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FEATURE REVIEW

The Subject *Is* Freedom



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Free Will, Agency, and Selfhood in Indian Philosophy. Edited by Matthew R. Dasti and Edwin F. Bryant. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. ISBN 978-0-19-992275-8.

1. Does the Question of "Free-Will" Arise in Indian Philosophy?

As the first comprehensive collection of essays in English on the perennial problem of free will and agency in Indian philosophies, *Free Will, Agency, and Selfhood in Indian Philosophy*, edited by Matthew R. Dasti and Edwin F. Bryant, richly deserves to be read widely and critically by philosophers, Asianists, and global historians of ideas. It is an excellent endeavor in comparative philosophy. So, like every exercise in comparative philosophy, it must face a frustrating double bind. Let me start this review essay by illustrating this double bind with an anecdote. Many years back, in a large freshmen's *Introduction to Logic* class at Montana State University, as a zealous young visiting professor from India, I was asked to give a single lecture on Indian logic. On the first day, I gave a super-abbreviated accessible account of the original Nyāya/Buddhist argument-paradigm and the features of a good and bad argument introducing a handful of peculiarly Indian technical terms for the subject of the inference, the target property to be inferred, the reason property, and the ways of establishing or questioning the universal concomitance between the reason and the target property. The senior American professor who was co-teaching the Elementary Logic course with me commented that this was fascinating but it did not sound like "Logic" as we understand it in the West. He requested that I reformulate the basic insights in recognizably Western logical terms and give a second lecture. When I did that, on another occasion, his comment was "But this logic we already have in the West, between Aristotle and Frege-Russell; what is so Indian or different about it?"

This double bind would always plague comparative philosophers as long as they use English (or any Western language) to make philosophy originally written in Sanskrit, Pali, Tibetan, or Chinese available to a Western or even Asian philosophical audience (and increasingly now, philosophy teachers and students in Asia speak and understand nothing but a Western idiom of philosophy). Should you emphasize the uncommon ("exotic") issues and techniques that are foreign to Western thinking, you

would have a hard time convincing your audience that it is really “philosophy” (e.g., the discussion at the heart of Mīmāṃsā, concerning the exact meaning of a verb-ending in an imperative sentence that enjoins an action-to-be-done to its comprehending hearer, which chapter 6 by Elisa Freschi so clearly lays out in the volume under review). Should you emphasize, instead, the common issues that are also known to and focused on in Western philosophy, you will either be suspected of superimposing a Western conceptual scheme on Classical Indian philosophy or, worse, you will be ignored as presenting a boring old hat. It is simply exhilarating to see how several essays in the volume under discussion here manage to escape both horns of this comparativist’s dilemma while discussing one of the most hackneyed topics of traditional and contemporary Western philosophy: *Given that our actions, including our acts of willing and choosing are events happening according to natural causal laws, how can they be free?*

The problem of free will and agency as it is discussed, even if tangentially, in Sāṃkhya, Buddhist, Nyāya, Jain, Kashmir Shaiva, Mīmāṃsā, Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Dvaita Vedānta texts is recognizable to be *that* problem by a Western lens as you go through this book, and yet the discourse around the problem, surely but unnoticeably, changes so radically that not only new solutions but new problem terrains are created. Effortlessly, comparative philosophy turns creative. For all its Indological and philological context-setting, the reader takes home from this anthology a fresh set of insights and puzzlements that are simply *philosophical* without any prefix: “Western” or “Indian,” “classical” or “modern,” or even “comparative.” Good comparative philosophy should be just that: *good philosophy*. With this book, Indian comparative philosophy gets closer to this bright future of losing the parochial prefix.

2. Were Asian Philosophers Unaware of the Free Will Problem?

The *Mahābhārata* claims about itself that “*whatever is here is elsewhere, and what is not here is not anywhere in the world.*” Some of us working in the confluence between Indian and Western philosophies would like to believe, analogously, that any perennial philosophical issue that is discussed elsewhere must have been discussed, in some form or other, in Indian philosophy as well. If a philosophical problem is deep and non-phony and arises from the human condition, it must have been discussed somewhere in the vast diachronic debating arena that is Classical Indian philosophy. Now, no one can deny that *whether human beings are free to will and act as they choose, given the sway of causality over their psychophysical lives*, is a deep and genuine philosophical issue. The same issue has been put poignantly and powerfully by Karl Potter negatively as follows: “as long as a person is at the mercy of forces external to himself, so long will he be subject to frustration, despair and unhappiness.”¹ How could it be possible that such a fundamental existential problem escaped the attention of the contemplative and argumentative Indians? Yet, it was and is thought generally even by eminent scholars of Indian philosophy (such as J. N. Mohanty and Jay Garfield) that it is a typically Western (perhaps Judeo-Christian) problem about which Indian philosophers never much bothered to debate or write.

If we accept this alleged “lack of concern,” that is, the putative fact that the free will debate is absent from the list of topics discussed by Indian philosophers, we have to tweak the other two assumptions. Either we diagnose, in a late Wittgensteinian way, why the Free Will question is a pseudo-problem, so that our generalization is well protected: all *genuine problems* of Western philosophy were discussed by the Indian philosophers. Or we question the audacious over-generalization itself (that all real philosophical problems are discussed in Indian philosophy). Just as some very central philosophical issues—for example, “Does the imperative verb-ending in a command sentence mean the intention of the speaker or the to-be-done-ness of the action meant by the verb?”—are not discussed majorly in any nook of Western Philosophy, there are many genuine philosophical issues that escaped the attention of Indian philosophers. Whether, for example, the same objects exist in different possible worlds or whether the identity of individuals is bound and confined to the particular possible world they exist in cannot arise in Indian philosophy because the model theory for modal logic is not formulated in any textual tradition of Indian philosophy, because of historical cultural contingencies of the social-religious-linguistic context in which they thought, taught, and wrote.

The corresponding conundrum with respect to Classical Chinese Philosophy and its two usual “solutions” has been succinctly reconstructed by Kai Marchal and Christian Wenzel: “Surprisingly, the problem [of free will] seems to be absent in Chinese thought. Did the Chinese miss something or has the West been chasing an illusion?”² “One and many, free will and determinism, reality and appearance, mind and body, knowledge and opinion, good and evil—fundamental metaphysical problems . . . were not interesting or important in shaping the classical Chinese philosophic tradition,” wrote Roger Ames.³ Even twenty years later, after developing the ethics of familial and social roles, Ames seems to endorse the second solution: “the West has been chasing an illusion,” namely that the Free Will problem is big only for those Western thinkers whose metaphysics is dualistic and ethics individualistic.

But a third alternative position seems to have been taken by Marchal and Wenzel. However relationally and non-substantially human personhood may be understood in Confucianism and Daoism, Marchal and Wenzel go on to show that, at different levels, agency and voluntary actions for which persons can be blamed or praised are theorized and problematized in many distinct ways in the long and varied Chinese philosophical traditions. So, neither is “the problem of agency and will” spurious, nor did the Chinese miss it. The third and middle way is to search for a culturally different sensitivity to the problem of free will in the 2,500-year-old Chinese corpus and find out how perhaps a related but different set of issues around choice, will, agency, and moral accountability was discussed by Confucius, Mencius, Xunzi, Wang Ming, and others. Marchal and Wenzel start by locating in Classical Chinese four or five words for a faculty to make choices, or ways of making choices, and factors that influence or even control one’s life, namely: (1) *xin* 心 (heart, heart-mind), (2) *xing* 性 (human nature, characteristic tendencies, inborn capacity), (3) *ming* 命 (life span, fate, command, allotment, endowment), (4) *ziran* 自然

(so of itself, nature, spontaneity), and another term, *zhi* 志, which has often been translated as “will.”

But a more precise translation is “direction [of the heart-mind].” One does not have to be an expert in Classical Chinese or Chinese philosophy to notice how the meanings of these five terms both capture the heart of the question “What makes humans initiate actions?” and also redefine the problem-space beyond any perceived conflict between natural events and human volition, or between fate and freedom. Without any trace or need of a theodicy-type reason to credit human will with freedom (so that God is not blamed for human atrocities), Xunzi sounds almost like an indeterminist when he remarks:

The heart is the lord of the body and the master of one’s spirit and intelligence. It issues orders, but it takes orders from nothing: it restrains itself, it employs itself; it lets itself go, it takes itself in hand; it makes itself proceed, it makes itself stop. Thus, the mouth can be compelled either to be silent or to speak, . . . but the heart cannot be compelled to change its thoughts.⁴

But, of course, such a view of human action, its naturalistic causes, and its spontaneity is much more subtle than compatibilism or absolute free-will-ism. For instance, both letting go and self-restraining, in this passage, are treated as equally spontaneous acts of the heart-mind. The goal of this third wave of comparative philosophy should be, as Rosemont and Ames⁵ and Chakrabarti and Weber⁶ suggest, to take uniquely Chinese, uniquely Indian, uniquely Japanese concepts such as the concept of an exemplary sage, of the heart-mind, of desireless action, of agency of surrendering agency, of collective ignorance, et cetera, and underscore their absence in classical and modern Western philosophy.

In his book on a very different problem of evil in Chinese philosophy, Franklin Perkins quotes an intriguing passage from Zhuangzi about the Promethean spirit of human beings: “Thus, they (human beings) rebel against the illuminating brightness of the sun and moon above, scorch the refined essence of the mountains and rivers below, and overturn the orderly progression of the four seasons in between. . . . Deep, indeed, is the disorder brought to the world by the love of knowing!”⁷ While this is clearly about human choice and freedom, Perkins perceptively comments: “this is explained not in terms of free will but through a blend of desire and knowledge.”⁸ Is love of knowing, then, a bad thing, to be curbed? Tracing ecological destructiveness to the unbridled human desire for knowledge (*haozhi* 好知), Perkins gives a radically new spin to the problem of free will that would be immensely relevant to the contemporary tension between technology-driven science and environmental ethics.⁹

In Sanskrit also, we have terms like *svātantrya* that stand for freedom, and terms like *kratu* or *kṛti* that stand for will. And of course, for “freedom from” (bondage, ignorance, suffering) Sanskrit has words, by now familiar to the West, such as *mokṣa*, *mukti*, and *apavarga*. So, philologically we know where to look if we have to search for discussions of the free will, agency, or freedom issue. But what we shall find when we search carefully may well be something very different from the Western or mod-

ern counterparts. If I am allowed a suggestive play on words, just as a free action changes the subject (agent), a comparative philosophy of freedom should also change the subject.

Matthew Dasti and Edwin Bryant, with the help of an august array of first-rate scholar-thinkers, have neither dismissed the Western formulations of the free will issue as unheard-of or marginal in Indian philosophical thinking nor deemed the issue itself to be phony or parochial. They have taken the third and middle way of solving this strategic problem for comparative philosophers. They have shown that it is not a fact that the apparent conflict between natural causation and conscious human will was never the focus of attention of the classical Indian philosophers. It often was. The issue of the self's agency, threatened on the one hand by God's omnipotence and omniscience, some mysterious force of "destiny," and, on the other hand, by the ubiquitous sway of naturalistic and karmic causality, was very much at the center of several debates, just like the issue of external-world-realism versus idealism, realism-about-universals versus nominalism, and conceptualism versus non-conceptualism about perception, et cetera—discussed of course, in the distinctive Indian religious and secular argumentative style. This seems to be the editorial stance. But not all contributors agree.

3. *Garfield's Dismissal of the Free Will Issue as "The Question Does not Arise"*

For example, Jay Garfield, one of the most provocative contributors to this volume, in his brilliant chapter "Just Another Word for Nothing Left to Lose," repeatedly asserts that the Free Will Problem—"How can human beings be held responsible for their good and bad actions if they are just cogs in the inexorable causal machine of nature?"—is an artifact of Augustinian Christianity. With some measure of vehemence, Garfield argues that Western philosophy's preoccupation with the free will problem can be traced back to the twin presuppositions of choosy autonomous human agent-selves and of an omniscient God who eternally knows what each of those selves will ever choose to do. Since Buddhism rejects both of these presuppositions, the free will question simply does not arise, at least in Buddhist philosophy. And, of course, the enlightened Nāgārjunian Buddhist is "free" in the minimal sense that she is free from all clinging to essences, and she has "nothing left to lose." It was eye-opening for me to try to see, as Garfield writes, that "Everything that the post-Augustinian libertarian West buys with the gold coin of the freedom of the will, along with all of the metaphysical problems it raises, are bought by the Mādhyamika much more cheaply with the paper currency of mere imputation" (chap. 7, p. 182).

But not all forms of the ("Western") antinomy we discussed above are derived from the metaphysical assumption of an agent-self and an omniscient creator God. How could Garfield write "The will as we (seem to) know it is in fact the legacy of St. Augustine, and for his struggle to solve the theodicy problem raised by the Fall of Adam and Eve in Eden" (p. 165), when, as he himself shows that he well knows (on page 168, he mentions Aristotle's doctrine of choice as the cause of voluntary action) that Aristotle devotes five chapters of his *Nicomachean Ethics* to the question of will,

volition, and choice as propellers of rational human actions. To quote, a bit at length, from what must have been Aristotle's lecture notes on this:

Both the voluntary and the involuntary having been delimited, we must next discuss choice; for it is thought to be most closely bound up with virtue and to discriminate characters better than actions do.

Choice, then, seems to be voluntary, but not the same thing as the voluntary; the latter extends more widely. For both children and the lower animals share in voluntary action, but not in choice, and acts done on the spur of the moment we describe as voluntary, but not as chosen. . . . Again, the incontinent man acts with appetite, but not with choice; while the continent man on the contrary acts with choice, but not with appetite.¹⁰

Surely what Aristotle is grappling with here has nothing to do with God, Augustine, or the biblical story of the Fall of Man, but has everything to do with at least one version of the problem of choice, agency, and will in contemporary secular Western moral psychology.

Garfield, who goes back to the historicist-Wittgensteinian diagnosis that the problem of Free-will-versus-Determinism is a local pseudo-problem of Western philosophy, that the Nāgārjunian Buddhist fly never got trapped in that particular fly bottle, eventually shows how a skeptical Mādhyamika Buddhist response to the Western/Christian problem of free will advances our understanding—and dissolution—of the problem itself. Even if there was no philosophical discussion of the free will *versus* determinism debate in Indian philosophy, now, thanks to this volume, there *is*.

We shall see in a later section of this review that Karin Meyers, in the section of her chapter 2 on "Karma, Free Will, and Moral Responsibility," clearly does not quite take Garfield's route. Given the central doctrines of dependent origination and no-self, the problem of free will, she says, is, in so many words "*one worth thinking about from a Buddhist perspective*" (p. 46; emphasis hers).

4. *The Mahābhārata's Open-ended Way of Reckoning with the Problem of Free Will*

Dasti and Bryant have invited contributions representing almost all schools of Indian philosophy, but chose not to have any entry on the philosophy of the *Mahābhārata* or of the *Bhagavad Gītā* (which is a small but crucial part of that philosophical epic). I take this to be a moderately regrettable omission. Everyone who is acquainted with the Vedic-Puranic literature knows that the *Mahābhārata* is not merely a long narrative poem about a royal family feud turning into total war; it is treated by the tradition as a philosophical commentary on the Vedas and Upanishads. The eighteen chapters of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, for example, are best read, I submit, as an indirect commentary on the eighteen verses of the *Īśa Upanishad*. Let me start and end this otherwise congratulatory review with two bookends that are missing from the volume I am showcasing as pathbreaking. First, very briefly, there is the complex problem-space regarding freedom, determinism, agency, action, and inaction that is created by the *Mahābhārata* and *Bhagavad Gītā*. Second—and I shall end the review with this—is

the stunningly original position argued for by K. C. Bhattacharya regarding the self/subject not just as free from or free to do something but as freedom itself.

After the great *Mahābhārata* war (controversially dated between 2,500 to 1,500 B.C.E.), described in the epic poem of a hundred thousand verses, through the stench of rotting corpses on the battlefield the question “Who or what is responsible for this genocide?” is raised repeatedly. Fingers are pointed at the warrior-princes’ lust for power, land, or a beautiful woman; at the virtuous hero Yudhiṣṭhira’s weakness for gambling; and above all at the conniving agency of Krishna, the “devious” divinity who could have prevented the carnage but chose not to (though in crucial moments he claimed to be identical with Cosmic Time and hence had to let the accumulated karma of all participating parties bring forth inexorably the perilous fruits they were “morally destined” to produce!).

To promote the virtue of forgiveness, the following parable is told at the start of the thirteenth book, the *Book of Teachings*. A venomous snake bites and kills the only son of the pious woman Gautamī. A hunter catches the snake and brings it to Gautamī for permission to kill it. Gautamī points out that such retribution is pointless because it will not bring her dead son back. The hunter keeps insisting that she must see her son’s killer killed. At this point, the snake manages to stick its head out and argue that the death of the son must have been predestined by Time, *kāla*, and that because he did not kill anyone willfully or knowingly, he could not be “blamed” or “punished.” In his defense of fatalism, the snake says: “You foolish fowler! How is it my fault? I have no will of my own, and am not independent. Not out of any spite against the child, but being propelled by Death I’ve bitten this child. Therefore, the sin, if any, should belong to Death” (*MBh* XIII.1.29). When the fowler responds that the snake deserves to be killed even if it has been employed by someone else as an instrumental cause of the child’s death, the argumentative snake enters into a deeper discourse on the metaphysics of causation, and claims that as an instrument akin to a potter’s wheel and its pivotal rod, it is not independent, and thus cannot be an agent.

It is noteworthy that God does not make any appearance in this story, either as a killer or as a redeemer. In another narrative, a wise bird tells a human king, “Destiny (*daiva*) and human agency work in reciprocal dependence. The noble ones take good initiatives, while eunuchs worship destiny” (*MBh* XII.139.78). “From knowledge arises craving, craving leads to intentional motivatedness, from motivation ensues bodily effort, and from effort action results” (*MBh* XII.206; Poona critical edition Ch-199).

The moral dilemmas explored in the *Mahābhārata* come to their sharpest focus with the *Bhagavad Gītā* section of the epic. Warlike, both by temperament and by caste criterion, Prince Arjuna suddenly develops an aversion to the ensuing carnage on the eve of the war. He wants to drop out of the battle for he does not want to kill his kinfolk and respected elders on the other side. He seeks to renounce this gruesome military life, even if he has to beg for a living. But Arjuna’s charioteer-mentor Krishna convinces him that wisdom and emancipation consist not in ascetic inactivity but in the midst of *vita activa*—a life of engaged but unattached, zealous but

non-egoistic, ethical work. Freedom lies in renouncing the *fruits of action*, not in renouncing *actions*. However, Krishna also warns in this connection: “Even wise men are confounded about what is action versus what is mere omission or inaction” (BG 4.16). In the eighteenth and final chapter, five causal conditions of any action are set out: (1) the body (locus), (2) the conscious knower-agent, (3) different sorts of instruments, (4) exertion and effort of various kinds, and finally (5) a divine factor or fate (BG 18.14). At the end we are told: “God dwells in the heart of all living beings, making them move around with his magical power as if on a motor-driven machine” (BG 18.61). Thus, the *Bhagavad Gītā*’s final stance on free will remains elusive. Krishna’s final exhortation seems to juxtapose a metaphysics of divine predetermination with a libertarian appeal to free will, with no attempt at reconciliation: “Therefore get up, earn fame, defeat your enemies and enjoy the entire kingdom; I have already killed off those enemies in the future, just be an occasioning agent of victory” (BG 11.33).¹¹

5. The Western Problem Rehearsed in an Indian Idiom

What exactly is the Western problem of free will such that in spite of such clear engagement with the question of “Who did this wrong? Who is responsible” in the classical philosophical epic *Mahābhārata*, very knowledgeable modern chroniclers of Indian philosophy go on saying that in the Indian classical corpus of philosophy, the problem of free will *versus* determinism is not discussed at all? Let us quickly recast the Western debate in recognizably Indian terms.

No social human beings who care for *dharma*—the universal moral code for a good life in any place or time or locale and age-and-community-specific codes of piety—can live without judging their actions as good or bad, and blaming each other for bad actions and regretting having done wrong. All of that presupposes *that they could have acted differently*, that when they did something praise- or blameworthy they acted freely. Yet, at least five different types of arguments can be given in support of the exact opposite thesis that human action is never free action.

A. The first is a metaphysical argument. Every human action is an event in time. Every event in time has a cause (as the Buddha’s central insight “dependent origination” encapsulates). Whatever has a cause is determined by a strict causal law—whether or not we are able in each case to discern what that law is. Whatever is determined by a strict causal law is non-free, since given its antecedent events it could not have happened otherwise. Therefore, every human action is causally determined, which is to say that no human action is free.

B. The second is a *logico-semantic argument*, whose force is not so easy to feel. It is beautifully summarized in the following Sanskrit verse from that gold mine of ethical wisdom called “*Pancatantra*”: “*Yad a-bhāvi na tad bhāvi, yad bhāvi na tad anyathā / iti cintā-viṣaghno’yam agadah kim na pīyate?*” (What is not-to-happen will not happen, what is going to happen cannot be made otherwise. Why not drink this potion that kills the poison of anxiety?) (Note that *Pañcatantra* calls this a lazy man’s words: “*iti keśāncit ālasya vacanam*”). So, the argument goes like this: Any action

that we appear to be considering now whether to do or not to do is a future event. Like an event in the past about which it is either determinately true or determinately false that it happened, an event in the future—independent of our ability to predict or foresee—is either going to take place or not going to take place, since a future-tense sentence is either true or false (now). If it is *going to happen*—that is, if the sentence “A woman will become the President of the USA in 2021” is *true* then no one, not even the strongest group of misogynist politicians, can do anything to make that statement false. If it is not going to happen, that is, if that statement is *false*, then no one can make it true. Since in neither case does anyone have any freedom to change the undiscovered truth-value of the future-tense sentence—and a third option does not exist—no one is free about any future action—which is all that one can feel free about.

C. The third is a religious argument from (God’s or Buddha’s) omniscience. Had I been really free in choosing my future course of action then no one—not even God or Buddha—can *know* from now what I am going to choose, freely, to do. But God or the Buddha is omniscient and knows all that was, is, or will be the case. So it is not true that no one knows what I shall choose to do. Therefore, I am not really free.

Instead of omniscience, the omnipotence of God is also used sometimes to deduce that we are merely instruments (as in the passage about human mechanical dolls in the hands of God in the *Bhagavad Gītā* passage mentioned above).

D. The fourth is also a religious argument, though it is not theistic. Even atheistic Hindu, Buddhist, and Jaina philosophers can propose this argument for determinism, as long as they share religious faith in the ethico-hedonic law of karmic retribution. It goes as follows: Whatever happens in the bodily or mental life of a human being is wholly determined by his or her past karma—good and bad actions done in this or an earlier life that have left their unseen effects behind. Even if no external force compels me to act the way I actually do, my so called “own” will to act is an unchosen effect of my own past actions and their unseen but accumulating effects on my disposition. If the will itself is an unchosen effect of an inexorable law—then whatever is propelled by such unchosen unfree will is itself unfree. Hence none of my actions, even the ones that I feel I have voluntarily done of my own accord, are free.

E. Finally, the fifth argument is a secular version of the karma-theoretic argument in terms of psychological determinism. My act of volition—whether it is identified with a neuro-physical event in the brain or not—is a mental *event* as much applicable in terms of its antecedents and lawlike connections as any physical event. Just as a kleptomaniac or a neurotic obsessive-compulsive person does not act freely, I also undergo psychological states propelled by my own neuroses and external stimuli. What I happen to think or wish or elect or decide is in principle explicable in terms of my genetic code and the details of my upbringing and my immediate environmental inputs. Therefore, none of my voluntary actions are genuinely free.

With such a battery of supportive arguments, determinism looks invincible. Yet, one of the most well-known practical philosophies of India, Patañjali’s philosophy of Yoga, clearly rejects the strict determinism of the early Ajivika Niyativādin (fatalists).

In his recently published book, Daniel Raveh remarks: "In Pātanjala Yoga, 'freedom' is an act of will. Yoga is philosophy of action."¹² None of the deterministic arguments above have gone unchallenged. Take, for example, the very general first argument. Even if we grant that as an event every human action must have a cause, that cause need not be another *event*. The cause of my own action can be my own self—the very person that I am. In order to be a *free* action my action need not be *uncaused*. As long as it is *auto-nomous*—caused by my self and not caused by another foreign agency—it can be free. And the causal chain of events can stop at the self. Since the self is not an event but a substance, its being itself free from the sway of causal law is quite consistent with the general law: every *event* must have a cause.

In response to the religious or theistic argument from God's foreknowledge, contemporary Indian philosophers have defended human freedom rather easily. If you do not already assume determinism, then there is no reason to admit that, before I actually decide to raise my left hand next Sunday morning, there is any truth-value, either *true* or *false*, to the forecast: "Arindam will raise his left hand next Sunday morning." And if there is no truth-value to it, it does not tarnish or curtail God's omniscience not to know which truth-value it has. So, in brief, God does not know the exact course of my future free actions because—as yet—there *is* no course of action by me to be known. But what about God's complete, detailed knowledge of the future? The very coherence of the notion of omnitemporal omniscience has been questioned by orthodox Vedic exegetes (the Mīmāṃsā philosophers).

Another alternative route one can take to dissolve the tension between God's foreknowledge and our genuine freedom is to say that God being *timeless*, the question "Does he know *now* what I shall do *next* Sunday" does not arise for him, because the question is inextricably temporal.

Let us now counter the preceding set of determinist arguments with three very strong arguments in favor of the opposite view: *libertarianism*. This is the view that human actions—at least some of them—are indeed free, and free will is a real feature of humanity (rather than "sheer nonsense"—as Swami Vivekananda says in one of his lectures).

A. The first argument is from introspective self-observation. Noticing the workings of our own minds we undeniably observe and feel that while there are some mental states and acts we simply cannot help, over others we have an obvious control. If for some reason I am very angry with a friend, the desire to use wounding words seems to flow uncontrollably from that anger. But when I want to imagine a nice scenario in my mind's eye, as it were, I seem to have a good deal of creative freedom as to which scenario to imagine—a beautiful temple on a hilltop or a beach with palm trees or a village of thatched cottages in the middle of lush green paddy fields. This voluntarism about the imagination is championed in Indian poetics and aesthetics by Abhinavagupta and his Kashmiri followers, who claim that "in the kingdom of poetry, the poet alone is an unconstrained sovereign"

About the nature of our own mental states, whether it is pain or pleasure that I am feeling, whether my anger is mild or intense, my own considered introspective

evidence seems to be so irreplaceable that if I feel I am free with respect to some mental acts, then I must actually be free. Therefore some mental acts are free. Indeed, to use the standard argument from contrast, we would not know what it is to be compelled, constrained, forced to think, feel, or perceive, some of the time, unless at other times we were genuinely un-compelled, unconstrained, and unforced. If for some reason the appeal above to direct introspective evidence is disregarded as illusory or misplaced, then the strongest argument for preserving the freedom of human actions comes from the need for ethical appraisal, which we notice in Elisa Freschi's chapter on Mīmāṃsā in the volume under review.

B. If all that human beings do is naturally causally determined, then the entire range of our moral and social reactive attitudes of resenting, regretting, reprehending, admiring, rewarding, punishing, and so forth would be as illicit "as blaming a cow for stealing or an oyster for lying" (to use an expression Swami Vivekananda was fond of using). But the undeniably unique feature of humans is that only humans can be legitimately blamed for lying or admired for sacrificing their self-interest for the benefit of others.

The only way we could ignore this argument for the reality of free will is to insist that all morality, moral resentment, and morally tinged notions like obligation, right, stealing, and lying are based on a huge but human error. But, like calling something an "error," to call some widespread practice a mistake is itself a strong normative, if not moral, statement, which comes with recommendations that we *should* stop judging people's actions morally, and that we *should* adopt the scientific attitude toward human action, but it makes sense to insist that we should do something only when we are *free* to do it!

C. This brings me to the most subtle argument for the ineliminability of human freedom, the argument from pragmatic self-refutation. Supposing someone gives an eloquent speech arguing that language does not exist, we would naturally conclude that such an argument refutes itself insofar as one uses language to show that language does not exist. Similarly, imagine someone arguing for the unreality of time, concluding with the utterance "On the preceding grounds, *after* you have considered my reasoning, you must stop believing in the reality of time." Since the recommendation itself assumes the temporal succession or sequence "*after* considering my reasoning, do this," the appeal to the unreality of time is pragmatically self-refuting (*vadato-vyāghāta*). Now, any argument that the determinist gives urging us to give up the mistaken idea of freedom—insofar as logical arguments are used at all—comes with a normative force: "If you admit the truth of the premise then you *must* acknowledge the truth of the conclusion." Now this "must" of rational logical obligation, just like the moral "must," presupposes that the audience—the listener to whom the determinist's *parārthānumāṇa* is addressed—has the *freedom* to deny the conclusion, and hence the ability to accept the conclusion, freely and voluntarily. Thus, to give any argument sincerely is to appeal to human intellectual freedom, since there is no logical "should" without a logical "can," backed up by a logical "might not."

6. Panini and Bhartṛhari, Showcasing Cardona's Majestic Chapter

Anyone who says the Sanskrit word for "free" (*svatantra*) is untheorized in Indian philosophy must be forgetting that Pāṇini (in the fourth century B.C.E.) defines an agent or doer (*kartā*) as "One who is free" (*svatantra*, self-ruled). Bhartṛhari, the philosopher of grammar, in explaining this idea of auto (*sva*)-nomous (*tantra*), in the fourth–fifth century C.E., lays down six criteria of free agency:

- (a) X is an autonomous agent if X started acting before drawing his strength from other aiding factors, such as the instruments.
- (b) X retains his preeminence by subjugating all other contributors to the action.
- (c) The operations of all other causal factors are subject to the functioning of X.
- (d) If X stops functioning, all the other conditions stop producing effects.
- (e) X is irreplaceable or non-substitutable with any surrogate, such that even if any other particular action-condition (e.g., the locus, instrument, the accusative) is missing or replaced, X has to be there for this action to be possible.
- (f) X can get the action done, even if indirectly from a distance, through its influence over other more directly involved employed agents.

7. The Position of Ancient Sāṃkhya

The most ancient, pre-Buddha, Sāṃkhya tradition of philosophy defends a dualism much more radical than the Cartesian dualism of mind and body. In Sāṃkhya, there is no room for conscious will to act because to be conscious is to be inactive and unchanging, and to be active and dynamic is to be unconscious. "Conscious free will," under this metaphysics, would at best be an oxymoron, at worst a logical mistake (though a mistake can only be committed by an active conscious cognitive agent, which does not exist according to Sāṃkhya!). After delineating this view as a form of determinism or a fictionalism concerning free will, Edwin Bryant insightfully remarks: "the unwelcome corollaries of Sāṃkhya's hard-line position on such issues [are] acting as a trigger for much subsequent development in Indian philosophy." Bryant ends his chapter prefiguring the chapters to come as follows:

Unhappy with the Sāṃkhya position, Nyāya seeks to couple an eternal unchanging *ātman* as a substance with separable changing qualities such as agency; Buddhism to jettison notions of any eternal entities in the first place; and Advaita Vedānta of non-eternal ones; and the theists to conclude that unresolvable philosophical problems of this sort mandate the existence of an Īśvara who is beyond comprehension. All run into philosophical difficulties of their own. (pp. 38–39)

Far from failing to find any awareness of the Free Will problem, notice how this brief history of Indian philosophies makes them all go around the normative voluntarism-versus-naturalistic causation issue. Finding or not finding a philosophical problem raised or not raised in a certain ancient tradition is just a matter of looking with the appropriate search engine.

8. Early Buddhist and Pali Canon Treatment of Human Will and Action

Karin Meyers seems to forget about the word *cetanā* when she writes that early Buddhists did not have a term equivalent to “free will” or any discrete faculty of the will. In chapter 2, Meyers gives us a contemporary formulation of the early Buddhist naturalized theory of karma (actions) done by empty persons who are reduced to streams of interdependent ephemeral *dharma* (event-like factors). Her account reminds us of Charles Goodman’s syllogistic refutation of Paul Griffiths’ (whose view is like Rick Repetti’s, which I mention approvingly below) libertarian interpretation of the Buddhist theory of free will:

This claim puts Griffiths in a difficult position. If the parameters are all determined by karma, then people’s actions must be caused by the parameters, by something else, or by nothing. If actions are caused by the parameters, then they are determined. If they are caused by nothing, they are utterly random, and therefore not free. If they are caused by something else, this something else must either be the self or something other than the self. If the something else is not the self, then either determinism or randomness will result. But the something else can’t be the self, because, according to Buddhists, there is no self. Therefore, Griffiths’s interpretation is untenable.¹³

In his recent impressive anthology titled *Buddhist Perspectives on Free Will: Agentless Agency?*¹⁴ Rick Repetti (who has reprinted the same essay by Garfield) remarks: “Some Buddhist scholars think Buddhism rejects free will, or they deny there is, was, or should be . . . even any Buddhist inquiry into free will. I disagree.” Although I learned an enormous amount from Meyers’ and Garfield’s essays, on this issue I tend to agree with Repetti’s disagreement. There are a number of supporting passages like the following from the *Dhammasangani*, which support a voluntaristic anti-determinist interpretation of early Buddhist philosophy of action:

“What on that occasion is volition (*cetanā*)? The volition, purpose, purposefulness, which is born of contact with the appropriate element of representative intellection—that is the volition that there then is.” And *Atthasalinī*: “Volition is that which co-ordinates. . . . [I]ts function is conation. . . . It makes double effort, double exertion.”¹⁵

At one place, the Buddha describes himself thus: “I am one who tells what actions should be done as well as how to practice inaction” (*kiriyāvādī cāhaṃ . . . akiriyāvādī cā’ti*).

9. On the Jaina View of Human Agency

In his learned chapter on Jainism Christopher Key Chapple presents Jaina philosophy as taking a “thoroughly voluntarist” stance in the free will debate. Each of us potentially omniscient pure souls finds ourselves covered in the unclean cloaks of karma. But the good news, for the cleansing-oriented Jaina, is that each fettered soul can do something autonomously to doff these layers of karmic cloaks. Karma binds us in eight ways, we are told in this lucid exposition of Jainism: as knowledge-covering,

intuition-covering, sensation-covering, deluding, life-span-fixing, body-generating, status-determining, and generally obstructive. But this karma-determinism, without the help of any transcendent God, can be overcome by prayer of emulation (to the wise and emancipated exemplars—the *Jinas*) and practice of detachment. Human beings, though mired in the causal nexus of their own past deeds, have the freedom to purify themselves painstakingly with ascetic self-control and bodily and intellectual nonviolence toward their fellow beings and toward nature. Chapple’s chapter ends with a wonderful sentence about the fork of choice we face between thickening or thinning the veil of karma: “Karma determines all things, and each soul faces, moment to moment, the decision to continue in patterns of behavior that densify karma and hence obscure the soul or to take up the steady path to purification” (p. 84).

10. Will, Causation, and Agency in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Philosophy of Mind

After the Buddhist denial of the self altogether, naturally comes the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika tradition of Indian thought where enduring and substantial self plays the most crucial role. Dasti himself writes an intensively researched essay on this school’s treatment of agency or doership of voluntary actions. He highlights three major points of the Nyāya treatment of agency of an individual (unliberated) Ātman:

- (1) the categorization of will and agency (sometimes identified with endeavor/*prayatna*, which is a mental quality, whereas effort/*ceṣṭā* is physical) as a quality of the self;
- (2) moral responsibility, merit and demerit (unseen *adr̥ṣṭa*) as non-essential properties of the self as long as one remains an embodied and knowing person;
- (3) dismissing the sharp distinction that the Advaita Vedantic tradition draws between knowledge and action, taking knowing itself as an expression of freedom.

About the last point, I just wanted to alert the readers that Dasti never claims that Nyāya regards *jñāna* (cognition) as an action. An awareness is a quality, not an action. As Jayanta Bhaṭṭa argues against the Mīmāṃsaka, knowledge is a quality of the self, whereas by “karma” Nyāya Vaiśeṣika only means physical motion in space, which a Nyāya Ātman cannot initiate or undergo because it is literally ubiquitous in size. But when a Nyāya self knowingly does something, it incurs or earns dharma or adharma and is accountable for each of its conscious voluntary actions.

In the late twentieth century, Karl Potter, an analytic philosopher very much in the New Nyāya tradition, defended and interpreted the karma doctrine as a response to the problem of freedom versus determinism, in a series of now-classic essays.¹⁶ Since Dasti’s chapter does not include any discussion of Potter’s nuanced Nyāya solution to the Free Will problem, let me fill in that gap here in this review. Karl Potter has famously called the karma theory an *a priori* presupposition of all Indian metaphysics of morals, and yet he does not think that the individual’s actions are

externally determined if they are largely determined by pre-initiated (*prārabdha*) karma.

Potter's ingenious version of compatibilism deepens the Nyāya notion of "volition" in terms of *trying to do something*. Potter begins his analysis defending the "prior" existence of the transmigrating self (whom God did not create and whose doing, trying, and trying to try go infinitely back in time). Suppose that I willfully try to do some action *Ah* that I have the ability to do—for example draw a human figure. If I succeed, I end up drawing either a male figure (*Am*), or a female figure (*Af*), or drawing a tall, lean male figure (*Atml*). My generally described goal "drawing a human figure" leaves room for these distinct alternative results, each of which would count as succeeding to do *Ah*—draw a human figure—not because of any slack in the causal connection between my trying to draw and the actual drawing that I accomplish. In comparison to every intended action that is a *determinable*, the actually accomplished act is a *determinate*. From the fact that John wanted to do a specific action, to infer that there exists one and only one particular action that John wanted to do is to commit what Potter calls the fallacy of misplaced determinateness. Since the object of my trying is imagined doing, and an imagined act, however narrowly specified by the intender, is not causally or logically constrained to be determinately this rather than that of one of its many alternative actualizations, our willed actions remain free. Potter applies this new logical compatibilism to the Nyāya theory where actions are caused strictly by knowledge, desire, and volition (as Dasti's chapter shows us).

11. *Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta: Opposition between Vita Activa and Vita Contemplativa?*

For the classical Indian *Mīmāṃsā* (Vedic textual interpretation) philosophers, an agent is someone who is capable of performing what is enjoined by a moral or ritual injunction such as "Thou shalt speak the truth" or "Desirous of happiness, you must perform the fire-ritual daily."

The exhortation goods the appropriate addressee, one who desires happiness and has other relevant qualifications, not by coercing or unconsciously brainwashing him to act according to it, but by bringing about his understanding of the prescriptive sentence as the only means of knowing his duty. The meaning of a mandate is "what is to be done." The act or its karmic results are called *apūrva*, "what was not there before"; it is other than all that is known as accomplished or happened because it *has to be done*.

When we speak of the "karmic" consequences of an action, say an act of stabbing or an act of offering clarified butter to a ritual fire, we are not speaking of the blood spilled or the smoke generated; we are speaking of the invisible demerit (which will mature into suffering) or merit (which will mature into happiness) earned by the agent. Such karmic consequences of action do not show up until after a long gap, sometimes not until the next life. This gap is "explained" in terms of the unseen potency of an action done.

There is also the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā view that the heart of the imperative is the propulsion that makes it happen (*bhāvanā*), connoted directly by the injunctive verb-ending. This urging propulsion again comes in two varieties: at the level of the sentence itself it is the motivating push of the words (the optative verb-ending “should”), and at the level of the person who is enjoined to carry out the command, it is the push by the intended competent auditor-agent. What is this perplexing property called “urge” or “*bhāvanā*”?¹⁷ It is somewhat psychologically characterized in Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā moral psychology as “cessation of indifference.” Until one feels the flutter of this propelling force, one stays volitionally indifferent. To “initiate” is to bring something about that was never there before (*a-pūrva*). It is the “initial” flutter of action-propelling “enjoining force” (*niyoga*) that harnesses our will to the act. Nothing counts as knowledge in Mīmāṃsā unless it brings to light something hitherto unknown.

From her chapter on Mīmāṃsā suggestively entitled “Freedom because of Duty”—which I am tempted to understand in the light of Strawson’s discussion of Freedom and Resentment—Elisa Freschi gives us at least three fresh pieces of “knowledge” in this Mīmāṃsā sense:

- (A) Just because Mīmāṃsā insists on the action-propelling force of the imperative verb-suffix, we must not think of them as determinists. Enjoining an action is not causally coercing the commandee into doing it. The commandee is free to cultivate the appropriate desire for the fruit of action or respect for the authority of the Veda, et cetera, without which he is not even the intended addressee of the conditional or categorical imperative.
- (B) To make room for this essential free will of the doer of Vedic duties, Kumārila is ready even to give up the standard Brahminical/Upanishadic claim of immutable eternity of the soul. Since the agent-self is free to change his actions, the self is said to be neither utterly same/changeless nor entirely ephemeral, but a continuant capable of transformation.
- (C) Past karma may exert an influence on how one chooses to act but does not fix or force an agent’s course of action. Mīmāṃsā compatibilism lies in a duly sophisticated analysis of the competent commandee’s command-receptive attitude.

First action, then contemplation! In spite of the fact that both Mīmāṃsā and (Advaita) Vedānta come under the general rubric of Vedic Exegesis, insofar as the former gives an account of active ethical life, and the latter of contemplative spiritual life, their positions on the free will question seem to be diametrically opposed, at least according to Sthaneshwar Timalisina. If Pūrva (prior) Mīmāṃsā vindicates *Vita Activa*, the Advaita stream of Uttara (posterior) Mīmāṃsā, which rejects any relevance or efficacy of work or ritual performance of duties toward final liberation, promotes pure *Vita Contemplativa*: the purely intellectual-meditative path of inaction that recommends the self’s total identification with the disinterested-witness consciousness. The individual self is ontologically identical to the universal im-

mutable Absolute for whom the question of any action or will does not arise. The agentive individuality that is presupposed by the action-prescribing part of Veda is erroneously superimposed by our shared ignorance, which projects a plural world of objects on undifferentiated pure subjective consciousness. That is Advaita “inactionism.”

Timalsina begins his impressively erudite account of such a “work”-averse Advaita Vedānta with a tell-tale epigraph from the *Bhagavad Gītā*: “Even as it sits inside the body, the Ātman neither acts nor gets attached to the fruits of actions, because it has no beginning or quality.” What Timalsina does not entirely ignore, but does deliberately under-emphasize, is that from the empirical/relative/pragmatic/transactional standpoint Śaṅkara, especially under his interpretation of *Brahma Sūtra* 2.3.33–42, works out a pretty strong theory of the individual self as autonomous agent (*kartā*), because it has to be meant by the scriptural imperatives for specific actions (*śāstrāthavattvāt*). Even that purely contemplative self-realization, the path to which has been recommended by Suresvara, whose “Proof of Non-Action” serves as the central text for Timalsina, is enjoined as a duty: “The Self has to be heard, reflected and meditated upon.” Most of Timalsina’s chapter is written from the radical non-dualist transcendental standpoint from which no will or effort is either necessary or possible even for liberating ourselves from the duality-concocting, reality-concealing fetters of ignorance. Those fetters never bind the pure quality-less self in the first place! But even Śaṅkara would concede that no philosophical argumentation is possible from that transcendental standpoint. For all the fictionalist double-level discourse that Timalsina illuminates with the Borges-like stories from the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*, as long as there is philosophical discourse, the talking persons have duties and therefore the freedom to do or not do those duties.

12. The Other Vedāntas

But Advaita is not the only stream of Vedānta. It is Martin Ganeri’s interpretation in chapter 10, that Rāmānuja (born 1017 C.E.), the Qualified Non-Dualist Vedāntin, sounds like a moderate libertarian when he writes “each finite self is a real agent that exercises genuine freedom of will, in opposition to both Advaita Vedānta and Sāṃkhya traditions” (p. 233). Rāmānuja’s ethic of surrender to God as the only initiative human beings are obligated to take makes it our epistemic duty to understand how God is the complete controller of all our inner and outer actions. Under this unlimited freedom of God, we have the limited freedom to relinquish our agency to the imperative of devotion, which is nothing but full recognition of our utter dependence on God.

The stances of Dualist Vedānta of Mādhva and Gaudīya Vaiṣṇava Metaphysics are naturally similar on the question of the limited freedom of human individuals, under the sovereign sway of divine will. Only the Supreme Lord is truly independent and autonomous; the causally operative action-propelling will of the human individual is under the overall control of the Lord. And using the *Brahmasūtra*’s common theodicy, “Madhva takes recourse to the beginninglessness of karma to exempt the

Lord from responsibility for the individual's good or bad deeds" (p. 259). In spite of their utterly dependent status, in Madhva's Vedānta the volition (*prayatna*) of the spiritual aspirant (we are told) plays an important role in the ultimate liberation of those who are destined to be liberated. There are some, only in this system of Indian thought, who will never be liberated; they are creatures of eternal darkness, perennially in bondage. An interesting modern question that should be asked is: Insofar as they are humans, are they free to respond to ethical do's and don'ts? Do the scriptural imperatives even apply to them?

The distilled results of the investigation into the theistic Gaudīya Vaiśṇava tradition's treatment of the notion of "a free doer" (from Grammar to Theology) are stated succinctly in the last chapter by Dasa and Edelman (p. 305) as follows:

- (i) When the embodied but conscious self acts under the magic spell of māyā, it makes the mind-body complex move but under the permissive oversight of the Lord/God.
- (ii) Such embodied agency should be looked upon as the individuals' inherent servitude to God, and therefore a mere expression of God's own power of consciousness.
- (iii) When this self merges back into God in apparent non-duality, agency remains as an unutilized potential quality.
- (iv) Agency in the emancipated realm of Vaikuntha is manifested through a perfected celestial body.

13. Portrait of the Knower-Doer as a Creative Artist Unbound in Kashmir Shaivism

We go back in a sense to the Panini-Bhartṛhari line of Grammatical thinking, with added phenomenological depth and ontological commitment to the dynamism of the Self who not only has the power of knowing, remembering, and separating out, but also enjoys the exercise of his power of desiring and acting. Kashmir Shaivism is the utter freedom from the cage of causality.

Building on the ancient grammarians' semantics of the autonomous agent (discussed by George Cardona in chapter 4), the Shaiva non-dualists of Kashmir—primarily Utpaladeva and his prolific commentator Abhinavagupta (tenth–eleventh centuries C.E.)—ascribe three powers to the conscious self: the power of knowledge, the power of desire, and the power of action. Each self, currently clothed in layers of past karma, is inherently capable of perfect freedom by rediscovering its identity with God (Shiva). David Peter Lawrence brings his well-proven expertise on this Trika school of thought to bear on the unique role that positive creative freedom plays in the Kashmir Shaiva concept of consciousness and the first person. It is the exercise of these powers that makes consciousness reflexively self-aware, dynamic, and playfully imaginative. Freedom is the very essence of consciousness, which can be aware of anything it chooses (*ruci*). Engaging in, as it were, a cosmic sport, consciousness first contracts itself into limited knowledge, individuated embodiment, temporal sequence, and lawlike causal regularity. But it is part of that sport to expand sponta-

neously after this contraction, rediscovering its true identity with the absolute non-dual divine consciousness. To remember, for instance, is not to be chained to a fixed past. In one place (*IPVV* II, p. 4), Abhinavagupta remarks that “the power of remembering is the ultimate freedom” of the self, because to remember is to feel free to connect back with the synthetic unity of universal consciousness. Not only do I relish my own freedom in the self-conscious movements of memory and imagination, but in communicative practice I also rely on *your* freedom—you being my own *other-ed* consciousness.

The basic freedom of a vibrant, dynamic, agentic I-consciousness is the freedom to add to or subtract from an earlier experience at the time of recollection. It is a thorough idealist monism where each knower is a creative artist. There is no thinking without doing and playing. All addressing of others turns out to be self-addressing by a playfully self-othering consciousness. Abhinavagupta’s analysis of freedom was used in all subsequent Sanskrit poetics to portray aesthetic imagination as free from the constraint of natural causal laws (*niyati-kṛta-niyama-rahitā*). It is a fascinating lexical fact that the same Sanskrit word *vimarśa*, which is used in Nyāya to mean doubt, is used in Kashmir Shaivism to mean that self-conscious, self-articulating aspect of consciousness that makes it free. This seems to support my hunch that the “or” of doubt and the “or” of freedom that it grounds are at bottom connected.

14. K. C. Bhattacharya on Subject as Freedom (Not of the Will)

I promised to end this review essay by speaking about K. C. Bhattacharya’s concept of freedom, which the volume under review omits because it is part of modern rather than classical Indian philosophy. Written in his uniquely analytic yet phenomenologically meditative style, without any reference to any previous Indian or Western philosopher, K. C. Bhattacharya’s original work *The Subject as Freedom* (1930) takes the subject to be an unmeant meaner.¹⁸ The subject is that which “intends by the word I . . . without being referred to by it.” To discover this self, the phenomenological analyst passes through successive inward stages: bodily, psychological, and spiritual subjectivity. In each subsequent rung, freedom lies in the feeling that I can exist independently of the previous level of subjectivity. In bodily subjectivity, I identify with my active inner felt body through my freedom from all perceived objects (including my externally perceived body). In psychological subjectivity, as the introspected flow of ideas and feelings, the self is isolable from even this felt body.

Going beyond introspection, at the highest level of spiritual subjectivity, the subject finds freedom even from this felt need to distinguish itself. Such a subject, like the Advaita Vedānta Ātman, which is not conscious but consciousness itself, is not an individual ego or a spiritual substance free from embodiment or feelings; it is freedom itself. In other contexts, for example in his profoundly original paper “Reality of the Future,” and in his commentaries on classical Sāṃkhya and Yoga philosophies, Bhattacharya has discussed the nature of positive freedom to enact something in the future, and negative freedom in the sense of *mukti* (liberation). But the above-mentioned densely argued concept of the subject, not merely as free but as *freedom*

per se, is still waiting to be critically analyzed as a third dimension of freedom distinct from freedom from and freedom to. Instead of the feeling “I could have done otherwise,” this third sense of freedom consists in the feeling “I might not have been x,” and ultimately in freedom even from *that* feeling.

One hopes that in the second edition of this “must-read” collection of essays Dasti and Bryant will include a critical exposition of K. C. Bhattacharya’s notoriously difficult but scintillatingly original work *Subject as Freedom*. I chose the title of this review essay partly to arouse the readers’ appetite for that fascinating notion, developed in twentieth-century Indian philosophy.

If and when, inspired by this exemplary anthology, contemporary researchers of Chinese philosophy bring out a similar volume on freedom, free will, and agency in Chinese philosophy, one hopes they will not confine themselves to ancient and medieval texts and sources only but also include samples of the stance by modern Chinese philosophers on metaphysical and political freedom and the will.

Notes

- 1 – Karl Potter, “Pre-existence,” in P. T. Raju and Alburey Castell, eds., *East-West Studies on the Problem of the Self* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), p. 193.
- 2 – Kai Marchal and Christian Helmut Wenzel, “Chinese Perspectives on Free Will,” in *The Routledge Companion to Free Will*, ed. Kevin Timpe, Meghan Griffith, and Neil Levy (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 374.
- 3 – *Self and Deception: A Cross-Cultural Philosophical Enquiry*, ed. Roger T. Ames and Wimal Dissanayake (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 219.
- 4 – *Xunzi: The Complete Text*, trans. with introd. by Eric L. Hutton (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 229.
- 5 – Henry Rosemont Jr. and Roger T. Ames, *Confucian Role Ethics: A Moral Vision for the 21st Century?* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2016), p. 110.
- 6 – Arindam Chakrabarti and Ralph Weber, eds., *Comparative Philosophy without Borders* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).
- 7 – Franklin Perkins, *Heaven and Earth Are Not Humane: The Problem of Evil in Classical Chinese Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), p. 108.
- 8 – Ibid.
- 9 – Ibid.
- 10 – Aristotle, *The Nichomachean Ethics*, trans. David Rose, rev. with introd. and notes by Lesley Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 41–42.
- 11 – Quotations from the *Bhagavad Gītā* in this paragraph are taken from Timpe, Griffith, and Levy, *The Routledge Companion to Free Will*.

- 12 – Daniel Raveh, *Sūtras, Stories and Yoga Philosophy: Narrative and Transfiguration* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 80.
- 13 – Charles Goodman, “Resentment and Reality: Buddhism on Moral Responsibility,” *American Philosophical Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (October 2002).
- 14 – *Buddhist Perspectives on Free Will: Agentless Agency?* ed. Rick Repetti (New York: Routledge, 2017).
- 15 – See the following website for all the texts that show the Buddha, going against contemporary fatalists and materialist determinists, endorsing human ability to initiate actions: www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an06/an06.038.niza.html.
- 16 – E.g., Karl Potter, “Freedom and Determinism from an Indian Perspective,” *Philosophy East and West* 17, nos. 1–4 (1967): 113–124.
- 17 – See, Allen Ollett, “What is Bhāvanā?” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 41, no. 3 (June 2013): 221–262.
- 18 – K. C. Bhattacharya, *Search for the Absolute in Neo-Vedanta*, ed. with introd. George Bosworth Burch (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1976).