person is that any action is pain. If an action were not a means to pleasure, then those who seek pleasure would not undertake this action. And, given that these people, when they lack a means, are not directly able to undertake actions for the sake of pleasure, this would yield the undesirable consequence that activities (*vyāpāra*) of prudent persons would cease! Therefore, the property of being a means to pleasure gives rise to practical undertakings by way of bringing forth a desire. And it is said that this property, by means of its own awareness, brings forth a desire that serves as the cause of practical undertakings.¹³

The argument depends on four assumptions.

No Action without Desire. A prudent agent only undertakes actions for the sake of a desired end.

Hedonism. A prudent agent only finally¹⁴ desires pleasure (or a positive balance of pleasure over pain) for herself.

Action involves Pain. Any prudent agent knows that actions—insofar as they involve mental and physical exertion—solely involve pain.

A Constraint on Action. An agent cannot undertake any action for the sake of a desired end unless she thinks (or judges or believes) that the relevant action is a means of realizing about that desired end.

Together, these four assumptions yield an argument for the claim that a prudent agent undertakes an action only if she takes it to be a means to a desired end. Let us see how. **No Action without Desire** says that an agent undertakes an action only for the sake of a desired end. By **Action Involves Pain**, any prudent agent knows that any action involves pain. If this is

¹³ NK on VVS §11.1.2, 477.18-22: *prekṣāvatām hi kāyavacanaceṣṭe prayantapūrvike | prayatnāś ca rāgapūrvah | sukhānuśayī ca rāgo na dukkhe nāpy asukhe dveṣād upekṣaṇāc ca | kriyā ca dukkhetṛy anubhavo lokasya | sā yadi sukhasādhanam na syān nāsyām sukhārthinaḥ pravarteran | na caite 'nuṣṭyāḥ sāksāt sukhe pravartitum īsate iti prekṣāvadyāpāroparamaprasaṅgaḥ | tasmād dukkharūpāsu kriyāsu sukhasādhanataivecchopahāramukhena pravartayati | svavijñānena cāsāv icchām pravṛttihetum upaharatīty uktam |* For a variant, see VVMG 173.12-18.

¹⁴ The distinction I am making between *final* and *instrumental* desires coincides with the distinction that Korsgaard (1983) makes between final and instrumental aims. If an agent finally desires *x*, then she does not desire *x* for the sake of something else; by contrast, if an agent instrumentally desires *x*, then she desires *x* for the sake of something else. What **Hedonism** claims is that only pleasure (or a positive balance of pleasure over pain) is finally desired. This does not entail that pleasure is the only desired end of an agent. There may be other such ends, but those would only be instrumentally desired.

right, then, given **Hedonism**, this means that a prudent agent cannot desire to perform an action for its own sake: after all, such an agent is averse to pain, and, if every action involves pain, there is nothing finally desirable about an action in itself. This leaves open two possibilities: either a prudent agent wants to perform an action for the sake of pleasure (or the sake of a positive balance of pleasure over pain) or some other end that she instrumentally desires for the sake of pleasure (or a positive balance of pleasure over pain). So, we are left with the conclusion that an agent must want to perform an action directly or indirectly for the sake of pleasure (or a positive balance of pleasure over pain). According to **Constraint on Action**, an agent cannot undertake any action for the sake of a desired end unless she thinks that the action is a means of realizing that end. This gives us the conclusion that an agent only undertakes an action because she takes the action to be a direct or indirect means of bringing about some pleasure (or a positive balance of pleasure over pain). If this argument is sound, then **Maṇḍana's Claim** is true.

The argument is questionable in two respects. We can reject **Hedonism**: the claim that a prudent agent only finally desires pleasure, not pain or the absence of pleasure and pain. This might strike many of us as false. Consider the soldier who throws himself on a grenade to save his comrades, or a dying woman who refuses to turn off life support even though she knows that whatever life lies ahead of her will contain much more pain than pleasure. In such cases, the agent is not motivated by the consideration that the action will yield pleasure (or a positive balance of pleasure over pain) for herself. Similarly, we might question **Action involves Pain**. My physical action of raising my hand or my mental action of attending to the tree outside my window—when considered in isolation—does not seem painful at all. So, it is not the case that all actions involve pain. Why can prudent people not perform such non-painful actions for their own sake? In both cases, the lesson is the same. If a prudent agent can at least sometimes perform actions either for their own sake or when she knows that the action will yield pleasure or a positive balance of pleasure or pain, Vācaspati's argument cannot be sound.¹⁵

Fortunately, these premises are dispensable. We can run a version of the argument with just two premises:

¹⁵ There are various ways of getting around this worry, but none of them are particularly convincing. For example, we can weaken **Hedonism** such that it no longer entails that a prudent agent must finally desire pleasure (or a positive balance of pleasure over pain) *for herself*, but rather allows such an agent to finally desire pleasure (or a positive balance of pleasure over pain) for other agents. This might take care of some versions of the soldier and the dying woman cases, where the agents know that their actions will give others pleasure. I do not think such a solution will be robust, because we can simply stipulate in the dying woman example that the woman has no relatives or friends who will be pleased if she lives. An alternative strategy might be to argue that, if there are agents who perform actions for their own sake or for motives that are completely unrelated to pleasure, such agents cannot be prudent. But that too does not strike me as right. Imagine that, from my perspective, what gives my life meaning is the fact that I am able to pursue certain projects, like painting or writing novels, which are worthwhile for me independently of whether they yield pleasure for me. So, if I perform actions for the sake of carrying out those projects, I could still be acting from prudential self-concern, even though I will not be motivated by the consideration that those actions will yield pleasure.

No Action without Desire. Any prudent agent only undertakes actions for the sake of a desired end.

A Weak Constraint on Action. An agent cannot undertake any action for the sake of an end unless she thinks that the action is a means of realizing that end.

These two premises would be enough to get us the result that an agent only undertakes actions if she thinks (or judges or believes) that it brings about a desired end.

If the argument given in Maṇḍana's passage is sound, then we end up with a semantic proposal about exhortations. On this picture, what causes an agent to undertake an action is the consideration that it serves a desired end of hers. How can exhortations do so? (1) roughly means that he who desires heaven should perform a sacrifice. If the conclusion of this argument is right, (1) conveys the content that, if someone desires heaven, then performing a sacrifice is a means to her desired end. Now, if the hearer is also a person who desires heaven (and knows this), she will then undertake the relevant action. This explains how exhortations give rise to practical undertakings. The same account, Maṇḍana claims, can apply to other exhortations, including orders. When an enjoinee hears the order "Bring the cow," she comes to judge that bringing the cow is a means to a desired end of hers. In a situation where the enjoinee is an assistant to a farmer who employs her, she may be able to infer from other information available to her what this desired end is: for example, it may be keeping her job. This inference, in turn, will make her undertake the action. This story can arguably be extended to requests and permissions.

2. Resistance

Maṇḍana's theory of practical motivation seems to support a restricted version of the **Desire and Belief Theory of Action**. On this view, if a prudent agent intentionally performs an action, then her action is caused at least by two mental states: (i) her desire for a certain end, and (ii) her judgement (or thought or belief) that performing that action will realize that end. This, if true, might be bad news for Maṇḍana. For this theory is subject to the same counterexamples that affect the unqualified version of the **Desire and Belief Theory**. Recall *Ṟoo*. When I take my nephew to the zoo, my practical undertaking is not caused by my judgement that this will promote some end that I independently desire. I act simply on the basis of the consideration that I should perform the relevant action. In this section, I discuss an alternative to Maṇḍana's theory of practical motivation, which Maṇḍana himself considers in VV and which is motivated by a similar concern.

2.1. To-Be-Done-Ness

Maṇḍana entertains the following objection from a Prābhākara opponent against his view.

[The opponent:] Practical undertakings arise from the awareness, “This is to be done” (*kartavyam iti*). For how could a person, who is undergoing such an awareness, not undertake an action? For who gives a reply to a person who, having perceived gold, has said that it is mud?¹⁶

If we look closely at the passage, we can distinguish two claims.

The first claim is that the awareness that an action is to be done (or should be done) causes practical undertakings. In the context, this seems to entail:

The Obligation Theory of Action. To-be-done-ness (*kartavyatā*) is the only motivating cause of action in prudent agents, i.e., the only entity such that, when a prudent agent becomes aware of it, she undertakes an action.

This conflicts with **Maṇḍana’s Claim** if to-be-done-ness is distinct from the property of being a means to a desired end. Interestingly, the **Obligation Theory of Action** leaves open the possibility that, if a prudent agent thinks that an action is to be done without judging it to be a means to a desired end, she may still undertake that action. This allows the defender of this view to accommodate counterexamples to the **Desire and Belief Theory**.

The second claim is meant to address an objection: namely, that an agent may not undertake an action even when she judges that it is to be done. This would mean that to-be-done-ness is not a motivating cause. The response is that a person who makes that judgement but does not perform that action is just as incoherent or unreasonable as a person who, despite perceiving something to be gold, says that it is mud. So, the **Obligation Theory of Action**—insofar as it is a claim solely about prudent agents—stands.

If the **Obligation Theory of Action** is correct, then (using an argument similar to Maṇḍana’s earlier argument) we arrive at another semantic theory of *vidhi*. On this view, to-be-done-ness is the meaning of exhortative verbal endings. Can we give any argument for this theory? Vācaspati outlines one.

¹⁶ VV §11.2. 479.13-14: *nanu kartavyam iti pratipatteḥ pravṛtṭiḥ | katham hi tathā pratipadyamāno na pravarteta | yo hi svarṇam upalabhya mṛttikety āha kas tasyottaram dadāti |* A version of the same objection was discussion earlier. See VV^s §7.13, 248.3-5: “A practical undertaking arises from the awareness of to-be-done-ness. Someone who is enjoined undergoes an awareness, ‘This is to be done by me.’ However, someone who, even after undergoing that awareness, does not perform the action that is to be performed, is not deterred even under the threat of punishment, just like a person who does not perform actions even though the attainment of a desired object and the avoidance of an undesired object take place [by means of the relevant actions]” (*nanu kartavyatāvagamāt pravṛtṭiḥ | avagacchati ca niyuktah | idaṃ mama kartavyam iti | yas tv avagacchann api nānuṣṭeyam anuṣṭhati sa sattve ’py arthānarthaprāptiparihārayor ananuṣṭhann va na daṇḍair vāryate |*).

This is the import. Certainly, those exhortative verbal endings have operations that are known by inference from the observation of their effect. Moreover, the effect has the characteristic of being a practical undertaking, which is observed in linguistically competent persons immediately after they hear the exhortative verbal endings. And that practical undertaking is based on an awareness, because it is a practical undertaking of an autonomous (*svatantra*) person just like our practical undertakings. Moreover, the inferred awareness has the same intentional object as the awareness that causes our practical undertakings, because it is an awareness that causes a practical undertaking just like the awareness-events that cause our practical undertakings.

As we ourselves reflect on its intentional object having closed our two eyes and having abandoned our attachment to useless activities (*cakṣuṣī nimīlya dīṇḍikarāgam parityajya*),¹⁷ we become aware only of to-be-done-ness, by ruling out linguistic operations, the intention of a person, a desired end of that person, and the property of being a means to that desired end [as possible meanings of exhortative verbal endings]. That is to say, we do not ever undertake actions, even in the case of suckling, etc., simply on the basis of the awareness, “This is a means to a desired object”; rather, we do so on the basis of the awareness, “This is to be done.” Moreover, since we do not undertake past and present actions, and future actions foretold by a palmist in the form, “This will happen to you,” when they do not have to-be-done-ness as their nature, and since we undertake actions when we are aware of that to-be-done-ness, to-be-done-ness alone is the cause of practical undertakings. So, the practical undertaking, which arises immediately after the exhortative verbal endings, are heard implies that the exhortative verbal endings designate to-be-done-ness.

And, thus, since the semantic connection (*saṃgati*) between the exhortative verbal endings and to-be-done-ness is known, the exhortative verbal endings designate (*abhidadhate*) that to-be-done-ness even in the case of the Veda.¹⁸

¹⁷ The phrase “*dīṇḍikarāgam parityajya*” occurs in Dharmakīrti’s *Hetubindu* (HB 7.17). Literally, it means “having abandoned the attachment of the *dīṇḍikas*.” In his commentary, Arcaṭa explains (HBṬ 71.3-6): “‘Having abandoned the attachment of the *dīṇḍikas*.’ The *dīṇḍikas* are naked teachers (*nagnācārya*) [probably Jain mendicants]; they are attached to inconsequentially writing names over and over again. Therefore, [this phrase means:] having abandoned the devotion to an inappropriate object (*asthānābhiniveśa*), similar to theirs, which is based on the consideration, ‘Given that others have said this, I must necessarily say it even though it is useless in virtue of being unreasonable.’” (*dīṇḍikarāgam parityajya dīṇḍikāḥ nagnācāryāḥ te niṣphalam upary upari nāmalekhane prasaktāḥ tatas teṣāṃ iva pareṇokte tasyopari mayā ’vaśyam ayuktatayā niṣphalam apy abhidhānīyam ity asthānābhiniveśam tyaktvā*). I am translating the phrase as “having abandoned our attachment to useless activities.”

¹⁸ NK on VVS §11.2, 479.17-21 and 480.1-6: *idam ākūtam | kāryadarśanonneyavyāpṛtayah khalv amī linādayaḥ | kāryam ca pravṛttilakṣaṇam vṛddhānām linādīśvavaṇādīsamanantaram upalabhyate | tac ca buddhīpūrvakam svatantrapravṛttivāt asmatpravṛttivat | anumitā ca buddhir asmatpravṛttihetubuddhigocaracārīṇī pravṛttihetubuddhitvāt asmatpravṛttihetubuddhivad iti | tasyāś ca viśayam svayam eva cakṣuṣī nimīlya dīṇḍikarāgam parityajya paryālocyantaḥ śabdavyāpārāpuruṣāśayataṣamīhitataṣādhanatāvīyudāsena kartavyatām eva pratīpradyāmahe | tathā hi stanāpānādāv api na jātu samīhitopāya ity eva pravṛttāḥ smaḥ | kim tu kartavyam etad iti | atīte vartamāne ’nānāgate ca sāmudravīdākhyāta etat te bhavītey akartavyatātmany āpravṛtteḥ tadavagame ca tadātmani pravṛtteḥ*

In the first two paragraphs of this passage, Vācaspati describes a pair of arguments that leads the opponent to take an awareness of to-be-done-ness to be the motivating cause of action. The arguments are derived from the Prābhākara author, Śālikanātha Mīśra, who was writing after Maṇḍana (see footnote 18). The arguments, as they are stated by Śālikanātha, are supposed to be inferences by means of which an inexperienced or ignorant person (*bāla*), who desires to acquire semantic competence, comes to learn that to-be-done-ness (*kāryatā*) must be what the exhortative verbal endings mean. This aspect of the argument (with inferences performed by someone with incomplete linguistic mastery) is not explicitly flagged by Vācaspati, so we need not frame the arguments that way. The arguments take off from what seems to be common ground amongst all parties: after hearing exhortative verbal endings, linguistically competent hearers undertake actions.

Argument 1. Any practical undertaking, which takes place after an agent hears an exhortative verbal ending, is based on some awareness, because it is the practical undertaking of an autonomous person.

Argument 2. Any awareness which is the basis of a practical undertaking that takes place after the agent hears an exhortative verbal ending, is directed at the same intentional object as any awareness that is the basis of our practical undertakings, because it is an awareness that causes a practical undertaking.

Argument 1 has some plausibility. The underlying idea may be that any autonomous practical undertaking is preceded by a conscious deliberative process which (however brief) gives rise to an awareness that causes the action. **Argument 2**, however, is much less plausible: it seems to suggest that there is only a certain kind of awareness directed at a unique object—namely, the motivating cause of action—which could cause practical undertakings. There is no obvious empirical reason for us to think that prudent agents—with diverse psychological profiles—would act on the basis of only one kind of awareness. Without such empirical evidence, this claim will be difficult to defend. But, still, it might be accepted by Maṇḍana, who is willing to say that there is just one motivating cause of action.

What is more contentious is the claim that follows:

The Contentious Claim. All our practical undertakings (at least if we are prudent) are caused by the judgement that the relevant action is to be done.

kartavyataiva pravṛttihetur iti liṅādiśravaṇānantarā pravṛttih kartavyatābhīdhānam eva liṅādīnām āpādayati | tathā ca viditasamgatayā liṅādāyo vede 'pi tām abhidadhate | For a variant, see VV^{MG} 174.16-26. The passage has an obvious parallel in the second chapter of Śālikanāthamīśra's *Vākyārthamāṭṛkā* in *Prakaraṇapañcikā* (PP 418.11-20).

Why is this plausible? Vācaspati mentions two reasons. The first is that, contra Maṇḍana, many of our practical undertakings do not seem to be based on any consideration about means and ends. When a child performs clearly autonomous actions like suckling, etc., it does not do so on the basis of the consideration that it will promote some desired end. Rather, it does so on the consideration that it is what it should do. The second is this. We never undertake actions that (we think) have already happened or are happening. We also do not undertake future actions foretold by a palmist if we do not regard them as actions to be performed, even though they may serve as means to desired ends. These two considerations lend support to the thesis that the consideration that an action is to be done, or should be done, underlies all practical undertakings. This confirms the **Obligation Theory of Action**, i.e., the claim that to-be-done-ness is the sole motivating cause of action in prudent agents.

The last few lines of the passage show how this could be turned into a semantic theory. Since we often undertake actions immediately after hearing utterances that involve exhortative verbal endings, we may infer that exhortative verbal endings cause us to undertake the relevant actions by directly conveying to us a motivating cause of action. But if to-be-done-ness is the only motivating cause of action, then exhortative verbal awareness must directly convey to-be-done-ness. What an expression directly conveys is its meaning. This lends support to an alternative theory about the nature of the *vidhi*: namely, that a *vidhi*, insofar as it is the meaning of exhortative verbal endings, is nothing other than to-be-done-ness.

2.2 The Difference Between Ordinary and Vedic Exhortations

In response to the argument above, a defender of Maṇḍana's view could make the following argument. We learn what exhortative verbal endings mean by observing and participating in ordinary linguistic practices, i.e., by looking how people act when they are exposed to verbal exhortations from human speakers. For example, take any ordinary context where an agent hears a verbal exhortation and then undertakes the action the speaker prompts her to perform. In such a case, the agent will typically be motivated in light of the consideration that the relevant action promotes some end that she independently desires. For example, when a farmer orders her assistant to bring the cow, the assistant complies with the order only insofar as doing so promotes some end of hers, e.g., keeping her job. Given such ordinary practices, it seems much more natural to conclude that the property of being a means to a desired end is what exhortative verbal endings mean.

What could the defender of the **Obligation Theory of Action** say in reply? The challenge for her is this. On the one hand, she must say that, even in ordinary contexts, to-be-done-ness is the meaning of exhortative verbal endings (since that is the only motivating cause of action on her view). On the other hand, she should not say that considerations about means and ends are irrelevant to practical deliberation in all contexts. In his commentary, Vācaspati explains how Maṇḍana's opponent could do this. She could argue that there is an important

difference in the way in which ordinary exhortations and Vedic exhortations motivate us to act. Our practical undertakings, when based on Vedic exhortations, can arise solely on the basis of consideration that the actions prescribed by the Veda are to be done. We do not need any further assurance that the actions themselves promote some desired end. But when we act on the basis of ordinary exhortations uttered by human speakers, our practical undertakings are—often, if not always—caused by the judgement that the recommended action is a means to a desired end.¹⁹ What explains the difference?

Maṇḍana’s opponent, as portrayed by Vācaspati, assumes that ordinary linguistic utterances cannot be an independent source of knowledge: we can gain the knowledge (or reasonably judge) that the content of an ordinary linguistic utterance is true only if we have access to an independent means of knowing (*pramāṇa*), which provides evidence for the claim that the relevant utterance is reliable. For, since any ordinary utterance is produced by a speaker, we cannot take such an utterance at face value unless we have some independent assurance that the speaker is telling the truth. According to the semantic theory endorsed by Maṇḍana’s opponent, the literal content of any exhortation is that an action is to be performed. So, in order to trust an ordinary exhortation, we have to have some independent evidence for the claim that the action in question is indeed something we should do. Maṇḍana’s opponent concedes that, in ordinary contexts, we can inferentially know this on the basis of the evidence that the relevant action is a means to a desired end (either because the relevant speaker has our best interests at heart or because the speaker’s own interests are tied up in some way with our interests). This means that a hearer will often judge that an action recommended by an ordinary exhortation is to be performed, because she takes that action to be a means to a desired end. This allows Maṇḍana’s opponent to preserve the thought that our actions, when inspired by ordinary exhortations, are often based on considerations about whether they promote some desired end.

However, according to Maṇḍana’s opponent, hearing Vedic exhortations can immediately produce in us the knowledge that an action is to be performed. No further evidence about the desirability of its consequences is required. This is because the Veda is authorless and therefore infallible. In other words, an agent can act on the basis of Vedic exhortations even when she does not take the relevant action to be a means to a desired end. But could an agent not draw the conclusion that an action recommended by the Veda should *not* be performed from the fact that the relevant action does not promote any end she desires? Maṇḍana’s opponent, represented by Vācaspati, says “No.”

¹⁹ VV^S §11.2, 480.6-8 and VV^{MG} 174.26-29: “However, the difference is just this. Since an ordinary [exhortative] utterance depends on some distinct means of knowing in order to generate a practical undertaking and since the awareness of to-be-doneness with respect to actions that have the nature of pain is preceded by the awareness of the property of being a means to a desired object, the awareness of to-be-done-ness [in such a case] arises by way of involving the property of being a means to a desired object, which serves as a means of knowing with regard to that to-be-done-ness. (*etāvāms tu bhedaḥ | laukikasya vacasaḥ pramāṇāntarāpekṣāpravṛttitvād apekṣitopāyatāpravṛttipuraḥsaratvāc ca duḥkharūpakriyākartavyatāvagater apekṣitopāyatām tatpramāṇabhūtām antarbhāvya kartavyatāvagatih |*)

However, the Veda, which does not have a human origin, does not require a further means of knowing with respect to its own meaning. So, it causes an awareness of to-be-done-ness without depending on the awareness of the property of being a means to a desired object...Moreover, the following is true: when the property of being a means to a desired object is absent, that to-be-done-ness is not also absent. For that property of being a means to a desired object is not a means of knowing that property of to-be-done-ness. When one means of knowing (i.e., the property of being a means to a desired object) is absent, it is not possible to make something disappear when that is being apprehended by another means of knowing (i.e., the Veda). For a substance does not fail to be determined by touch, because it is not apprehended by sight in darkness.²⁰

The fact that a non-normative property sometimes helps us infer the presence of a normative property does not imply that the presence of that non-normative property is necessary for the presence of that normative property. The non-normative property of being a means to a desired end does help us infer that an action is to be done (at least when the action is recommended by an ordinary exhortation). But that does not mean that when an action lacks that non-normative property, it should lack to-be-done-ness. In fact, when it comes to actions recommended by the Veda, they can recognizably have the normative property of to-be-done-ness even when they do not promote any end that the relevant agent desires. The upshot: the normative property of to-be-done-ness is not reducible to the non-normative property of being a means to a desired end. Thus, Maṇḍana's opponent is committed to:

Weak Anti-Reductionism. The normative property of to-be-done-ness is not identical to the property of being a means to a desired end.

Note that **Weak Anti-Reductionism** leaves open the possibility that the normative property of to-be-done-ness is identical to a non-normative property other than the property of being a means to a desired end. But, presumably, Maṇḍana's opponent would want to resist any other attempt to reduce to-be-done-ness to a non-normative property. So, she may defend:

Strong Anti-Reductionism. The normative property of to-be-done-ness is not identical to any non-normative property.

The upshot is this: if the defender of the **Obligation Theory of Action** wants to claim that considerations about means and ends can at least sometimes be epistemically irrelevant to what an agent should do, she must commit herself to **Weak Anti-Reductionism**, and perhaps even to **Strong Anti-Reductionism**.

²⁰ NK on VV^S §11.2, 480.8-19 and 481.2-4 and VV^{MG} 174.29, 175.5, 175.16-19: *apauruṣeyas tu vedo na svārthe pramāṇāntaram apekṣata ity apekṣitopāyatāvagamānirapekṣa eva kartavyatāvagamahetuḥ |...na cāpekṣitopāyanivṛttau tasyā api nivṛttir iti sāmpratam | sā hi tasyāṃ na pramāṇam | na caikapramāṇanivṛttau pramāṇāntareṇa pratīyamānaṃ tad eva nivartayitum arhati | na hi santamase dravyaṃ cakṣuṣā na grhyata iti na tvacā'pi vyavasthāpyate |*

In what follows, I argue that Maṇḍana’s arguments against the **Obligation Theory of Action** are in fact arguments against both forms of anti-reductionism about to-be-done-ness. Before we consider these arguments, let me discuss a challenge that the defender of the **Obligation Theory of Action** faces.

3. Practical Insight

Suppose we accept the view that the normative property of to-be-done-ness is not identical to the property of being a means to a desired end, or any other non-normative property. This raises the question of how we become aware of this irreducibly normative property.

3.1 *Pratibhā*

Maṇḍana’s opponent answers this question by appealing to a form of practical insight that she calls *pratibhā*.

[The proponent:] What is this object (*artha*) that is said to be “the thing to be done”?

[The opponent:] Nothing. It is *pratibhā*.²¹

The claim is that there is no object (*artha*) that is picked out by the expression “to be done”; it is simply *pratibhā*. This remark is related to a worry about *pratibhā* that Maṇḍana discusses earlier in the text.

In the first half of the text, while discussing the Prābhākara account of *vidhi*, Maṇḍana considers a version of the Prābhākara view on which a *vidhi* is something to be done or brought about (*kārya*). It is the awareness of this thing to be done, which causes agents to undertake actions. The problem is this. Whatever this object may be, it cannot be a past or present existent object: such objects cannot be brought about. It also cannot be a future existent object: there is no means of knowing by which an agent can decisively determine that such an object will exist. But one cannot also say that it does not exist, since we are aware of it (on the basis of verbal exhortations). Pushed to a corner, the defender of this Prābhākara view claims that the thing to be done does not exist. But, then, the question is this: How does one become aware of it?²² To

²¹ VV^s §11.3, 482.3-4 and VV^{MG} 175.2-3: *kaḥ punar ayam arthaḥ kartavyam iti | na kaścīt | pratibhā |*

²² VV^s §7.7, 217.5-9: “[The opponent of the Prābhākara:] The meaning of “One should perform a sacrifice” is something that is to be brought about. This is not a future object, since such an object is not exclusively determined due to the absence of a means of knowing. Moreover, simply because it is to be done, it is not located at any other time. Furthermore, it is not the case that it does not exist. For one is aware of it. [The Prābhākara:] The reply to this has been stated. If something has a nature [i.e., exists], it is not actually devoid of temporal distinctions. If it is [merely appears to be devoid of temporal distinctions] due to some episode of knowledge, then it is not distinct from

solve this puzzle, the defender of this view appeals to language: since ordinary non-linguistic means of knowing only provide us knowledge of existent things that occur either in the past, the present, or the future, we cannot be aware of the thing to be done (which is non-existent) by any means other than language. In this respect, our awareness of the thing to be done is much like the awareness of a fictional object that is brought about by the use of a fictional term “hare’s horn” (*śaśaviśāna*). Now *pratibhā*, according to the Prābhākara opponent, is nothing but this kind of language-driven awareness.

This is precisely why the learned say that it is a language-based awareness, which is a mere *pratibhā* or a mere conceptual construction (*vikalpa*). Moreover, it is on the basis of *pratibhā* that action (*vyavahāra*) arises. The different means of knowing, assisted by *pratibhā*, become necessary components of action.²³

Let us assess this theory.

The Prābhākara opponent has told us that the thing to be done or brought about is not determined as occurring in the past or the present or the future. As Maṇḍana notes, this is problematic:

Certainly, that which is not exclusively determined to be either past, or present, or future, is an intentional object of doubt (*saṃśaya*). For example, the rain, which neither has already fallen nor is falling now, but which descends on the path of awareness due to the rising of dark dense clouds by the power of many observations, is not exclusively ascertained, because instances of deviation (i.e., cases where such clouds rise but there is no rain) are observed.²⁴

Maṇḍana here is echoing Kumāriḷa’s view about the Vaiśeṣika theory of *pratibhā*. On this view, instances of *pratibhā* do not involve certainty. For the Vaiśeṣikas, an episode of *pratibhā* consists in a flash of intuition with respect to truths about imperceptible objects; for example, a girl may have a premonition that her brother will arrive the next day because she feels certain emotions, or a farmer may have the premonition that it will rain because he sees dark dense clouds on the

intentional objects [of other means of knowing]. So, [the thing to be brought about] does not have a nature [i.e., does not exist]. [The opponent:] How, then, is there an awareness of that?” (*nanu pratīyate yajeteti kāryārthaḥ | na bhaviṣyan mānābhāvāt ekāntānavadhāraṇāt | kāryatvād eva ca netarakālānupātī | na ca nāsti pratīteḥ | uktottaram etat | sātmatkatve na vastutaḥ kālabhedavivekaḥ | pramītitas cet na viśayabhedah itī nairātmyam | katham tarhi pratītiḥ |*). For a variant, see VV^{MG} 60.3-6.

²³ VV^S §7.7. 217.10-11 and VV^{MG} 6-8: *ata eva pratibhāmātraṃ vikalpamātraṃ vā śābdajñānam itī vipaścitah | pratibhānibandhanaś ca vyavahārah | pratibhānugrhitāni ca pramāṇāni vyavahārāṅgam itī |*

²⁴ VV^S §7.8, 219.4-6 and VV^{MG} 61.4-6: *yat khalu na bhūtam na vartamānaṃ bhāvi na cety anavadhāritaikāntam tad āśankājñānagocarah | tad yathā varṣam anatīpatitam apravṛttam atinīlabahalajaladodayād bahuladarśanasāmarthyena pratyayapatham anupatad vyabhicāradarśanād anīścīyamānaikāntam |*

horizon.²⁵ But the problem is this: since, in such cases, the agents do not rely on any evidence, or inferential mark (*liṅga*), that decisively indicates the conclusion that they draw, they cannot be (rationally) certain of the conclusion.²⁶ In fact, in his criticism of this view, Maṇḍana takes these to be disguised inferences that are based on defective pieces of evidence or inferential marks.²⁷ For example, when the girl thinks on the basis of her emotions that her brother will come tomorrow, she makes an inference on her emotions. But these emotions (by her own lights) can be present in a case even though her brother does not arrive the next day. So, on this interpretation of the case, her premonition is based on a defective piece of evidence, or a defective inferential mark, which deviates from (i.e., is present in the absence of) the target (*sādhya*) or the object to be inferred, i.e., her brother's arrival the next day. Therefore, she cannot exclusively determine on the basis that her brother will arrive the next day. Similarly, when the farmer sees dark clouds on the horizon, he may suspect that it will rain. In this case, the rain has not fallen yet, and is not falling now. But it also is not exclusively determined to be something that will occur in the future. For, by the farmer's own lights, the presence of dark clouds is not always accompanied by the presence of rain. So, he cannot be certain that the rain will occur in the future. The point is basically this: unless there is some means of knowing by which we can exclusively determine the thing to be done as existing in the past, the present or the future, an awareness about it cannot be certain in character. So, it will simply be a doubt. That is problematic, because a doubt cannot give rise to action.

²⁵ This is confirmed by Maṇḍana's later discussion of the Vaiśeṣika view of *pratibhā*. In *Padārthadharmasamgraha*, Praśastapāda defines *pratibhā*-based awareness (*pratibhājñāna*) as follows (PDS 245.9-15): "What is called sage-insight (*ārṣa*) is that *pratibhā*-based awareness, which presents things as they are, and which arises due to a conjunction between the self and the *manas* and due to a specific kind of merit (*dharma*) in sages (*ṛṣi*) who lay down the scripture, with respect to imperceptible past, present, and future objects such as *dharma*, etc., that are spoken of and not spoken of in authoritative texts. Now, that largely belongs to divine sages (*devarṣi*), but sometimes indeed to ordinary people, e.g., in the case where a girl says, 'My heart says that tomorrow my brother will come.'" (*āmnāyavidhātṛṇām ṛṣīṇām atītānāgataavartamāneṣv atīndriyeṣv artheṣu dharmādiṣu granthopanibaddheṣv anupanibaddheṣu cātmamanasoḥ samyogād dharmaviśeṣāc ca yat pratibham yathārthanivedanam jñānam utpadyate tad ārṣam ity ācakṣate | tat tu prastāreṇa devarṣīṇām kadācid eva laukikānām | yathā kanyakā bravīti śvo me bhrātā 'gantā iti hṛdayam me kathayatīti |*).

²⁶ In verse 32 in the *Pratyakṣapariccheda* of *Slokavārttika* (ad *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.4), Kumārila says that ordinary cases of *pratibhā* do not involve certainty (ŚV 103.20-21): "Just as ordinary *pratibhā*, which does not depend on perception, etc., is not sufficient for certainty, so also should be true of *pratibhā* that belongs to *yogins*" (*laukikī pratibhā yadvat pratyakṣādyanapekṣinī | na niścayāya paryāptā tathā yoginām api |*). For discussion, see Taber (2005, pp. 55-6).

²⁷ See VV^S 8.3.9.2, 359.1-6 and VV^{MG} 120.3-7 and 121.1: "First of all, supramundane *pratibhā* is a subject of dispute. However, ordinary *pratibhā*, which has as its intentional object something agreeable or disagreeable, is usually due to a defect of factors such as the inferential mark, e.g., the calmness of the heart, its distress, and so on, which arise together [with the relevant agreeable or disagreeable object]. Therefore, it does not have the nature of certainty. And thus they say, 'There is an appearance (*pratibhāna*) of this kind, but not certainty.' Since both alternatives (*koṭi*) are not involved in the awareness and are not comparable [in epistemic strength], the awareness does not have the nature of doubt. It is simply *pratibhā*. It is not a means of knowing, because it does not have a certainty as its result (*phala*) and is ascertained by depending on another means of knowing. Similarly, since it depends on things of the same kind as an inferential mark, it depends on something else even in that respect." (*lokottaram tāvāt pratibhānam vivādapadam | laukikaṃ tu priyāpriyagocaram prāyaḥ sahapravṛttahṛdayaprasādotvegādiliṅgādyābhāsaprabhavam | ata evāniścayātmakam | tathā ca vyapadiśanti | evaṃ pratibhānam | na tu niścaya itī | ubhayakoṭisamsparśatvātulyatvāc ca samśayātmakam | pratibhāiva | na pramāṇam aniścayaphalatvāt pramāṇāntarāpekṣaniścayatvāt | evaṃ liṅgādijātīyāpekṣatvāt tatrāpi pāratantryam |*).

Let us now return to our present context. To resolve this worry, Maṇḍana's opponent explains the nature of *pratibhā*.

[The proponent:] What is this?

[The opponent:] It is an insight (*prajñā*) which is conducive to the practical undertaking (*pratipatti*) of an action delimited by a means that is invariably connected to it. Moreover, that is the cause of a practical undertaking. Unless a certain *pratibhā* that takes the form, "This is to be done in this way by this means," arises in a person, he does not undertake any action with respect to an object that is known by perception, etc. It is in *pratibhā* that the effects of the different means of knowing culminate. For, in this world, a person, who has *pratibhā* as his eye, strives towards the method (*itikartavyatā*) of performing an action.²⁸

The claim is that all our practical undertakings are guided by a form of practical insight which tells us which action to perform for what goal, in what way, and by what means. How does this take care of the earlier problem?

Vācaspati explains:

This is because those, who have said that *pratibhā* is an awareness that does not have the nature of certainty, do not know what *pratibhā* is. Such an uncertain awareness is simply a doubt.²⁹ We should learn that *pratibhā* is an insight, with the content, "This is to be done," which is conducive to the awareness of an action delimited by its end (*sādhya*), the means to that end (*sādhana*), and the way to do it (*itikartavyatā*), and which assists what is to be done—i.e., the performance of the action—in virtue of the relevant awareness.

[Objection:] If this is right, then its intentional object is just the action, so it is not without an intentional object.

[Reply:] So, he said, "*pratibhā*." For an awareness of an action arises only if that awareness has an action as its intentional object. Such an awareness of an action has as its intentional object an action that is delimited by the three times, as is expressed by, "He cooks," "He will cook," and "He cooked." In contrast, this awareness [that we speak of] is *pratibhā* insofar as it is bringing about the appearance (*pratibhāsayantī*) of something, which is not delimited by any time amongst the past, the present and the future, as if it were an

²⁸ VV §11.3, 482.5-9 and VV^{MG} 175.3-5 and 176.3-5: *kā punar iyam | niyatasāadhanāvachinnakriyāpratipattyanukūlā prajñā pratibhā | sā ca pravṛtīhetuḥ | na hīdam ittham anena kartavyam ity anupajātapratibhābhedaḥ pravartate pratyakṣādyavagale'py arthe | tatra hi pramāṇakāryasamāptiḥ | pratibhānetro hi loke itikartavyatāsu samīhate |*

²⁹ The reference here is to Maṇḍana's earlier criticism of a Vaiśeṣika theory of *pratibhā* on which it is neither certain in nature nor a doubt; the opponent here is saying that to say that *pratibhā* is not certain is to simply reduce it to doubt. See footnote 27.

experienced object (*anubhūtārtha*). It also does not have anything ultimately existent (*paramārthasat*) as its intentional object, since its intentional object is devoid of the three times, like a sky-flower. Certainly, an utterance, “He should do this,” (*kuryād*) does not refer to the present. For then it would have the same content as the utterance, “He does this.” It is not the case that it refers to the future, like the utterance, “He will do this.” It is also not the case that it refers to the past, like the utterance, “He did this.” *Pratibhā* is not a means of knowing, since its intentional object is non-existent. It is not a doubt, since it involves exclusive determination. It is not an error, since it makes everyone undertake actions everywhere.³⁰

According to Vācaspati, instances of *pratibhā* represent an action as something to be done. This, in turn, gives rise to an awareness of the action along with its goal, the means to achieve it, and the way to perform it, and results in the performance of the action. This action may be something mundane, like cooking pasta, where the goal of the action is the prepared pasta, the means of action involves the ingredients and utensils needed for cooking, and the way to do it is laid out in the recipe. People have performed this action in the past, are perhaps performing it now, and will perform it in the future. In that sense, it may be described by means of declarative sentences. This is why Vācaspati says that the action in question may be delimited by the three times. The catch, however, is this. Even though the action in question may be delimited by the three times, it is represented by instances of *pratibhā* as delimited by neither the past, nor the present, nor the future. That ensures that the content of that awareness cannot be expressed by means of declarative sentences like, “He does this,” “He will do this,” and “He did this.” In this respect, *pratibhā*, unlike our other sources of knowledge, is directed at an object that is ultimately non-existent. Yet, it is not uncertain in the same way as a state of doubt is. It decisively tells the agent what is to be done. Moreover, since it gives rise to successful action everywhere, it also is not like a state of error.

The lesson: an instance of *pratibhā* is an awareness which does not represent an action as something that an agent has performed, or is performing, or will perform. In this respect, it does not have any descriptive content at all: it has a distinctively normative content. In this respect, the relevant theory of *pratibhā* is distinct from the Vaiśeṣika theory of *pratibhā* that Maṇḍana criticises elsewhere (see footnote 25). For the Vaiśeṣikas, the content of *pratibhā*, e.g., in the case of the girl’s premonition that her brother will arrive the next day, or in the farmer’s premonition that it will rain, is descriptive. But, on this theory, it is irreducibly normative.

³⁰ NK on VV §11.3, 485.3-11: *na hi te pratibhāvīdo ye saṃvedanam anīśayātmakam pratibhām ācakhyuh | saṃśayo hi sah | vayam tu sādhyasādhane kartavyatāvachinnāyāḥ kriyāyāḥ pratipattāv anukūlām tatpratipattiyā kārye ’nuṣṭhānalakṣaṇe kartavye sahakāriṇīm kartavyam iti prajñām pratibhām adhyagīsmahi | evaṃ tarhi kriyāvāsyaḥ viśaya iti na nirviśayety āha – pratibheti | kriyāvīśayatve hi kriyāpratitih | sā ca traikālyāvachinnakriyāgocarā yathā pacati paksyaty apākṣīd iti | iyaṃ punar atītānāgatavartamānānām anyatamenāpy anavachinnam anubhūtārtham iva pratibhāsayanīti pratibhā | na punar asyāḥ paramārthasadviśayaḥ kālatrayarahitavāt khaṇapūṣpavat | na khalu kuryād iti vartamānākhyā karotīty aviśeṣaprasaṅgāt | nānāgatā kariṣyatīti | nātītā akārṣīd iti | tad eṣā na pramāṇam asadviśayatvāt | na saṃśayaḥ ekāntāvasāyāt | na viparyayaḥ sarveṣāṃ sarvatra vyavahārapravartanāt | For a variant, see VVMG 176.6-18.*

How does this resolve the worry that was raised earlier? If the content of the *pratibhā* regarding what is to be done were descriptive, then it would be hard to explain how it has the nature of certainty: given that the relevant action cannot be exclusively determined as existing in the three times, we cannot be certain of anything regarding it. But since the content of the practical insight regarding what is to be done is not descriptive at all, whether or not the relevant action can be determined as existing in the three times is irrelevant to the status of the awareness as a certainty. This helps us explain how an instance of *pratibhā* can be certain and therefore can give rise to action.

Before we move on, it is worth exploring a similarity between *pratibhā* and what is sometimes called *knowledge-how*. Beginning with Ryle (1949), some philosophers have distinguished *knowledge-how* (i.e., knowledge of how to do something) from *knowledge-that* (i.e., propositional knowledge). On this view, for example, my knowledge of how to ride a bike is not a knowledge of any truth about bike-riding. Such a view is often called *anti-intellectualism* about knowledge-how.³¹ From Maṇḍana's description of *pratibhā*, it might seem that instances of *pratibhā* do involve some kind of knowledge about how to perform an action, though they may also involve practical knowledge about what action to perform, what the goal of performing the action is, and so on. Moreover, Vācaspati's explanation also seems to suggest that instances of *pratibhā* do not have a descriptive content; so, arguably, they do not represent the world as being a certain way as instances of propositional knowledge do. So, it is tempting to ascribe to Maṇḍana an *anti-intellectualist* account of practical knowledge, i.e., an account on which our knowledge of what to do so in what way by what means—given by instances of *pratibhā*—is not reducible to some kind of propositional knowledge.

This would be too quick. The theory of *pratibhā* that Maṇḍana presents is different from standard anti-intellectualist accounts of knowledge-know. On standard anti-intellectualist views (going back to at least Ryle), states of knowledge-how are non-representational, i.e., states without any content, e.g., abilities or dispositions or capacities. But this does not straightforwardly fit the description of *pratibhā* that Maṇḍana and Vācaspati offer.

To see the complication, notice that there are two relevant bits of evidence. First, Maṇḍana's opponent seems to suggest that no object is in fact represented by instances of *pratibhā*. That explains why, when asked what the object picked out by the description “the thing to be done” is, Maṇḍana's opponent says that it is nothing. Yet, at the same time, both Maṇḍana and Vācaspati seem to treat instances of *pratibhā* as awareness-events that have the content, “This is to be done in this way by this means.” How can we account for both these pieces of evidence?

³¹ For defences of anti-intellectualism after Ryle, see Schiffer (2002), Noë (2005), Adams (2009), Wallis (2008), and Devitt (2011), Cath (2012), Waights Hickman (2019). For recent defences of intellectualism, see Stanley and Williamson (2001), Stanley (2011), and Pavese (2015).

We can offer two interpretations. The first is to say that instances of *pratibhā* (as understood here by Maṇḍana and Vācaspati) have no content at all, but rather are merely represented by external ascribers in their reports as having the content, “This is to be done in this way by this means.” The second option is to say that, even though instances of *pratibhā* may not have any descriptive content, they do have some content that involves the irreducibly normative property of to-be-done-ness. So, when Maṇḍana’s opponent says that nothing is picked out by the description “the thing to be done,” she simply means that no ultimately existent object—e.g., an action that has been, is being, or will be performed—is picked out by that description.

It is this second interpretation, rather than the first one, that looks more plausible to me. It has two virtues. First, it fits the original Prābhākara proposal in the service of which the theory of *pratibhā* was put forward in Maṇḍana’s text. On that proposal, it is an awareness that takes the form, “This is to be done by me,” which gives rise to practical undertakings. If instances of *pratibhā* did not have any (descriptive or normative) content at all, we would have to say that this Prābhākara proposal is not literally true. But that would be dialectically counterproductive for the Prābhākara, because she appealed to the theory of *pratibhā* to support her own proposal. Second, if we take Vācaspati seriously as an interpreter of Maṇḍana, this second interpretation seems to be the one that he endorses. As he says, *pratibhā* is so-called insofar as “it is bringing about the appearance of something, which is not delimited by any time amongst the past, the present and the future, as if it were an experienced object.” This strongly suggests that, even though instances of *pratibhā* do not have any existent actions as their intentional objects, they do represent (or make apparent) ultimately non-existent actions as things to be done. So, there is at least some reason to prefer this second interpretation. And, if this is the correct interpretation of the theory of *pratibhā* that Maṇḍana presents, then this theory of *pratibhā* does not give us an anti-intellectualist account of practical knowledge.

For now, it will be useful to notice that, even if we accept the second interpretation of this theory of *pratibhā*, it does not make this theory an intellectualist account of practical knowledge. On a standard intellectualist account of knowledge-how defended by Stanley and Williamson (2001), states of knowledge-how involve knowledge about truths or facts about ways of performing various actions. It is fairly clear that, according to the theory of *pratibhā* (presented by Maṇḍana), instances of *pratibhā* (insofar as their contents are non-descriptive) are not directed at facts. So, if we understand intellectualism as a view on which practical knowledge involves knowledge of truths or facts, this view is not an instance of intellectualism. Thus, the view of practical knowledge that is presented here is neither intellectualist nor anti-intellectualist in the standard sense.

3.2 Language and *Pratibhā*

This theory of *pratibhā* still faces an explanatory challenge: we need a story about how we come to represent such non-existent actions as things to be done. Maṇḍana’s opponent has a simple solution to this problem: we do so on the basis of language.

To show how that is possible, she helps herself to a version of the theory of *pratibhā* that the grammarian, Bhartṛhari (5th century CE), adopts. Bhartṛhari’s basic idea that all actions arise from some language-laden thought, which in turn arises from certain linguistic impressions (*śabdabhāvanā*) that allows us to think or become aware of objects.³² In *Vākyapadīya* 1.129, Bhartṛhari writes: “The way of performing an action (*itikartavyatā*), in this world, is based on the operation of language. Even a child, in whom dispositions (*saṃskāra*) have been deposited previously (i.e., in a previous birth), becomes aware of (*pratipadyate*) that way of performing an action.”³³ In his explanation, Bhartṛhari says that, unless an existent object falls within the range of linguistic usage, it is no better than non-existent objects, since it cannot give rise to any action. Second, even non-existent objects like a hare’s horn can give rise to various effects (i.e., various mental, linguistic, and physical activities)—as if they had mind-independent reality (what Bhartṛhari calls *mukhyasattā* or primary existence)—when they are brought to mind by the power of linguistic expressions. Third, even children who have not been exposed to linguistic usage are able to act on the basis of linguistic impressions (*śabdabhāvanā*) that are left in them by linguistic usage in previous births: “And even in infants who are endowed with language in accordance to their respective species [or their births] due to the deposition of impressions (*bhāvanā*) caused by their previous association with language, there arises a practical undertaking (*pratipatti*), based on indescribable linguistic expressions (*anākhyeyaśabdānibandhanā*), with respect to specific purposeful activities.”³⁴ As evidence for the existence of linguistic impressions, Bhartṛhari says:

Without linguistic impressions, the first movement of the vocal organs, the upward motion of the vital air, and the striking of the places of articulation would not be possible.”³⁵

The explanation of this verse is significant for our purposes:

Moreover, these linguistic impressions are beginningless and contain the seeds of awareness for every person (*pratipurusaṃ avasthitajñānabījapratigrahā*). For it is not possible for these impressions somehow to be of human origin. That is to say, the movement of the

³² This idea is explained at length in Bhartṛhari’s *vṛtti* on *Vākyapadīya* 1.131 (VP 1, 188.5-189.5). For discussion, see Vergiani (2017, pp. 238-239).

³³ *Vākyapadīya* 1.129 (VP 1, 186.1-2): *itikartavyatā loke sarvā śabdavyapāśrayā | yām pūrvāhītasamkāro bālo ’pi pratipadyate | |*

³⁴ *Vṛtti* on *Vākyapadīya* 1.129 (VP 1, 186.3-187.2): *saṃnāviṣṭavācāṃ tu svajātiṣu bālānām api pūrvāśabdāveśabhāvanādhanāt tāsu tāsu arthakriyāsv anākhyeyaśabdānibandhanā pratipattir utpadyate |*

³⁵ *Vākyapadīya* 1.130 (VP 1, 187.3-4): *yaḥ karanāvinyāsaḥ prāṇasyordhvaṃ samīraṇam | sthānānām abhigātāś ca na vinā śabdabhāvanām | |* I am translating the expression “*śabdabhāvanā*” here and below as the plural expression “linguistic impressions”, primarily because the view, understood charitably, cannot be referring to a single impression left by the agent’s exposure to language, but rather to a collection of such expressions.

vocal organs, and so on, simply cannot be brought about by any instruction and must be known by means of *pratibhā*. For what is capable of bringing about or conveying these human properties apart from something that has the nature of language?³⁶

Maṇḍana's opponent accepts a version of this theory.

According to her, the kind of *pratibhā* that gives rise to practical undertakings is either derived directly from exposure to language in linguistically competent speakers, or from linguistic impressions carried over from previous births in children and other animals who are not exposed to linguistic practices in this birth.

What is the cause (*nimitta*) of this? In the case of linguistically competent agents, it is directly language. In the case of children whose practices are not known to be based on language, *pratibhā* arises due to impressions (*bhāvanā*). Linguistic impressions are beginningless.³⁷ For, otherwise, the first movement of the vocal organs, etc., would not be possible. As it has been said [by Bhartṛhari]:

Without a linguistic impression, the first movement of the vocal organs, the upward motion of the vital air, and the striking of the places of articulation would not be possible.³⁸

This appeal to Bhartṛhari's theory is significant. It nicely explains how an instance of *pratibhā* can represent a non-existent action (which is not connected to the three times) as something to be done. On this story, this happens in the same way as we come to represent non-existent objects such as a hare's horn due to the semantic powers of linguistic expressions. Vācaspati sums up the argument for this theory as follows.

Certainly, this boy, who is just born—when offered honey and ghee by the father at his mouth—licks those with his tongue. That very action is the first movement of the organs. Moreover, he moves the vital airs upward; that is what is called exhalation (*ucchvasiti*). Furthermore, he hits the places of articulation, e.g., the heart and so on, due to which a particular sound appears. Thus, all this is a manifestation of linguistic impressions from previous births. Here is the argument: such an effort (*ceṣṭā*) in children is based on an awareness of to-be-done-ness, since it is the conscious undertaking of an autonomous

³⁶ *Vṛtti* on *Vākyapadīya* 1.130 (VP 1, 187.5-188.2): *anādis caiṣā śabdabhāvanā pratīpuruṣam avasthītabījaṅgarāhā | na hy etasyāḥ kathañcīt pauruṣeyatvaṃ sambhavati | tathā hy upadeśasādhyā pratibhāgamyāḥ eva karaṇavinyāsādayaḥ | ko hy etān puruṣadharmān anyatra śabdātmikatāyāḥ kartuṃ pratīpādayituṃ vā samartha iti |*

³⁷ For a parallel, see *Vākyapadīya* 2.146 (VP2 66.12-13).

³⁸ *VV*^s §11.3, 482.10-14 and 483.1-2: *kiṃ punar asyā nimittam | śabdā vyutpannānām sāḥṣāt | bhāvanāmukhena vā 'prasiddha-śabdānibandhanavyavahārāṇām bālādīnām | anādiḥ śabdabhāvanā anyathā 'dyakaraṇavinyāsādyasambhavāt | yathoktam | ādyaḥ karaṇavinyāsaḥ prāṇasyorddvaṃ samīraṇam | sthānānām abhīghātaś ca na vinā śabdabhāvanām | | iti |* For a variant, see *VV*^{MG} 177.1-5.

person. If something is a practical undertaking of an autonomous person, then it is based on an awareness of to-be-done-ness, just like practical undertakings that belong to us and others. So, the awareness of to-be-done-ness, which is the subject of dispute, has an origin in language, since it has the form of to-be-done-ness. Everything that has such a form has an origin in language, just like the awareness of to-be-done-ness that belongs to us and others. And, that language, which is not apprehended directly, attains the status of a cause—by a principle of implication from what is accepted (*adhikaraṇasiddhāntanyāyena*)—through the mediation of an impression.³⁹

This can be divided into two sub-arguments. According to the first sub-argument, the practical undertakings that we see in children, etc. must be guided by an awareness of to-be-done-ness, since they are conscious practical undertakings that belong to autonomous agents, and thus are not fundamentally different from the kind of practical undertakings we have. Moreover, the relevant awareness of to-be-done-ness must originate from language (as predicted by Bhartṛhari), since no other means of knowing can give us access to such a normative content. In adults, we can explain this by appealing to their exposure to linguistic practices of their community. But we cannot resort to that explanation in the case of children. So, we must posit the existence of beginningless linguistic impressions, through the mediation of which their exposure to language in previous births comes to generate an awareness of to-be-done-ness in later births.

3.3 The Explanatory Power of *Pratibhā*

What reason do we have preferring this theory to Maṇḍana’s own theory on which we undertake actions merely on the basis of the awareness of the relevant actions as means to desired ends? On behalf of Maṇḍana’s opponent, both Maṇḍana and Vācaspati present an inference to the best explanation. There are plenty of practical undertakings, which either do not seem to or cannot be motivated by any deliberation about whether the relevant action is a means to a desired end. The theory, on which practical undertakings are caused by instances of *pratibhā*, better explains such cases than Maṇḍana’s own theory. Therefore, we should prefer the former theory to the latter.

Let us see this argument in action. Maṇḍana says that this theory of *pratibhā* explains how we understand linguistic utterances almost instantly without much reflection.

³⁹ NK on VVS §11.3, 486.20, 487.1-7: *jātamātrah khalv ayaṃ bālakah pitrā mukhato hute madhusarpiṣi jihvayā ledhi | so ’yam ādyaḥ karaṇavinyāsaḥ | prāṇāms’ codhrvaṃ samīrayatīti yad ucchvasitītyucyate | api codīritena vāyunā hṛdayādīni sthānāny abhīhanti yataḥ śabdabheda āvirasti | tad etat sarvaṃ prāgbhavīyaśabdabhāvanāvijṃbhitam | atra prayogaḥ | bālānām evaṃvidhā ceṣṭā kartavyatāvagatipūrvikā svatantracetanapravṛtītvāt yathā ’smadādīnām | tathā vivādādhyāsitaḥ kartavyatāvagamaḥ śabdayoniḥ kartavyatākāratvāt | yo ya evamākārah sa sarvaḥ śabdayoniḥ yathāsmadādīnām | sa ca śabdaḥ sāksād anupalabhyamāno bhāvanāmukhenādhikaraṇasiddhāntanyāyena kāraṇabhāvam āpadyate |*

For a variant, see VV^{MG} 177.19-28.

This linguistic impression, which is a power that is not previously recognized, while appearing as if it were a power that the subject was endowed with, results in a synthesis (*upaśleṣa*), without any deliberation (*vicāravikalā*) regarding which of the things [or meanings of words] (*padārthānām*) can be combined with which others in what way, even though the subject has awareness of those things separately (*vicchinnaṣṭapattīnām api*). For that is the purpose of that capacity, since, without it, that synthesis is absent.⁴⁰

This passage mirrors two other verses from Bhartṛhari. In *Vākyapadīya* 2.143, Bhartṛhari says: “When the meanings [of words] are apprehended separately (*vicchedagrahaṇe ṛthānām*), an instance of *pratibhā*, which is indeed distinct, arises. They call that *pratibhā*, which is brought about by the meanings of the words (*pada*), ‘sentential meaning’ (*vākyārtha*).”⁴¹ Then, in 2.145, he says, “It is as if it brings about the synthesis (*upaśleṣa*) of the meanings of the words without requiring any deliberation (*avicāritā*), and, having attained the nature of all the meanings, is present as an intentional object.”⁴² These verses clearly suggest that Maṇḍana is considering a case of linguistic comprehension where one unreflectively grasps what a sentence means without considering the meaning of which word is to be semantically composed with the meanings of which other ones. Here, *pratibhā* acts as a source of semantic knowledge-how, whereby one skilfully performs semantic operations to grasp the meanings of sentences that one has never heard before.

Vācaspati explains the same passage differently.⁴³ He imagines a person who feels distressed by heat, and wants to bathe in the cool water of a lake in order to alleviate that heat. How does that person figure out what he needs to do in order to alleviate that heat? One answer could be that he makes an inference about how the waters of the lake can alleviate heat, and then arrives at the conclusion that, since he does not want to be hot, he should bathe in that lake. But no such conscious reasoning, actually, may precede the action. Moreover, this person separately apprehends multiple objects, e.g., the heat, the water in the lake, their capacity to pacify heat, and so on. Assuming that the agent has not seen such an action performed earlier, he may not have any means of knowing, using which he could synthesise these objects and thereby construct a plan of action. So, in order to explain the action of bathing, we must appeal to some sort of practical insight that is not based on any non-linguistic means of knowing such as perception or inference. That insight is just *pratibhā*. Vācaspati explains the point as follows.

⁴⁰ VVS §11.3, 483.2-4: *vicchinnaṣṭapattīnām api padārthānām kiṃ katham anusandhīyata iti vicāravikalā ṣṭapattīnām api padārthānām kiṃ katham anusandhīyata iti vicāravikalā ṣṭapattīnām api padārthānām kiṃ katham anusandhīyata iti vicāravikalā ṣṭapattīnām api padārthānām kiṃ katham anusandhīyata iti vicāravikalā* | For a variant, see VVMG 178.1-2 and 179.1.

⁴¹ *Vākyapadīya* 2.143 in VP2 65.17-18: *vicchedagrahaṇe ṛthānām pratibhānyaiva jāyate | vākyārtha iti tām āhuḥ padārthair upapādītām ||*

⁴² *Vākyapadīya* 2.145 in VP2 66.7-8: *upaśleṣam ivārthānām sā karoty avicāritā | sārvarūpyam ivāpannā viṣayatvena vartate ||*

⁴³ This difference might be explained in two ways. First, Vācaspati (though perhaps aware of Bhartṛhari) may be trying to generalise the theory of semantic knowledge-how that Bhartṛhari offers to other cases of knowledge-how that do not involve linguistic comprehension. Second, he might also be trying to connect this theory with the Vaiśeṣika theory of *pratibhā* on which instances of *pratibhā* are just these flashes of insight that need not have anything to do with language.

This is the meaning. Indeed, those persons, whose bodies have become hot due to heat, undertake actions merely on the basis of observation of a cold lake insofar as they desire to bathe in its water. They do not deliberate in the meantime [in the following manner]: “The water in the visible lake is capable of alleviating heat, because it is cold water. Everything that is cold water is capable of alleviating heat, just like the water of the Ganges. And we are hot. So, for the sake of alleviating that heat, we shall bathe here.” Moreover, these different things—the heat, the water located in the lake, its capacity to alleviate heat, and so on—are objects of which one is aware separately. Furthermore, unless these are synthesized with each other, there is no to-be-done-ness. And, when this to-be-done-ness is absent, there is no conscious practical undertaking of an autonomous person. Also, with respect to the synthesis, there is no means of knowing that usually operates. Therefore, it is to be accepted that linguistic impression, whose nature is unknown (*asamviditarūpa*), is the cause of the *pratibhā* that takes the form, “This is to be done by this means in this way.”⁴⁴

The last line of the passage claims that this *pratibhā* is caused by linguistic impressions. Why must we think so? Why can the underlying impression not be just a memory impression left by inferential awareness-events that took place in a previous birth? Vācaspati addresses this objection.

The following is not to be said: “Whatever [awareness] appears wherever either due to a previous birth or insofar as it is produced by that birth, let there be a seed of an impression for that [awareness] in that case. What is the point of language?” Since an impression that is produced by a non-recollective inferential awareness (*ānumānikānubhava*) does not cause an awareness that has the form of to-be-done-ness because that inferential awareness has a fact (*bhūtārtha*) as its intentional object, and, in this case [where the agent performs an action], there is no awareness of a mere synthesis which lacks the form of to-be-done-ness.⁴⁵

The impression that gives rise to the practical insight about to-be-done-ness must originate from language, since the other means of knowing, such as inference, etc., only gives us access to facts,

⁴⁴ NK on VVS §11.3, 487.10-17: *ayam arthaḥ | santāpataptatanavo hi śītrahradadarśanamātrād apsu mimaṅśavaḥ pravartante | nāntarā vicārayanti | dr̥śyamānahradaḡatā āpas tāpam āpanetuṃ samarthāḥ śīśratoyatvāt | yad yat toyam śīśiram tat sarvaṃ tāpāpanodanasamartham yathā gaṅgātōyam | vāyam ca tāptāḥ | tad iha tatpraśamanāya nimaḡjāmaha iti | nānā caite padārthā vicchinnapratīpattayaḥ santāpo hradādihārā āpas tāsāṃ santāpopaśamanasāmarthyam ity ādayaḥ | na caiteṣāṃ parasparopāśeṣam antareṇa kartavyatā | na cāsyām asatyāṃ svatantracetanapravṛttili | na copāśeṣe samudācāravṛttili kiñcit pramāṇam asti | tasmād asamviditarūpā śabdabhāvanāivedam ittham anena kartavyam iti pratibhāhetur āstheyāḥ | For a variant, see VVMG 178.6-12.*

⁴⁵ NK on VVS §11.3, 487.17-18 and 488.1: *na caivaṃ vācyam | prāgbhāvīyam tajjanmajaṃ vā yatra yat pratibhāti tatra tadbhāvanā bījam astu | kiṃ śabdeneti ānumānikānubhavaḡjanmano bhāvanāyā bhūtārthagocaratvena kartavyatākārapratītyakāraṇāt kartavyatākārarahūtasya cātropāśeṣamātrasyāpratīteḥ | For a variant, see VVMG 178.12-15.*

i.e., how things are, and not to how things should be. Since the content of the relevant practical insight is irreducibly normative, language alone can be our guide to such a content.⁴⁶

The second piece of evidence for this theory of *pratibhā* comes from various activities that languageless animals perform. Sparrows construct intricate nests that human beings cannot make, and the cuckoo sings melodious notes that human beings find hard to imitate. Animals belonging to different species strive for different kinds of food, which are good for them, without any instruction or repeated observation of the beneficial effects of such actions. Some animals, like ducks and so on, are able to perform skilled activities like swimming, without any instruction. Animals belonging to the same species often act out of both desire and aversion towards each other: for example, pigeons are friendly towards each other, while snakes tend to fight each other. Animals belonging to different species sometimes only exhibit mutual aversion: the snake and the mongoose, for example, are caught in a cycle of eternal enmity. In each case, these animals (arguably) undertake actions consciously and autonomously. However, their actions cannot be guided by the awareness of the relevant actions being a means to a desired end. For they have not been taught that these actions lead to beneficial effects, and they may not have drawn that conclusion on the basis of any initial awareness of such beneficial effects. The best explanation is that such animals act merely because they take the relevant actions to be things that are to be done. This awareness is nothing other than an instance of *pratibhā*.⁴⁷ But, as we know, ordinary non-linguistic means of knowing cannot be the source of such awareness, so such an awareness of to-be-done-ness must be dependent on language. Given that these animals have

⁴⁶ This suggests that the role of linguistic impressions in generating instance of *pratibhā* is understood quite differently by Maṇḍana's opponent (at least as portrayed by Vācaspati) from Bhartṛhari. For Bhartṛhari, linguistic impressions play a role in explaining action insofar as action is guided by conceptual awareness, and all conceptual awareness is language-laden and therefore are not possible without some sort of innate grasp of language. By contrast, for Maṇḍana's opponent, even though not all conceptual awareness may be language-laden, the awareness of to-be-done-ness—insofar as it has as its intentional object an irreducibly normative property—must be derived from language, since no other means of knowing can give rise access to that property.

⁴⁷ VV^S §11.3, 483.4-10: “Moreover, when it comes to the singing of specific notes and the construction of different nests—the means to which are difficult to know even for the wise—*pratibhā* is the cause of practical undertakings in birds, insofar as it is an operation of temporally remote language due to the continuity of linguistic impressions. Further, the awareness of a means is not the cause, because neither instruction nor repeated observation is present. The awareness of a specific food [as something to be eaten] could not be produced by an initial awareness, because there is no awareness of that food as a means to pleasure for animals belonging to the same species. And animals that possess different kinds of *pratibhā* manifested by their different species undertake actions like swimming and so on without being aware of any means [to a desired end]. Furthermore, animals of the same species undertake actions, infused with both desire and aversion, with respect to each other. Animals that are eternally in conflict undertake actions, infused with aversion, with respect to each other. Therefore, the cause of practical undertakings is not the property of being a means to a desired end. It is *pratibhā*.” (*durjñānopāyeṣu ca prājñair api svaraviśeṣāsryabhedēṣu pakṣiṇām pūrvaśabdabhāvanānugamād viprakṣaśabdavyāpārā pratibhā pravṛttimibandhanam | nopāyājñānam upadeśāsakṛddarśanayor abhāvāt | āhāraśiṣeṣapratipattiś ca tajjātīyānām aviditaprītyupāyatvena prathamajñānanibandhanā na bhavet | jātibhedābhivyaktapratibhābhedānām plavanādikriyāpravṛttiś cājñātopāyānām | ekajātīyānām ca rāgadveṣamayī pravṛtṭiḥ | śāśvatavirodhinām dveṣavatī pravṛtṭiḥ | ato neṣṭābhīyupāyatā pravṛtṭihetuḥ api tu pratibheti |*) For a variant, see VV^{MG} 179.1-6 and 180.1-2. My explanation of the passage is heavily dependent on Vācaspati's explanation in NK on VV^S §11.3, 489.2-15 and VV^{MG} 179.16-30.

never been exposed to linguistic usage, we may assume that the relevant practical insight is generated by linguistic impressions carried over from their previous lives.

Let us sum up. In this section, we have seen three things. First, we have seen how Maṇḍana's imagined opponent appeals to a theory of *pratibhā* to explain how we become aware of the irreducibly normative property of to-be-done-ness. Second, we have looked at an argument for the claim that the instances of *pratibhā*, which constitute our awareness of to-be-done-ness, must be language-based. Third, we have encountered two reasons for thinking that this theory of *pratibhā* seems to be a better explainer of various facts about practical undertakings than Maṇḍana's own theory.

4. Against Anti-Reductionism

Maṇḍana's response to the **Obligation Theory of Action** and the accompanying theory of *pratibhā* has two parts. The first part of the response should be interpreted as an argument against **Strong Anti-reductionism**, i.e., the view that to-be-done-ness is not identical to any non-normative property. The second part of the response targets **Weak Anti-Reductionism**, i.e., the view that to-be-done-ness is not identical to the property of being a means to a desired end. In this section, I reconstruct this response.

4.1 Against Strong Anti-Reductionism

In this subsection, I discuss the first part of Maṇḍana's response. Suppose instances of *pratibhā* give us some kind of insight into what we are to do. Recall that, in §3.1, we considered two distinct interpretations of this theory of *pratibhā*. On the first interpretation, instances of *pratibhā* have no content at all. On the second, it does have a content, but that content is irreducibly normative; it involves representing an action as something to be done. Maṇḍana seems to be sensitive to the availability of these two interpretations.

He poses a dilemma for the defender of this theory of *pratibhā*. As Maṇḍana notes, either an instance of *pratibhā* has no intentional object (*ālambana*), or it does.

Now, does that *pratibhā* have an intentional object or not? If it does have an intentional object, then let that simply be understood as the cause of practical undertakings. And it is nothing other than the property of being a means to a desired end.

An awareness, which does not have an intentional object, is not tenable. For its defining characteristic is having, as its effect, the appearance of something that one is aware of (*jñeya*). Moreover, if it is impossible for anyone to acquire linguistic competence due to the

absence of an intentional object, practical undertakings would arise [on the basis of exhortations] without linguistic competence.⁴⁸

We can state the dilemma as follows.

Horn 1. If an instance of *pratibhā* does not have an intentional object, then there will be two problems: first, it cannot be an awareness and, second, we will not be able to explain why practical undertakings based on verbal exhortations require semantic information on part of the hearer.

Horn 2. If an instance of *pratibhā* does have an intentional object, then one of its intentional objects must be to-be-done-ness. But, if this is so, to-be-done-ness cannot be an irreducibly normative property.

Let us focus on **Horn 1**.

Recall that Maṇḍana’s opponent appealed to *pratibhā* for the sake of explaining how we become aware of to-be-done-ness. If this opponent now claims that an instance of *pratibhā* has no intentional object at all, she will be committed to the view that an instance of *pratibhā* is an awareness of to-be-done-ness, which gives rise to practical undertakings, but has no intentional object at all. But that seems to conflict with a natural way of thinking about awareness-events. This is what Maṇḍana points out in the first two sentences of the passage: “An awareness, which does not have an intentional object, is not tenable. For its defining characteristic is having, as its effect, the appearance of something one is aware of.” Any awareness, by definition, is directed at some object: to be aware is to be aware of something. So, if the defender of *pratibhā* claims that instances of *pratibhā* lack intentional objects altogether, they must deny that instances of *pratibhā* are awareness-events.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ VV^s §§11.4-5, 492.5-6 and 506.15-16, and VV^m 181.8-9, 186.1, 191.1-2: *sā khalu pratibhā ’lambanavatī na vā | ālambanavatī ced tad evāboddhavyam pravṛtīhetuḥ | na ca tad anyad ihitoḥpāyātāyāḥ | nirālambanam jñānam ayuktam eva tasya jñeyābhasakāryalakṣaṇatvāt | viśayābhāvāc ca vyutpattyasambhave tadanapeksasya pravṛtīḥ syāt |*

⁴⁹ Vācaspati explains the same point differently. While explaining **Horn 1**, Vācaspati launches into a long discussion of a Dharmakīrti-inspired Yogācāra view on which, whenever we undergo any episode of awareness, we are only aware of a form or an aspect (*ākāra*) that belongs to the awareness. (The same view is discussed at length in his sub-commentary *Nyāyavārttikatātparyayāṅkā* on *Nyāyasūtra* 4.2.32-4. The arguments given in that overlap to a great extent with the arguments that he gives in NK; for a reconstruction of those arguments, see Das (2021).) However, having shown that this view does not really work (since it fails to explain how spatial properties like separateness, etc. that do not belong to any awareness could be represented by an awareness), Vācaspati glosses Maṇḍana’s argument by appealing to the Bhāṭṭa theory of manifestness or *prākāṣya*. According to one version of this theory, when an agent becomes aware of an object, the object comes to have a property called *manifestness* in virtue of appearing in that awareness. On this view, we do not have any epistemically direct access to our own awareness-events: when we become aware of an object, we also become aware of its manifestness, and then learn by inference or postulation (*arthāpatti*) about the awareness on the basis of that manifestness. Vācaspati says (NK on VV^s §§11.5, 514.7-8): “Something’s being an object of awareness (*jñeyatā*, i.e., manifestness) consists in the appearance of an object of awareness. The awareness, which is not directly accessible at all, should be inferred on the basis of that, because

What if the defender of *pratibhā* denies the claim that every awareness is an awareness of something or claim that instances of *pratibhā* are awareness-events? The second part of the second paragraph explains why this will not help: “Moreover, if it is impossible for anyone to acquire linguistic competence due to the absence of an intentional object, practical undertakings would arise [on the basis of exhortations] without linguistic competence.” If *pratibhā*, i.e., the awareness of to-be-done-ness, did not have any intentional object, then exhortative verbal endings also would not mean anything. So, one would not be able to gain linguistic competence with respect to such verbal endings in virtue of learning about the semantic relation between these linguistic expressions and their meaning, i.e., to-be-done-ness. Thus, in a case where an agent undertakes an action after hearing an exhortative verbal ending, no linguistic competence with respect to such linguistic expressions would be necessary for the practical undertaking to arise. That seems obviously false: in order to undertake actions on the basis of verbal exhortations, one does have to learn what these expressions mean.

In response, the defender of *pratibhā* could concede that *pratibhā* does have an intentional object. This brings us to **Horn 2**. What is the intentional object of *pratibhā*? An action alone cannot be the intentional object of *pratibhā*. For non-exhortative utterances, which do not give rise to practical undertakings, can also produce awareness-events that are directed at actions. So, that cannot explain why exhortations—and not non-exhortative utterances—give rise practical to undertakings (at least under optimal conditions).⁵⁰ The response cannot be that all utterances can give rise to practical undertakings. That is patently false: ordinary declarative sentences as well as Upaniṣadic sentences, which purport to describe the world as it is, are not supposed to motivate actions.⁵¹ Presumably, the thought here is that exhortations give rise to practical undertakings not by informing the hearer of an action, but rather by conveying the content that the action is to be performed. This seemingly normative property of to-be-done-ness is supposed to be the meaning of the exhortative verbal endings. So, the defender of the *pratibhā* theory should say that to-be-done-ness is one of the intentional objects of *pratibhā*.

This raises a new challenge for the defender of the *pratibhā* theory: namely, to explain how to-be-done-ness could become an intentional object of *pratibhā*.

[The proponent:] By what means of knowing does one become aware of to-be-done-ness? It is not perceived by the senses. One does not become aware of it by the other means of knowing, since those are preceded by (i.e., dependent on) perception.

there is no other means of knowing with respect to it. This has been said.” (*jñeyābhabhāso jñeyatārthasya | tayātyantaparokṣaṃ jñānam anumātavyam tatra pramāṇāntarābhāvād ity uktam |*) For a variant, see VVMG 191.22-4. This is not satisfying. As Vācaspati himself notes elsewhere (NVT 626.4-7), at least if we take manifestness to be a property of the object, it is hard to explain how an inferential awareness directed at a past or future object could produce this property at a time when the object is not present.

⁵⁰ VVS §11.6, 517.10-12 and VVMG 192.1-3.

⁵¹ VVS §11.6.1, 518.7-9 and VVMG 192.4-6.

[The opponent:] True. One does not become aware of it by any means of knowing other than language.

[The proponent:] Surely, since language also requires an awareness [of the semantic relation between linguistic expressions and their meanings], it requires proof [of those meanings] by other means of knowing.

[The opponent:] Certainly, we can become aware of to-be-done-ness from injunctive linguistic expressions (e.g. exhortative verbal endings).

[The proponent:] This will result in mutual dependence.

[The opponent:] This is not right, because linguistic impressions (*śabdabhāvanā*) are beginningless. Certainly, language does not immediately bring about any *pratibhā* regarding to-be-done-ness, since it is temporally remote. Rather, it does so by means of the continuity of [linguistic] impressions (*bhāvanā*)...⁵²

If we grant that to-be-done-ness is not a property that we can know by perception or by perception-driven inference, we are led to the conclusion that only language can make us aware of that property. But in order to become aware of to-be-done-ness on the basis of linguistic utterances, we need to have a prior awareness of the semantic relation between linguistic expressions and that property. But that requires a further awareness of to-be-done-ness. Now, if that awareness is also based on another linguistic utterance, there will be a problem of mutual dependence. The defender of the *pratibhā* theory seeks to resolve this problem by appealing to impressions left by our exposure to language in previous births.

This account, clearly, is not satisfactory. As Maṇḍana sensibly points out, it is unclear what these linguistic impressions are. There are two salient options. Either they are memory traces that later give rise to a recollective awareness of a linguistic expression, or they are memory traces that later give rise to a recollective awareness of the meaning of a certain linguistic expression.

⁵² VV^s §11.9, 556.26-29 and 557.1-3: *kena pramāṇenāvagamyate | nendriyair iyaṁ adhyakṣyate | tat puraḥsaravān netaraiḥ | satyam | [na] śabdātirekibhiḥ | namu śabdo 'pi samvidapekṣayetarasiddhim apekṣate | na niyogataḥ śabdataḥ sidde 'pi tatsambhavāt | nanv itaretarāśrayaṁ syāt | na anāditvāc chabdabhāvanāyāḥ | na khalu śabdaḥ sāksād eva kartavyatāpratibhāṁ āvirbhāvayati yato viprakṛṣṭaḥ | aṇi tu bhāvanānugamamukhena |* For a variant, see VV^{MG} 209.8 and 210.1-4.

Still, what is this linguistic impression? Is it a seed of an awareness of a linguistic expression, which has as its intentional object a linguistic expression, or is it a seed of an awareness of an object designated by a linguistic expression?⁵³

If the first possibility is true, then they are memory traces directed at linguistic expressions. But, then, it is unclear why we have to reacquaint ourselves with linguistic expressions at all when we learn a language after we are born.

If it has as its intentional object a linguistic expression, then linguistic usage would arise simply by means of those linguistic expressions, which are connected to memory traces (*smṛtisamskāra*) that have remained intact and which belong to a previous birth? And, in that case, linguistic competence will not be required.⁵⁴

If they are memory traces left by our past awareness of the meanings of linguistic expressions, then there are two possibilities: those traces are directed either at the meanings alone, or at the meanings along with their semantic relations with the relevant linguistic expressions. If the second possibility is true, then an agent would not have to acquire any linguistic competence with respect to the relevant linguistic expressions while learning a language.

The first possibility seems arbitrary without further explanation. We need a story that explains why we retain memories only of the meanings, but not of the relevant linguistic expressions or their semantic connections with their meanings. But Maṇḍana thinks no such explanation is available. He appeals here to a Vaiśeṣika theory of dispositions (*samskāra*) defended by Praśastapāda in his commentary on the *Vaiśeṣikasūtra*. On this view, impressions (*bhāvanā*)—which are dispositions of a certain kind—are basically memory traces: they are qualities of the self, which cause recollective awareness-events and episodes of recognition. Such impressions are created by three kinds of factors: the acuteness (*pātava*) of an awareness, the repetition (*abhyāsa*) of an awareness with respect to the same object, and the effort (*ādara*) underlying an awareness.⁵⁵ But the problem is that the awareness-events regarding a linguistic expression, its meaning, and the semantic relation between the two may be the same with respect to acuteness, repetition, and

⁵³ VV^S §11.9, 560.13-14: *kā punar iyaṃ śabdabhāvanā | śabdaviśayā śabdajñānabijam atha śabdābhīhītarthajñānabijam* | For a variant, see VV^{MG} 211.6-7.

⁵⁴ VV^S §11.9, 560.14-15: *yadi śabdaviśayā tair evābhraṣṭasmṛtisamskāraiḥ prāgbhaviyayaiḥ śabdair vyavahāraḥ syāt | vyutpattis ca tathā nāpekṣyeta* | For a variant, see VV^{MG} 211.7-8.

⁵⁵ The theory is explained by Praśastapāda as follows in PDS 4-12.259. For example, a person from the southern part of India may see something marvellous, e.g., a camel, when she travels to northern India; given how surprised she is by this animal, she might undergo a particularly striking experience, which (in virtue of its acuteness) may create a sturdy memory trace that could later give rise to a recollective awareness. Similarly, consider a novice who is initiated into some area of learning, or some art, or some athletic exercise that she is unaccustomed to; when she repeatedly undergoes the same awareness with respect to the same object, the repetition may create a robust memory trace that could later give rise to a recollective awareness. Finally, if a person puts in a lot of effort into something and attends to the object of her visual awareness (by placing the *manas* or the inner sense on her visual sense), she may undergo an effortful awareness (*ādarapratyaya*) with respect to an object; for example, on a full-moon night in the month of Caitra, if one bathes in some divine lake at midnight, one may see a silver or golden lotus.

effort. Yet, the opponent is committed to thinking either that only some of these awareness-events (i.e., the ones about the meaning) leave a memory trace, or that somehow only the memory traces pertaining to the meaning are preserved in the new birth. But this is arbitrary: unless a reason can be stated for distinguishing the memory traces pertaining to the meanings of the relevant linguistic expressions from the memory traces pertaining to the linguistic expressions and the relevant semantic relations, the opponent’s explanation cannot be convincing.⁵⁶

This leaves the opponent with the possibility that memory traces pertaining to the linguistic expression, its meaning and the semantic relation between the two are preserved in the new birth. But that, as we already know, will lead to absurd consequences: for example, the story will predict that even a congenitally blind or deaf person can recall the meanings of terms standing for various colors or sounds.⁵⁷ The general thrust of the worry, I take it, is this. Even if we possess innate linguistic dispositions, those capacities cannot explain how we understand the weirdly exotic meaning of exhortative verbal endings—the irreducibly normative property of to-be-done-ness—without ever becoming aware of that property by perception or inference.

Maṇḍana sums up the problem nicely. If to-be-done-ness is not a non-normative property like the property of being a means to a desired end, it is not clear that we can become aware of it either by perception, or by inference, or by means of our innate linguistic capacities. To-be-done-ness (at least understood as an irreducibly normative property) is not accessible to the senses. We cannot know its existence by inference from a piece of evidence, or an inferential mark. For any inference requires background information regarding the relation between the target (*sādhya*, i.e., the object to be inferred) and the inferential mark. But if the target—which in this case is to-be-done-ness—is independently unknown, then such background information will be unavailable. Moreover, it cannot be known by means of innate linguistic dispositions either, because we would still need a story about how our linguistic capacities allow us to latch on to this mysterious

⁵⁶ VV^S §11.9, 560.16-20 and 561.1: “[The opponent:] The linguistic impression has as its intentional object something designated by a linguistic expression. [Reply:] Let that be the case. Even then, if the previous impression [which has as its intentional object a linguistic expression] is present, then that very same problematic result will arise. [The opponent:] Only this linguistic impression [which has as its intentional object an object designated by a linguistic impression] is present. [Reply:] A reason for a distinction (*viśeṣahetu*) is to be stated for the following. [On your view] when the acuteness (*pātava*) of the awareness, the repetition (*abhyāsa*) of the awareness, and the effort (*ādara*) underlying the awareness are the same with respect to the linguistic expression, the meaning, and the relation between the two, there is only a seed of an impression pertaining to the meaning, but not pertaining to the linguistic expression and the relation. Alternatively, suffering, death, or the interval that separates a distinct birth destroys the seeds of impressions pertaining to the linguistic expression and the relation, but not pertaining to the meaning” (*śabdābhihitā cet | bhavatu | tathāpi pūrvasyāṃ satyāṃ sa eva prasaṅgah | atheyam eva | viśeṣahetur vaktavyaḥ | tulyeṣu pratyayapātavābhyāsādareṣu śabdārthasambandhaviśeṣeṣu artha eva bhāvanābhījam | na tu śabdāsambandhayoḥ | prāyaṇam duḥkham vocchettr jātyantaravyavadhānam vā śabdāsambandhayaḥ bhāvanābhījanām | nārtheṣu |*). For a variant, see VV^{MG} 211.8-20 and 212.1-2.

⁵⁷ VV^S §11.9, 561.1-2: “If there is a continuity of impressions with respect to those [the linguistic expression, its meaning, and the relation between the two], then even congenitally blind and deaf people would speak of various kinds of sounds and colours they have experienced in a different birth as if they had experienced them in that birth.” (*teṣv api bhāvanā ’nugame jātyandhabadhīrās tajjanmānubhūtānām iva rūpaśabdaprakāraṇ janmāntarānubhūtān vyācakṣīran |*) For a variant, see VV^{MG} 212.2-4.

normative property. The story cannot be that we were exposed to verbal exhortations in previous lives and thus became aware of to-be-done-ness. For that story does not explain why we only selectively remember to-be-doneness but not the linguistic expressions that refer to it or the relevant semantic relations. And, if we could remember not only to-be-done-ness, but also these expressions and their semantic relations with to-be-done-ness, then it would be hard to explain why we ever need to learn what these expressions mean. Thus, the epistemological mystery around to-be-done-ness remains unsolved.⁵⁸

Given this problem, Maṇḍana could insist that the object of *pratibhā*, i.e., to-be-done-ness, is nothing other than the property of being a means to a desired end. As Maṇḍana himself notes, his own theory—on which an awareness of this latter property gives rise to actions—does no worse than his opponent’s in explaining how children and other languageless animals perform various skilled activities without any instruction or antecedent observation. He says:

Just as [on your view] temporally remote language is the cause of *pratibhā* in children, birds, etc. due to the continuity of impressions, why shall it not be accepted that the same kind of awareness with respect to a means is the cause of undertaking or refraining from action due to the continuity of impressions? And differences with respect to species, etc. awaken the impressions left by the awareness of a means just as they awaken the linguistic impressions [on your view].⁵⁹

The point is that we do not need linguistic impressions to explain how languageless animals and children perform various actions without any instruction or antecedent observation. We can simply assume that such actions are produced by an awareness of those actions as means to desired ends. How does that arise? Just as the opponent appeals to linguistic impressions to explain the awareness of to-be-done-ness, so also can we appeal to impressions or memory traces left in our past lives by the awareness of the relevant actions as means to desired ends. So, there is no need for us to think that the object of *pratibhā* is anything other than the property of being a means to a desired end.

Let us take stock. Maṇḍana has shown two things so far. On the one hand, he has noted, using his opponent as a mouthpiece, that we sometimes act just on the basis of the judgement that something is to be done, without considering explicitly whether that action is a means to any end we desire. Cases of skilled unreflective activities performed by children and animals, e.g., suckling, birdsong, etc., support this intuition. On the other hand, we have no good epistemological story about how we become aware of to-be-done-ness at least if the property is irreducibly normative. Then, the only way of preserving the intuitions about cases of skilled

⁵⁸ VV^S §11.9, 563.9-20 and VV^{MG} 213.4-6 and 214.1-4.

⁵⁹ VV^S 11.6, 540.24-25-541.1-2: *śiśuśakuntādīnāṃ yathā viprakṛṣṭaḥ śabda nimittam bhāvanānugamāt pratibhāyāḥ tathā tādrśam evopāyājñānaṃ pravṛttnivṛttinibandhanaṃ bhāvanānugamamukhena kiṃ nesyate | jātiviseśādayaś ca śabdabhāvanāyā ivopāyājñānabhāvanāyāḥ prabodhakāḥ* | For a variant, see VV^{MG} 202.4-6.

unreflective activities is to claim that judgements about to-be-done-ness are not really about any irreducibly normative property. That is bad news for Maṇḍana’s opponent at least if she accepts **Strong Anti-Reductionism**.

4.2 Against Weak Anti-Reductionism

Even if **Strong Anti-Reductionism** is false, **Weak Anti-Reductionism** may still be true: to-be-done-ness may be identical to some non-normative property, but it does not have to be identical to the property of being a means to a desired end. But, then, it will be hard to preserve **Maṇḍana’s Claim**, the claim that the property of being a means to a desired end is the only motivating cause of action. In this last subsection of this essay, I will briefly consider Maṇḍana’s argument against **Weak Anti-Reductionism**.

Here is the argument.

It is also the case that:

An ordinary person’s awareness of the form, “This is to be done,” arises only with respect to something that is a means to an object desired by the agent. With respect to an object of the opposite sort, there arises an awareness of the form, “This is not to be done.”

Certainly, if a certain kind of awareness is accompanied by something, then that thing is the intentional object of that awareness, just as an awareness of white colour arises only when something white is present. Ordinary people’s awareness, “This is to be done,” follows the property of being a means to a desired end, and their awareness, “This is not to be done,” follows the property of not being a means to a desired end. From that, it is known that these two properties are the intentional objects of these two kinds of awareness. Therefore, to-be-done-ness is nothing other than the property of being a means to an object that the agent strives for.⁶⁰

Here, the argument involves two premises.

The first premise depends on a theory of content. On this view, intentionality is largely a matter of tracking. Let’s say that an agent’s awareness tracks a property F-ness just in case (under optimal conditions) that awareness arises with respect to an object o only if o is F. Maṇḍana’s claim is this:

⁶⁰ VV^s §12, 569. 5-11: *api ca—kartur iṣṭābhyupāye hi kartavyam iti lokadhīḥ | viparīte tv akartavyam iti tatviśaye tataḥ | | yaḥ khalu pratyayo yam artham anveti sa tasya viśayaḥ śukla iva śuklapratyayasya | apekṣitopāyatām tadviparītām cānuyātaḥ kartavyam akartavyam iti pratyayau laukikānām | tena te tayoḥ gocarāv iti gamyate | tasmāt kartavyatā’pi nānyā kartuḥ samīhitopāyatāyāḥ |* For a variant, see VV^{MG} 215.1-6 and 216.1.

A Theory of Content. If an awareness of a certain type tracks a property F-ness, F-ness is an intentional object of that awareness.

In this sense, our visual awareness of white colour may be said to track that colour itself: under optimal conditions (i.e., when our visual sense is functioning well, the lighting conditions are normal, and so on), we become aware of the white colour in an object *o* only when the object *o* is white. Maṇḍana's second premise concerns to-be-done-ness.

The Thesis about To-Be-Done-Ness. An agent's awareness of to-be-done-ness tracks the property of being a means to a desired end.

This says that our awareness of to-do-done-ness tracks the non-normative property of being a means to a desired end. This seems right in the case of skilled, unreflective activities performed by children and animals, e.g., suckling, birdsong, swimming, etc. In these cases, the agent (human or non-human) clearly knows what to do. But this practical knowledge propels her towards activities that promote what she truly desires. Thus, even in those cases, the agent's awareness tracks the non-normative property of being a means to a desired end. Similarly, consider ζ_{00} . In that case, I know that I should keep the promise I made to my nephew, and therefore, that I should go to the zoo. What explains this knowledge? Here is a plausible story. I have a general commitment to keeping promises. Unless I had this commitment, I would not think that I should go to the zoo. This commitment, ultimately, is nothing but a desire to keep promises. So, here too, through my judgement, I am just latching on to a non-normative feature of the relevant action, i.e., its being a means to something I desire.

Together, these two premises entail that any awareness of to-be-done-ness is in fact an awareness of the property of being a means to a desired end. This gives us the conclusion that Maṇḍana wants: namely, that to-be-done-ness is nothing other than the property of being a means to a desired end. So, if this argument succeeds, then **Weak Reductionism** is false.

Even if we grant that the **Theory of Content** is true, why should we think the awareness of to-be-done-ness, which gives rise to our practical undertakings, tracks the non-normative property of being a means to a desired end? Vācaspati offers two arguments.

The first argument starts from an observation: namely, that not every awareness of to-be-done-ness is capable of giving rise to a practical undertaking.

Here, this is the import. It is true that to-done-ness is the mere property of being something to be brought about by effort (*kṛtisādhyatā*). However, that alone is not the cause of a practical undertaking. For that would give rise to the undesirable consequence that something that one strives for, insofar as it is to be done, would be a cause of a practical

undertaking. Certainly, a result does not become an intentional object of a practical undertaking insofar as it is treated as something to be done. By contrast, a means to that result should be an intentional object of a practical undertaking. And it is not the case that the to-be-done-ness that belongs to one thing gives rise to a practical undertaking with respect to something else, since that would give rise to a problem of overgeneration (*atiprasaṅga*).⁶¹

The argument is this. On the view that Vācaspati favours, to-be-done-ness is the broader property of being something that is to be accomplished by means of effort. That property does not only belong to actions, but also to outcomes an agent might want to realize. For example, suppose I want to have a cauliflower curry this afternoon, so I judge that this is something that I should accomplish by means of effort. But this judgement alone would not be enough to stir me into action. Consider two versions of the case. In one version of the case, I have no idea at all about how to cook a cauliflower curry or do not know any shops I could buy it from. If I am rational, I will not undertake any action to realize my desired end of having a cauliflower curry this afternoon. However, if a judgement that something is to be done (in the relevant sense) were sufficient to initiate a practical undertaking with the relevant object, then a practical undertaking with respect to my desired end should arise even in a case like this. But that clearly does not happen. Next, consider a second version of this case. Here, I do know how to cook an aubergine curry. So, given my desire for a cauliflower curry, I will undertake various actions—like collecting the spices, chopping up the vegetables, heating the pan, putting in the ingredients, and so on—which together would bring into existence the curry that I wanted all along. The crucial difference between the two versions of the case is this: in the second version, not only do I treat my desired end as something that is to be done, but I also know that certain actions jointly serve as the means to that desired end. Since I also take these actions to be things to be done insofar as they serve as the means to a desired end, I go on to undertake these actions. Notice that, in cases like this, the judgement about to-be-done-ness which gives rise to the relevant practical undertaking tracks the property of being a means to a desired end. This, in turn, lends support to Maṇḍana's thesis that the awareness of to-be-done-ness, which produces our practical undertakings, tracks the non-normative property of being a means to a desired end.

An opponent might try to block this argument by saying that, in the second version of the curry example, the relevant judgement about to-be-done-ness is not tracking any non-normative property of the relevant actions at all, but rather the property of to-be-done-ness that belongs to the outcome that I want to realize. In other words, even though my practical undertakings (i.e., the conscious effort I make) are directed at actions like collecting spices and chopping vegetables, the underlying judgement about to-be-done-ness—which gives rise to those practical

⁶¹ NK on VVS §12, 570.12-15: *idam atrākūtam | satyam | kṛtisādhyatāmātram kartavyatā | na tu tanmātram pravṛttihetuḥ samāhūtasāpi kartavyatayā taddhetuvaprasaṅgāt | na khalu phalaṃ kartavyamiti pravṛttigocaraḥ | tatsādhanam tu syāt | na cānyakartavyatānyatra pravartayati atiprasaṅgāt* | For a variant, see VV^{MG} 215.18-21.

undertakings—is actually a judgement to the effect that I should realize the state of affairs where I have a cauliflower curry this afternoon.

As Vācaspati notes in the last line of the passage quoted above, this is not a good reply, because it might give rise to a problem of overgeneration. Consider the following principle: if an awareness of to-be-done-ness is to cause a practical undertaking, the intentional object of that practical undertaking cannot be distinct from what the agent treats as the thing to be done. For example, suppose I want to have a cauliflower curry and therefore take the cauliflower curry to be something to be done. But, then, I undertake actions that bring into existence of an aubergine curry. Surely, my judgement about to-be-done-ness cannot be causally relevant to this practical undertaking. Why? An intuitive explanation is just this: my judgement about to-be-done-ness is not about the action that my practical undertaking is directed at. So, the principle looks plausible. But, if Maṇḍana's opponent is right, then this principle turns out to be false in cases where a judgement about to-be-done-ness, which is directed at some desirable outcome, produces a practical undertaking directed at an action. In such a case, there is a mismatch between the intentional object of the agent's awareness of to-be-done-ness and the intentional object of her practical undertaking. Vācaspati's claim is simply that, if we allow for such cases, then we would have to allow for other cases—e.g., the case involving the two kinds of curry—where a judgement about to-be-done-ness, directed at a desirable outcome, gives rise to a practical undertaking directed at some completely unrelated action. This is the problem of overgeneration.

In reply, the opponent might say that there is in fact no such problem of overgeneration. For, whenever an agent undertakes a certain action on the basis of her judgement that a certain outcome to be brought about, she takes the relevant action to be a means of bringing about the relevant outcome. But that is simply grist for Maṇḍana's mill. For, then, the opponent will be conceding that our judgement that a certain action is a means to a desired end is what underlies all our practical undertakings.⁶² The upshot of this argument is basically this. If we accept that sometimes our practical undertakings are produced directly by an awareness of to-be-done-ness, then the awareness in question must be tracking the non-normative property of being a means of desired end. Otherwise, it becomes impossible to explain how it gives rise to a practical undertaking. For there are plenty of cases where something—e.g., a desirable outcome—is taken to be something to be done (i.e., brought about), but the agent does not undertake any action insofar as she is not aware of any means of realizing that outcome.

In response to this argument, the opponent may point out that, even in the case of permanent duties (*nityakarman*) (i.e., duties one should perform every day) enjoined in the Veda, one undertakes actions even though one does not take the relevant act to be a means to any desired end. In reply, Vācaspati offers a second argument.

⁶² NK on VVS §12, 570.16-571.1-3 and VVMG 215.21-25.

Moreover, it is not correct to say the following: “The property of being a means to an end that one strives for—which is conducive only to an awareness of to-be-done-ness and which falls under the scope of a means of knowing—is not a cause of a practical undertaking. However, to-be-done-ness itself is the cause of that practical undertaking. And, in some cases, one is aware of it on the basis of the property of being a means; in other cases, one is aware of it on the basis of linguistic expressions. That is why, even when the property of being a means to an end that one strives for is absent in the case of permanent duties (*nityakarma*), to-be-done-ness—which is an object of awareness—serves as the cause of a practical undertaking.”

For it has already been said that mere to-be-done-ness is not the cause of a practical undertaking. Moreover, let that to-be-done-ness fall under the scope of a means of knowing. Even in that case, there must be some means of knowing, in the absence of which the knowable object (i.e., to-be-done-ness) is absent. This is just as the property of being produced is a means of knowing with respect to impermanence. Likewise, in the absence of that property of being produced, impermanence is absent. For it is not possible for things to be thus: an existent object is unproduced and impermanent. In the same way, here too, to-be-done-ness is the property of being something to be pervaded by effort, and effort is the exertion (*prayatna*) of a person. Furthermore, that exertion has as its origin desire, aversion, and life; it does not arise when its origin is absent just as smoke does not arise when fire is absent.⁶³

The argument has two parts. In the first part, Vācaspati makes the relatively obvious claim that, if to-be-done-ness is a knowable property of actions, then there must be some means of knowing, which, when present, confirms the presence of to-be-doneness in actions and, when absent, indicates the absence of to-be-done-ness. Vācaspati offers an analogy of impermanence: if we think that impermanence (i.e., existing at certain times and not others) is a knowable property of objects, then there has to be some means of knowing—i.e., some piece of evidence—the presence of which confirms the existence of this property and the absence of which confirms the absence of this property. When it comes to impermanence, there is such a means of knowing. An object’s being produced decisively indicates its impermanence, and its not being produced decisively indicates its permanence. Something similar, according to Vācaspati, is true of to-be-done-ness. An action’s being a means to a desired end decisively shows that it is to be performed by the

⁶³ NK on VVS §12, 571. 4-11: *na ca kartavyatāvagamamātroḥpayoginī samīhitasādhanatā pramāṇāntahpātīnī na pravṛttihetuḥ | kartavyatāiva tu taddhetuḥ | sā ca kvacitsādhanatāvagamyate | kvacic chabdataḥ | tenāsatyām api samīhitasādhanatāyām nīyeṣu kartavyatāvagamamānā pravṛttihetur iti sāmpratam yato na kartavyatāmātraṃ pravṛttihetur ity uktam | api ca bhavatu pramāṇāntahpātīnī tathāpy asti hi kūñcit pramāṇam yadabhāvāt tatprameyaṃ nivartate yathā kṛtakatvaṃ bhāvānām anīyatve pramāṇam | atha ca tadabhāvād anīyatvaṃ nivartate | nāivaṃ hyasti sambhavaḥ | akṛtakaś cānītyaśca bhāva iti | tathehāpi kṛtiyāpyatā kāryatā | kṛtiśca puruṣaprayatnaḥ | sa cecchādveṣajīvanayoniḥ svayoninivṛttau na bhavati dhūma iva dhūmadhvajanivṛttau |* For a variant, see VVMG 215.26-216.2-6.

relevant agent, while its not being a means to a desired end decisively shows that it should not be performed by the relevant agent.

Why is this true? This takes us to the second part of the argument. As Vācaspati has argued, an action can have the property of to-be-done-ness if and only if it is something to be brought about by effort. According to a theory of effort defended by Praśastapāda, there cannot be an effort with respect to anything unless it is an object of desire or aversion, or something that sustains life (see footnote 3). But something that is an object of aversion cannot be something that we try to bring about, and something that merely sustains life is not something that needs to be enjoined by means of exhortations. So, any act that is enjoined in the Veda or in ordinary speech (including permanent duties) must be something that the relevant agent takes to be a means to a desired end. Otherwise, such an action simply could not have the status of being something that is to be brought about by effort. Once again, we end up with the result that the awareness of to-be-done-ness that gives rise to action must be indirectly tracking the property of being a means to a desired end.

These two arguments support the **Thesis about To-Be-Done-Ness**. Together with the **Theory of Content**, this premise yields the result that to-be-done-ness is nothing other than the property of being a means to a desired end.

5. Conclusion

Maṇḍana's theory of practical motivation is elegant in two respects. On the one hand, it preserves the key insight underlying the **Obligation Theory of Action**: to-be-done-ness—insofar as it is nothing other than the property of being a means to a desired end—can indeed be the motivating cause of action. Thus, this view helps us reconcile **Maṇḍana's Claim**—i.e., the claim that the property of being a means to a desired end is the motivating cause of action—with the **Obligation Theory of Action**. On the other hand, this theory nicely handles putative counterexamples to the **Desire and Belief Theory of Action**. That theory was subject to counterexamples like *Ṟoo*, precisely because it ruled out the possibility of prudent actions that are not motivated by considerations about means and ends. Maṇḍana's story about practical motivation allows us to accommodate such cases. He can allow an agent's actions to be guided solely by considerations about what she should do. But he also wants to say that such considerations implicitly track the property of being a means to a desired end.

This means that Maṇḍana cannot endorse the version of the **Desire and Belief Theory of Action** that we started out with. That theory entails that any intentional action must be produced by the judgement that the relevant action is a means to some desired end. If Maṇḍana's theory succeeds, then we end up with a revised version of the **Desire and Belief Theory**.

The Revised Desire and Belief Theory of Action. If a prudent or practically rational agent (intentionally) ϕ -s, then her action is caused at least by two mental states:

- (i) her desire to bring about a state of the world, and
- (ii) her judgement (or thought or belief) that ϕ -ing has a property F, where (necessarily) ϕ -ing has F just in case ϕ -ing is likely to bring about that state of the world.

The difference between this revised theory and the original **Desire and Belief Theory of Action** lies in (ii). While the original theory required prudent agents to act on the basis of the thought that their action would likely promote some desired end, this theory requires the agent to act on the basis of a consideration that is in some sense equivalent to (but is not the same as) the content of that other thought. Therefore, unlike the original theory, it is able to accommodate cases where an agent seems to act without explicitly considering whether the relevant action is a means to any end she desires. It leaves open that we at least sometimes do not see our actions as mere means towards our aims. This, we might hope, takes us part of the way towards the truth.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ I am grateful to Elisa Freschi for her extremely helpful and insightful comments on earlier drafts of this paper and for organising a workshop in the summer of 2019 on Maṇḍana's *Vidhiviveka* at IKGA, Vienna. I also wish to thank everyone who was present at that workshop for excellent discussions of the themes explored in this paper: especially, Hugo David, Kei Kataoka, Lawrence McCrea, Parimal Patil, and Andrew Ollett.

Primary Texts and Abbreviations

- Bṛ *Bṛhatī Śrīprabhākaramiśrapranītā Śrīśālīkanāthapranītaya R̥juvimalāpañcikayā Sametā: Prathamādhyāye 2,3,4 Pādāḥ Sampūmo Vvityādhyāyaś Ca.* Edited by S. Subrahmaṇya Śāstrī. Madras: Madras University, 1962.
- BV *Bhāvanāviveka, With Viśamagranthibhedikā.* Edited by V. A. Rāmasvāmiśāstrī, and K. A. Sivarāmakṛṣṇasāstrī. Annamalainagar: Annamalai University, 1952.
- HB *Dharmakīrti's Hetubindu.* Critically edited by Ernst Steinkellner on the basis of the preparatory work of Helmut Krasser with a transliteration of the Gilgit fragment by Klaus Wille. Beijing : Vienna: China Tibetology Publishing House; Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2016.
- HBT *Hetubinduṭkā of Bhaṭṭa Arcaṭa with the Sub-Commentary entitled Āloka of Durveka Miśra.* Edited by Pandit S. Sanghavi and Muni Shri Jinavijayaji. Baroda : Oriental Institute, 1949.
- MNP *The Mīmāṃsā Nyāya Prakāśa: Or, Āpadevī: A Treatise On the Mīmāṃsā System.* Edited by Franklin Edgerton. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1929.
- NVT *Nyāyavārttikatātparyāṭikā of Vācaspatimiśra.* Edited by Anantalal Thakur. New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1996.
- PDS *Prasastapādabhāsyam: With the Commentary Kīraṇāvalī of Udayanācārya.* Edited by Jitendra S. Jetly. Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1971.
- PP *Prakaraṇapañcikā of Śālīkanāthamiśra with Nyāyasiddhi of Jaipurī Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa.* Edited by A. Subrahmaṇya Śāstrī. Varanasi: Banaras Hindu University, 1961.
- PV *Pramanavarttika-Karika (Sanskrit and Tibetan).* Edited by Y. Miyasaka. Acta Indologica 2, 1971 | 72, 1-206.
- SV *Slokaṅvārttikam Kumārīlabhaṭṭapādaviracitaṃ Pārthasārathimiśraviracitayā Nyāyaratnākaravyākhyayā Sanātham.* Edited by Dwarikadas Sastri. Varanasi: Tara Publications, 1978.
- Trīṃ *Śhīramatī's Trīṃśīkāvijñaptibhāṣya, Critical Editions of the Sanskrit Text and its Tibetan Translation.* Edited by Hartmut Buescher. Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007.
- TV *Śrīmājājaiminīpranīte Mīmāṃsādarśane...* Edited by Kashinath Vasudev Abhyankar, and Gaṇeśāsāstrī Ambādāsa Joṣī. Pune: Ānandāśrama, 1970.
- VP1 *Vākyaṇṇadīya of Bhartṛhari with the Commentaries Vṛtti and the Paddhati of Vṛṣabhadeva. Kāṇḍa I.* Edited by K. A. Subramania Iyer. Poona: Deccan College Monograph Series 32, 1966.

- VP2 *Savṛttivākyapadīyadvitīyakāṇḍam: Puṅyarājakṛtātīkopetam*. Edited by K. A. Subramania Iyer. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- VV^{MG} *Vīdhiviveka of Śrī Maṇḍana Miśra with the commentary Nyāyakaṇikā of Vācaspati Miśra*. Edited by Mahaprabhu Lal Goswami. Varanasi: Tara Publications.
- VV^S *Vīdhiviveko Maṇḍanamīśraviracitas Tadvyākhyayā Nyāyakaṇikayā Vācaspatimīśranirmitayā Saṃvalitah*. Edited by Elliot Stern. 2020.

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