An Inquiry into the Definition of *tarka* in Nyāya Tradition and Its Connotation of Negative Speculation

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Abstract　The technical term ''*tarka*'' in the Nyāya tradition is the object of the present investigation. Diverse texts including Buddhist ones exhibit a negative estimation of activities using *tarka*. In contrast, more often than not, later treatises dealing with logico-epistemic problems, especially certain Naiyāyika works, identify the methodological peculiarity of Nyāya with *tarka*. Such an ambivalent attitude toward *tarka* can be understood in a coherent way if the essential features of *tarka* that gave rise to it can be grasped. Starting from the *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.40 and the explanation given in the *Nyāyabhāṣya* on it, the present researcher sorted out three characteristic features of *tarka* in the early Nyāya tradition. These three features focus on the main feature of *tarka*: namely, reflective analysis without requiring further factual information on the object of investigation. Based on this, the present researcher critically reviewed what promoted an understanding of *tarka* as a *reductio ad absurdum* argument or an *a priori* reasoning. Furthermore, certain passages from the *Nyāyamañjarī*, *Nyāyakalikā*, and *Tarkasaṅgraha* were examined to demonstrate that the present researcher's interpretative understanding of *tarka* was adequate for explaining the usage of this term in a broad sense, with positive connotations.

Keywords　*Tarka* · *Tarkin* · *Vibhāga* · Nyāya

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Tarka

'*Tarka*' is a technical term that occupies a significant position in the logico-episte-mological traditions in India. The exact technical meaning of it, however, especially in the early Nyāya tradition, remains unclear. A widespread negative attitude towards reasoning associates with it the blind tendency to rely exclusively on human intel-ligence and argumentation. Indeed, more often than not the unbridled trust connoted by the term '*tarka*' is felt to be dangerous.[1] The Buddhist tradition is no exception in its harbouring such an outlook.[2] In the *Brahmajālasutta*, for instance, we find a negative evaluation of those who practise *tarka* (*tarkin*, Pāli: *takkin*). By contrast, some later Naiyāyika authors use this term in an obviously positive sense to represent their own tradition. Two good examples are the *Tarkasaṅgraha* of Annambhaṭṭa and the *Tarkabhāṣā* of Keśavamiśra. Even a later Buddhist author, Mokṣākaragupta, and a Jaina author, Yaśovijaya, have chosen the title *Tarkabhāṣā* for their short intro-ductory works on the philosophy of their own traditions.[3]

The term itself has a complex history of development, which I shall not try to delineate within the limited scope of this paper. What I do hope to show is that there may be a core meaning to this term—despite its observable ambiguity—in the *Nyāyasūtra* (= *NS*) and the *Nyāyabhāṣya* (= *NBh*), and other relevant texts in the early Indian debate traditions. If a core meaning of '*tarka*' can be identified, one which shines through the divergent usages, it may be possible to gain some insight into why the term has become loaded with negative connotations but at the same time could be understood as the representative method of the Nyāya tradition by some later Naiyāyika-s.

Such historical clarification is urgently needed as a counterbalance to discussions that lack any serious consideration of textual material and ignore the historical backdrop against which the concrete meaning of this technical term in Indian philosophy must be viewed in order to be understood. In cases where the basic research into the history of Indian philosophy has still to be done (and such is the case with *tarka* in my estimation), there is a tendency to fill this lack with pseudo-logical methods, seemingly using the terminology of modern logical and established philosophical concepts properly, but in incongruous contexts—owing to ignorance of the complexity of the given topics in both Indian and Western philosophy.[4]

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[1] Halbfass (1988, pp. 279–280).

[2] Cf. *DN* I, 16 and *MN* I, 520 and Halbfass (1988, p. 279).

[3] Mokṣākaragupta lived probably between 1050 and 1292, and only one single treatise by him is known; see Steinkellner and Much (1995, p. 106). I have found no passage dealing with the term '*tarka*' in this Buddhist work. The Jain treatise with the same title, *Tarkabhāṣā*, composed by Yaśovijaya (seventeenth to eighteenth century) was not available to me. In these two introductory works, the authors seem to consider *tarka* not as a well-defined method of argumentation or deliberation, but rather as a generally applicable type of human intellectual activity not bound up with the Nyāya tradition.

[4] Bharadwaja (1981a, pp. 533–534; 545 and 1981b, p. 504, n. 14), for example, seems unable to differentiate early Nyāya from Navya-Nyāya traditions, or to tackle the harder question of whom or what he means by "Nyāya thinkers," "Nyāya logicians" and "Nyāya literature." He has said in Bharadwaja (1981a, p. 532), that "... there are at least three features of tarka which each one of the Nyaya thinkers seems to have subscribed to: ..." and in (1981b, p. 501): "This possibility is considerable in the context of a philosophical discussion on the concept of tarka, for the word lacks any one generally agreed-upon usage, and it defies all attempts to translate it correctly into English."

Tarka in the *Nyāyasūtra* and *Nyāyabhāṣya*

In *NS* 1.1.40 we can find an explanation of *tarka*:

> *avijñātatattve 'rthe kāraṇopapattitas tattvajñānārtham ūhas tarkaḥ*
>
> Deliberation is [a type of] reflection in which reasons are given [for assumptions] regarding an object whose [true] nature is not known in order to obtain knowledge of its [true] nature.

Ruben seems to take the main purpose of *ūha* in this *sūtra* as being expressed by *kāraṇopapattitas*:

> "Überlegung" ist die Prüfung in Bezug auf einen Gegenstand, dessen Wesenheit [bislang] nicht erkannt ist, eben zum Zweck der Erkenntnis [seiner] Wesenheit unter dem Gesichtspunkt, ob dieser oder jener Grund zutrifft.[5]

Ruben apparently reads the suffix °*tas* in its locative sense.[6] To better understand the meaning of this *sūtra*, we can consult a passage from *NBh* 1.1.1, in the general introduction, where *tarka* is explained:

> *tarko na pramāṇasaṅgṛhīto na pramāṇāntaram. pramāṇānām anugrāhakas tattvajñānāya kalpate.*
>
> *tasyodāharaṇam:* "*kim idaṃ janma kṛtakena hetunā nirvartyate, āho svid akṛtakena, athākasmikam*[7] "*ity evam avijñātatattve 'rthe kāraṇopapattyā ūhaḥ pravartate.*[8]
>
> . . .
>
> *etasmiṃś ca*[9] *tarkaviṣaye* "*karmanimittaṃ janma*" *iti pramāṇāni pravartamānāni tarkeṇānugṛhyante. tattvajñānaviṣayasya ca*[10] *vibhāgāt tattvajñānāya kalpate tarka iti. so 'yam itthambhūtas tarkaḥ pramāṇasahito*

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[5] Ruben (1928, p. 13).

[6] Nakamura (1983, p. 196) seems to follow this translation.

[7] *NBh*[T]: *utākasmikam.*

   In the following I consider and record mainly cases where the three most important manuscripts of the *NBh* (*NBh*[J1], *NBh*[J2] and *NBh*[T]) are strongly indicative of a reading substantially diverging from the *textus receptus*. On the manuscripts mentioned, see n. 19 below. In any case, the notation of variant readings will not be a complete and systematic one. My choices are rather arbitrary and sporadic.

[8] *NBh*[T]: om. *evam avijñātatattve . . . ūhaḥ pravartate.*

[9] *NBh*[J1], *NBh*[J2] and *NBh*[T]: *ca.*

[10] *Textus receptus*: om. *ca.*

vāde sādhanāyopālambhāya cārthasya bhavatīti[11] *pṛthag ucyate prameye
'ntarbhūto*[12] *'pīti.*[13]

Tarka is not included among the means of valid cognition, nor is it a distinct
means of valid cognition. [But] since it supports the means of valid cognition,
it conduces to knowledge of the [true] nature.

An example of this: "Is rebirth brought forth by a created cause or perhaps by
an uncreated one, or is rebirth not caused [at all]?" In this way reflection
proceeds by furnishing persuasive reasons [for assumptions] regarding an
object whose [true] nature is not known.

...

Regarding this object of deliberation, when the means of valid cognition are
applied, they are supported by deliberation [in order to come to the conclusion
that], "Deeds are the instrumental cause of rebirth." And the deliberation is
conducive to knowledge of [true] nature, on the basis of distinctions made
[regarding] the object of knowledge whose true nature [is sought]. This same
kind of deliberation entails the proof or refutation of [some proposition about]
an object [examined] discursively in tandem with [some] means of valid
cognition, [as explained in *NS* 1.2.1].[14] [For this reason] it is mentioned
separately, although it is included under the [heading of] what is to be proved
[by means] of valid cognition.

In the following I will discuss the meaning of '*tarka*' in the *NBh* in terms of three
important features of it identified by Vātsyāyana: *kāraṇopapatti*, *avijñātatattve
'rthe* and *vibhāga*.

Kāraṇopapatti

The passage in the *NBh* "*evam avijñātatattve 'rthe kāraṇopapattyā ūhaḥ pravar-
tate*" following the one example of *tarka* (*tasyodāharaṇam:* "*kim idaṃ janma
kṛtakena hetunā nirvartyate, āho svid akṛtakena, athākasmikam*" *ity*) calls
for special attention. In this passage *kāraṇopapattyā* is in the instrumental case,
indicating that *ūhaḥ* proceeds by furnishing persuasive reasons (*kāraṇopapattyā*).

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[11] *Textus receptus*: *bhavatīty evam artham*; *NBh*[J1], *NBh*[J2] and *NBh*[T]: *bhavatīti*.

[12] *NBh*[J1] reads *prameye ntarbhūto*, and *NBh*[J2] reads *prameye n*(?)*tarbhūto*. The *textus receptus* reads
prameyāntarbhūto. But *NBh*[T] seems to testify the reading *pramāṇāntarbhūto hi*(? confirmed by a
Devanāgarī transcription in Chennai) *pramāṇasahitopādeyavad iṣṭa iti*. The reading *pramāṇāntarbhūta*
conflicts with the stance of Vātsyāyana and would involve very serious theoretical consequences. In the
passages of the *NBh* explaining *nirṇaya* we find the passage *so 'yaṃ nirṇayaḥ prameyāntarbhūta evam
arthaṃ pṛthag uddiṣṭa iti* (in *NBh*(E_D), p. 5, 8), with *NBh*[J1] and *NBh*[J2] displaying the compound form, and
NBh[T] resorting to the locative case. The formulation with the locative case is frequently used. At the
beginning of the *NBh* there are two similar passages: one in the passage on *saṃśaya*; *sa ca prameye
'ntarbhūto prthag ucyata iti* (*NBh*(E_D), p. 3, 7–8), and one in the passage on *avayava*-s;
te caite 'vayavāḥ śabdaviśeṣāḥ santaḥ prameye 'ntarbhūtā evam arthaṃ pṛthag ucyanta iti (*NBh*(E_D),
p. 4, 17–18). In both passages the *textus receptus*, *NBh*[J1], *NBh*[J2] and *NBh*[T] all have the locative case.

[13] *NBh*(E_D), pp. 4, 19–5, 6 ad *NS*1.1.1. *NBh*[J1] fol.2r15-2v5, *NBh*[J2] fol.282v7-283r1 and *NBh*[T]
fol.2v4-9.

[14] The reader should note here the allusion to *NS* 1.2.1.

This sentence suggests that the following consideration of three possibilities, each backed by reasons, means that *tarka*, too, proceeds by furnishing persuasive reasons (*kāraṇopapattyā*).[15] According to this interpretation, the "*kāraṇopapatti*" in *NS* 1.1.40 refers to the reasons furnished for each possibility.[16] Provided that this interpretation is justified, the passage "*evam avijñātatattve 'rthe kāraṇopapattyā ūhaḥ pravartate*" implies that *ūha*, taken as the content of *tarka*, is generated by consideration of the reasons postulated for each possibility. This means in practical terms, first, that the reason for each assumption is, at least epistemologically, furnished before the *tarka* process begins, and, secondly, that the reasons (*kāraṇa*) relating to any concrete case are considered only after dealing with hypothetical cases. In this way we come to understand Jha's translation for '*tarka*' as 'hypothetical reasoning'.[17]

Interestingly enough, the significant passage "*evam avijñātatattve 'rthe kāraṇopapattyā ūhaḥ pravartate*" is omitted in manuscript *NBh*[T].[18] Perhaps this passage was inserted between the examples of *tarka* with a slightly revised wording of *NS* 1.1.40 to make the interpretation given in the *NBh* more straightforward. If this is the case, this insertion likely took place in the earliest phase of the text transmission of the *NBh*, before the hypothesized divergence of *NBh*[T] from *NBh*[J] and the *textus receptus*.[19]

Avijñātatattve 'rthe

The initial state of affairs is that the true nature (*tattva*) of the object to be investigated is not known in full. Here, *tattva* does not mean the truth in the sense of "unitary essence, " but rather "suchness" (which is close to the literal meaning of the word) or "the condition that allows for valid representation [of the object] in

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[15] The last part of *NBh* 1.1.40 cited below supports this interpretation. I prefer the above translation to 'possibility' for '*upapatti*'. If one of the alternative possibilities is considered merely on the basis of some supporting reason, this reason is not a viable one within the framework of a *tarka*. It would be a viable reason only in the sense that it is not verbally formulated in a supporting argument (*parārthānumāna*)—a distinction not made in the *NS*. Accepting the difference formulated by Diṅnāga would run a high risk of being anachronistic.

[16] The mere possibility of some postulated reason will not in itself set a weighing of alternative possibilities in motion.

[17] Jhā (1912–1919, p. 446).

[18] *NBh*[T], fol.2v5.

[19] Any fruitful discussion of passages from the *NBh* requires some consideration of the transmission of the text of the *NBh*. The *NBh* text reproduced in numerous editions and preserved in the majority of the manuscripts and editions of the sub-commentaries on the *NBh* represents the line of the textual transmission I designate *textus receptus*. On the manuscript transmission of the *NBh* in general, see Muroya (2006a), and on the relation between the *textus receptus* and later commentaries see Muroya (2006b). During the process of collecting and evaluating all the available manuscript material for the new critical edition of the *NBh* mentioned in the acknowledgements below, we soon became aware that the manuscripts *NBh*[J1] and *NBh*[J2] from Jaisalmer and *NBh*[T] from Trivandrum are very close to the archetype of the *NBh*, in contrast to all other manuscripts, most of which go to form the *textus receptus*. On the basis of dates given in manuscripts bound in the same bundles with *NBh*[J1] and *NBh*[J2], we can estimate the date of *NBh*[J1] as *saṃvat* 1501 (~1444 A.D.) and that of the *NBh*[J2] as "*saṃvat* 1279 *bhādrapada vadi* 13 *likhitam*" (~5th September 1222 A.D.). *NBh*[J2] is at present the oldest dated manuscript and very probably the oldest available manuscript of the *NBh*.

thought and speech,'' in the epistemological context of Nyāya.[20] Since the object of *tarka* is not fully known in detail, the given representation can be neither completely confirmed nor disproved; this is a necessary precondition for the application of *tarka*. The expression ''*tattvajñānārtham ūhas*'' in *NS* 1.1.40 implies that *tarka* aims at a cognition or representation corresponding fully with the object. In this context the last part of *NBh* 1.1.40, where Vātsyāyana explains the meaning of ''*tattvajñānārtham ūhas*,'' is very significant for our discussion:

> *katham punar ayam tattvajñānārtho na tattvajñānam eveti.*
>
> *anavadhāraṇāt. anujānāty ayam ekataram dharmam kāraṇopapattyā na tv avadhārayati na vyavasyati na niścinoty evam evedam iti. katham tat-tvajñānārtha iti.*
>
> *tattvajñānaviṣayābhyanujñālakṣaṇād ūhād bhāvitāt prasannād anantaram pramāṇasāmarthyāt tattvajñānam utpadyata iti.*[21]
>
> *so 'yam tarkaḥ pramāṇāni pratisandadhānaḥ pramāṇānugrahād*[22] *vāde pramāṇasahita upadiṣṭa*[23] *iti.* ''*avijñātatattve 'rthe*'' *iti yathā so 'rtho bhavati sa tasya*[24] *tathābhāvas tattvam aviparyayo yāthātathyam iti.*[25,26]

Why then is [*tarka* explained in *NS* 1.1.40 as [something engaged in] ''in order to obtain knowledge of [an object's true] nature'' and not as ''knowledge of the [true] nature [itself]''? On account of undecidability. *Tarka* [in] this [understanding of it] accepts one of two qualities on the basis of a given reason, but does not decide, determine or ascertain [anything] in the form ''This is such [and not otherwise]. Why [then] is it told ''in order to obtain knowledge of the [true] nature''? The means of valid cognition being what it is, knowledge of [an object's true] nature follows directly from [a type of] reflection (*ūha*) characterised by [its resulting in some] distinction being admitted concerning the object knowledge of whose [true] nature [is being sought].

This [understanding of] *tarka* enhances the means of valid cognition, for it accepts [what] the means of valid cognition [yields], and therefore, [in *NS* 1.2.1,] it is accounted on a par with the means of valid cognition in debate. ''Regarding an object whose [true] nature is not known'' refers to something of such and such a nature that does not deviate from its [true] nature—[in other words displays] a correspondence with this nature.

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[20] Halbfass (1992, p. 167, n. 115):

See *NBh* I, 1, 1 (Calc. S. S., p. 24): *kim punas tattvam? sataś ca sadbhāvo 'sataś ca-asadbhāvaḥ. Tattva* in this sense is the condition of the possibility of valid representation in thought and speech, and it indicates a fundamentally epistemological perspective on being.

See also the last sentence in the cited passage from *NBh* 1.1.40 below: *so 'rtho bhavati sa tasya tathābhāvas tattvam aviparyayo yāthātathyam.*

[21] *Textus receptus: ity evam tattvajñānārtha iti. NBh*[J1], *NBh*[J2] and *NBh*[T]: *iti.*

[22] *NBh*[J1], *NBh*[J2] and *NBh*[T]: *pramāṇānugrahād; textus receptus: pramāṇābhyanujñānāt.*

[23] *Textus receptus: pramāṇasahito vāde 'padiṣṭa; NBh*[J1], *NBh*[J2] and *NBh*[T]: *vāde pramāṇasahita upadiṣṭa.*

[24] *Textus receptus: tasya; NBh*[J1], *NBh*[J2] and *NBh*[T]: *sa tasya.*

[25] *Textus receptus: om. iti; NBh*[J1], *NBh*[J2] and *NBh*[T]: *yāthātathyam iti.*

[26] *NBh(E_D)*, p. 37, 3–9; *NBh*[J1], fol.9r8-11; *NBh*[J2] fol.292r4-7; *NBh*[T] fol.14r1-4.

The explanations given in *NBh* 1.1.40 for the most part agree with those given in the introductory part of the *NBh*, even if small differences are observable. Still, further detailed study and interpretation of the text are required.

Contrary or Contradictory

To advance the discussion we now examine the explanation given in *NBh* 1.1.40:

> *avijñāyamānatattve 'rthe jijñāsā tāvat pravarttate*[27] "*jānīyedam*[28] *artham*[29]" *iti. atha jijñāsitasya vastuno vyāhatau dharmau vibhāgena vimṛśati* "*kiṃ svid idam*[30] *āho svin nettham*" *iti.*

> *vimṛśyamānayor dharmayor ekataraṃ kāraṇopapattyānujānāti,* "*sambhavaty asmin kāraṇaṃ pramāṇaṃ hetur.*" *iti.* "*kāraṇopapattyā syād evam etan netarad.*" *iti.*[31]

> Regarding an object whose [true] nature is not known, therefore, there becomes the desire to know active: "I would like to know this object." Then the consideration in the form "Is this so or rather is it not so?" occurs, with a distinction being made between two [possible] contrary qualities of the object one desires to know.

> One of the two qualities considered is accepted for the given reason [in the form,] "There is reason [to incline towards] this [quality]—[in other words,] a means of valid cognition or a cause." "On the basis of the given reason this [object] ought to be so and not otherwise."

The example of *tarka* given in *NBh* 1.1.40 is remarkably different from the one given in *NBh* 1.1.1. The example of *tarka* in *NBh* 1.1.40 represents an *ūha* relating to two mutually exclusive possibilities; that is, there are no other logical possibilities. This, however, does not seem to be the case in the example found in *NBh* 1.1.1. The question, though, is not which of the two is the more compelling. The example given in *NBh* 1.1.1 is a case involving the choice not among three contrary alternatives, but between only two alternatives, one of which breaks down into two contradictory sub-alternatives. Understood in this way, *ūha* in *NBh* 1.1.1 and 1.1.40 in the context of *tarka* announces two contradictory possibilities, which may unfold a further complex structure out of the contradictory alternatives. In any case, it seems to me reasonable to accept that the examples given in the *NBh* for *tarka* are idealized cases, for it would be senseless to confine the scope of *tarka* to cases entailing contradictory alternatives. But this point needs to be considered in close connection with the usage of the term '*jijñāsā*' in *NBh* 1.1.40.

In *NBh* 1.1.40, unlike in *NBh* 1.1.1, the explanation of *tarka* makes use of the term '*jijñāsā*'. This term is generally associated with a situation in which a decision

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[27] *Textus receptus*: *jāyate*; *NBh*[J1], *NBh*[J2] and *NBh*[T]: *pravarttate.*

[28] *NBh*[J1], *NBh*[J2] and *NBh*[T]: *jānīyedam*; *textus receptus*: *jānīyemam.*

[29] *NBh*[J1], *NBh*[J2]: om. *artham*; *NBh*[T]: *ittham.*

[30] *NBh*[J1], *NBh*[J2] and *NBh*[T]: *idam*; *textus receptus*: *ittham.*

[31] *NBh*(E[D]), p. 36, 6–9; *NBh*[J1] fol.9r2-3; *NBh*[J2] fol.291v8-9; *NBh*[T] fol.13v4-6.

is called for, inasmuch as the given possibilities exclude each other.[32] Here *jijñāsā* implies that the investigation has been forced by circumstances and is indeed carried out. The fact that *jijñāsā* is involved in the example given in *NBh* 1.1.40 may imply that *tarka* there was understood by Vātsyāyana as a deliberation between contradictory alternatives in its typical form. Provided this interpretation of *jijñāsā* is right in the context of *tarka*, *vibhāga* can be understood, in its basic meaning at least, as the act of differentiating: the *tarkin* (the one who engages in practising *tarka*) associates one quality with the object of cognition and weighs two contradictory possibilities corresponding to the quality.

Vibhāga

In the two passages *NBh* 1.1.1 and 1.1.40 we observe the explicit formulation that *vibhāga* is a procedure used under *tarka* to enhance *tattvajñāna*: *etasmiṃś ca tark-aviṣaye* "*karmanimittaṃ janma*" *iti pramāṇāni pravartamānāni tarkeṇānug-ṛhyante. tattvajñānaviṣayasya ca vibhāgāt tattvajñānāya kalpate tarka iti*[33] (*NBh*1.1.1); and *atha jijñāsitasya vastuno vyāhatau dharmau vibhāgena vimṛśati* "*kiṃ svid idam āho svin nettham*" *iti*[34] (*NBh*1.1.40). This is an important point, one that, as far as I know, has been generally overlooked by scholars.[35] *Tarka* is a means of sizing up a certain state of affairs: all the given factual or logical possibilities are differentiated, and the logical and theoretical implications of them are drawn. It is not explicitly stated in the *NBh* that the deliberations under the *vibhāga* are part of the *tarka* itself, but the formulation there suggests as much. If the weighing of the given possibilities involves not only logical but also epistemological considerations, the means of valid cognition (*pramāṇa*) can be introduced into *tarka*. The following passage from *NBh* 1.1.40 provides some clarity as to the intricate nature of the whole procedure set forth in the *NBh*:

> *vimṛśyamānayor dharmayor ekataraṃ kāraṇopapattyānujānāti,* "*sam-bhavaty asmin kāraṇaṃ pramāṇaṃ hetur.*" *iti.* "*kāraṇopapattyā syād evam etan netarad.*" *iti.*[36]

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[32] *NBh* 1.2.7 is another passage where *jijñāsā* is used not in the sense of 'desire to know' but in that of 'unavoidable consideration', in other words, 'unavoidable choice [between]' two contradictory possibilities: *NBh* 1.2.7 in *NBh(E$_D$)*, p. 44, 6–8:

vimarśādhiṣṭhānau pakṣapratipakṣāv ubhāv anavasitau prakaraṇam. tasya cintā vimarśāt prabhṛti prāṅ nirṇayād yat samīkṣaṇam, sā jijñāsā yatkṛtā sa nirṇayārthaṃ prayukta ubhay-apakṣasāmyāt prakaraṇam anativartamānaḥ prakaraṇasamo nirṇayāya na prakalpate.

'Topic' (*prakaraṇa*) [in *sūtra* 1.2.7] refers to both, namely the position and the counter-position, which have been set forth for deliberation upon but not yet judged. The thought (*cintā*) devoted to this [topic], that is, the investigation that [proceeds] from deliberation to ascertainment, represents a wish to know [the truth]. The thought of which the deliberation consists is directed towards achieving ascertainment, but is not successful in bringing about ascertainment, for it cannot rise above the topic, given the commonality of the two positions [as topics].

[33] *NBh(E$_D$)*, p. 5, 3–4.

[34] *NBh(E$_D$)*, p. 36, 6–8.

[35] The translations given in *TSI* vol. 2, p. 114a and Jha (1912–1919), p. 447 miss this point.

[36] *NBh(E$_D$)*, p. 36, 8–9.

One of the two qualities considered is accepted for the given reason [in the form,] "There is reason [to incline towards] this [quality]—[in other words,] a means of valid cognition or a cause." "On the basis of the given reason this [object] ought to be so and not otherwise."

If such is the case, how can one demarcate the boundary between *tarka* and *pramāṇa* (or some other epistemological or dialectical methodology)? I suggest an interpretation of *NBh* 1.1.40 under which the main characteristic of *tarka*, as understood by Vātsyāyana, consists in the differentiating or analyzing procedure (*vibhāga*) itself. The decision as to what combination of possibilities should be accepted for further consideration should be made on the basis of the reasons used to justify each possibility. To be sure, further logical reasons or new information can always be considered if the matter at hand admits of them. But in any case, the division into alternative possibilities should be carried out at the beginning, as part of the *tarka*. This analytic work need not wait upon additional factual information; indeed, it represents a coming to terms with the readily available information. This, in my opinion, defines the essence of the *tarka*.

A priori

The above-mentioned characterization of *tarka* given by Vātsyāyana is ambiguous enough to force readers to puzzle over its exact meaning. The explanation given in the *Nyāyavārttika* (= *NV*) adds nothing essential to what is offered in the *NBh*. This is a case where the meaning of a term is not immediately transparent. The reason for this blurred conceptual demarcation of *tarka* from other technical terms given in the *NS* is the historical circumstance that the editor(s) of the *NS* simply adopted unaltered the terms as they were generally accepted in the early debate traditions in ancient India. An additional circumstance hindering the interpretation of *tarka* is that although almost all technical terms in *NS* 1.1.1 are mentioned or explained (more often than not in variant forms) in other texts documenting the early debate traditions in ancient India (e.g. the Vādamārgapada section of the *Carakasaṃhitā* in *CaS* Vi. 8.27–66 or 方便心論 (= *Upāyahṛdaya*)), '*tarka*' is a term which is neither mentioned by name nor otherwise alluded to.[37] In view of this, the explanation given in the *NBh* takes on greater importance. The important task for us is to clarify what is intended by the explanation of *tarka* given in the *NS* and *NBh*, so as to be able to understand later developments in the Naiyāyika and related traditions. Without any doubt, *vibhāga* was a term used by Vātsyāyana to mean analyzing the conceptual content of a *tarka*. I do not insist that the original meaning of *tarka* can only be understood and explained on the basis of this concept. But this latter occurs in the earliest available commentary on the *NS*, which occupies a

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[37] This does not mean that *tarka* was generally unknown to or considered unimportant by other debate traditions in ancient India than the one attested to in the *NS*; confer n. 38 below. This seems to me to imply that it was its unstable meaning and status that led to the exclusion of *tarka* from the list of important terms, most of which were on their way to becoming established technical terms.

An overview of terms can be found in Kajiyama (1984, pp. 6–8). It is important to note, however, that the identicalness of terms does not imply that the same meaning is intended by them, or vice versa.

crucial place in the whole Nyāya tradition. Thus *vibhāga* as the conceptual scheme underlying a *tarka* is of considerably greater importance, at least in an historical sense, than other, later ones. We have, moreover, good reason to assume that Vātsyāyana understood *tarka* in the conventional meaning of his time and simply tried to offer an acceptable explanation of it. If that is so, his explanation affords easy access to the term, and will prove to be more than of merely minor historical value. The term '*tarka*' was not invented by Vātsyāyana, but he does offer a good conceptual grounding of the characteristic framework within which the term was used in Nyāya and other relevant traditions.[38]

In consideration of these facts, it seems to me advisable to review some concepts used by modern authors to explain *tarka*. One widespread interpretational scheme for philosophical terminology is that of Matilal. Matilal holds that *tarka* as explained in the *NS*, *NBh* and *NV* "is a reasoning based only upon some *a priori* principle, or what comes closest in the Indian tradition to something *a priori*."[39]

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[38] It should be clear that Vātsyāyana was in almost the same hermeneutical position in his time as we are at present. Concerning the broader usage of the term '*tarka*', especially in works of Śaṅkara, note the following useful remark of Halbfass (1991, pp. 134–135):

> On the side of "reason, " yukti and tarka are the most conspicuous and significant terms. Śaṅkara does not formally define these terms, nor does he use them in a strictly technical sense. He alludes to, but does not commit himself to, the technical meanings which the terms, in particular tarka, may have in other systems. In Nyāya, tarka, if used in a technical sense, is not a "means of knowledge" (*pramāṇa*) in the full sense, but rather an auxiliary method of hypothetical or circumstantial reasoning which is supposed to contribute to the elimination of doubt and to bring about some kind of conditional certainty. The definition given in *Nyāyasūtra* I, 1, 40 (*avijñātatattve 'rthe kāraṇopapattitas tattvajñānārtham ūhas tarkaḥ*) has been open to a variety of interpretations that often emphasize the negative, reductive functions of tarka, consisting in the elimination of false views rather than the establishment of truth. Although Śaṅkara must have been familiar with the Nyāya definition of tarka, other less technical uses were probably more significant to him. The word is already used, indicating various degrees of human "independence" or even of opposition to the sacred texts, in the Upaniṣads, the Mahābhārata, and other ancient texts. More specifically, Bhartrhari's usage of tarka (including the compound *śuṣkatarka* and *puruṣatarka*) seems to have had its impact upon Śaṅkara.

[39] Matilal (1998, p. 46). Earlier, in Matilal (1986, p. 79), he had formulated his understanding of *tarka* as follows:

> The next component of the Nyāya method is called '*tarka*', which takes the form of a supportive argument but unlike the previous one (scil. *avayava*-s), it is not directly based upon empirical evidence. The real nature of *tarka* (literally, 'reasoning', 'argument') has been the subject-matter of controversy among Indian philosophers throughout history. It transpired later in the history of Indian philosophy that we must understand by it some sort of a *reductio ad absurdum*, where an appeal to some absurdity or absurd consequence (*prasaṅga*) is made in order to lend an indirect support to a positive thesis. . . .
>
> . . . For whatever a *tarka* is, it is not an inference based upon some empirical evidence. It is rather an argument where we use generally the *a priori* principles only, or what may be closest to the *a priori* principles in the Indian tradition. . . .
>
> . . . This indirect reasoning, which is called *tarka* in the Nyāya method, and which I am inclined to call *a priori* reasoning, is described under *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.1 as that which is employed for the sake of the knowledge or truth but does not lead to a truth all by itself. Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara explain that it cannot impart empirical knowledge by itself for it cannot generate the required certainty. Purely *a priori* certainty is not an acceptable certainty in a properly empirical philosophy!

The term '*a priori*' is a Latin phrase that literally means 'from what is before'. The terms '*a priori*' and '*a posteriori*' (the opposite term), in philosophical usage, concern two different types of knowledge, namely ones that are respectively independent and dependent upon experience. This usage has been extended to apply to different types of arguments or other forms of justification (nowadays, for instance, even in the context of genetic research). This complex distinction has gone through numerous phases of development within the history of Western philosophy and is still open to further ones.[40] Roughly speaking, *a priori* is used in the Aristotelian tradition to denote the cognition resulting from preceding factors (πρότερον), in a much wider sense than used in Kant's philosophy. After some traces of a change in meaning in the writings of Jungius and Leibniz, the now common distinction that the origin of the cognition in question lies in pure reason (*a priori*) as opposed to experience (*a posteriori*) was established in the 18th century, especially in German-speaking countries. Kant's understanding and usage of this term in his transcendental philosophy determined its usage and meaning in the following period. The programme of Kant's transcendental philosophy—in its core part, the clarification of the possibility of cognition *a priori*—endows this term with extraordinary significance. Since the time of Kant it has generally been accepted that the distinction between *a priori* and *a posteriori* is a purely epistemological one. This means that it must not be confused with the distinction between the necessary and the contingent, which is a metaphysical one, or with that between the analytic and the synthetic, which is a semantic distinction.

In the characterization of *tarka* given in the *NBh*, it is obvious that the procedure called for by *tarka* does not rely on further perceptual or other experiential data, but it may involve expanded cognition of previously established facts. We should keep in mind that the reasons for each possibility considered within the framework of a *tarka* can be supplied by any means of valid cognition (*pramāṇa*); that is, not simply *a priori* cognition is admitted.[41] Furthermore, what is crucial is the fact that the cognition that initiates the whole procedure of *tarka* is itself a perceptually based one, albeit one that is insufficiently informative. If this initiating cognition is counted as part of a *tarka*, one will run into serious problems manoeuvring *tarka* anywhere near to *a priori*-based cognition. If we want to interpret the explanation given in the *NBh* to mean that the *tarka* is epistemologically void of all experiential cognition, then the only way to do so would be to constrict the procedure so

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[40] For a further discussion of *a priori*, confer Boghossian and Peacocke (2000), especially the introduction.

[41] Once again I allude to the passage in the *NBh(E$_D$)*, p. 36, 8–9:

vimṛśyamānayor dharmayor ekataraṃ kāraṇopapattyānujānāti, "sambhavaty asmin kāraṇaṃ pramāṇaṃ hetur." iti. "kāraṇopapattyā syād evam etan netarad." iti.

One of the two qualities considered is accepted for the given reason [in the form,] "There is reason [to incline towards] this [quality]—[in other words,] a means of valid cognition or a cause." "On the basis of the given reason this [object] ought to be so and not otherwise."

narrowly as to include the logical analysis (*vibhāga*) of the given two alternative possibilities but to exclude any cognitive method for supplying factual data that support either of the two. But in any case this does not keep the basic data underlying the *tarka* from being epistemologically grounded in experience.

Tarka and Indirect Proof

In the early debate traditions in India, the term '*tarka*' stands in a neat net of related terms with fluctuating meanings. For example, in *Carakasaṃhitā* (= *CaS*) Vi. 8.40 we find an explanation of inference (*anumāna*) in terms of '*tarka*'.[42] The examples given in the *NBh* demonstrate that the distinctions made when engaging in *tarka* are intended to clarify the whole span of logical or factual possibilities, and so to exclude a number of possibilities from consideration. Thus *tarka* is used to root out false views and, in so doing, establish the truth only in an indirect way. The question remains whether *tarka* can be distinguished from other varieties of indirect proof widely known in ancient India. An argumentative strategy that first provides all alternative possibilities and then begins eliminating them one by one as unaccept-able, until left with the last remaining possibility as the sole logical possibility applicable is what I shall designate as '*modus tollendo ponens*'. The description of *tarka* given in *NBh* cited above shows strong parallels to this paradigm.[43] Obvi-ously *tarka* is very similar to indirect argument. Indirect argumentation (this can be subdivided into theoretical and historical varieties) is commonly found in works of

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[42] *CaS* Vi. 8.40:

   athānumānam – anumānaṃ nāma tarko yuktyapekṣaḥ.
   Inference: What is called 'inference' is deliberation that meets the demands of logical and factual coherence.

'*Yukti*' in the *CaS* probably means argumentation based on implication which cannot properly be conceived as mono-causal; cf. Kang (2003, p. 112). See also n. 47 below.

[43] Readers may have noticed that I have been treating the epistemological context and the argumenta-tional one promiscuously with regard to *tarka*. Already in the *NS* the focus of interest shifted from the argumentational (*vāda*) to the epistemological (*pramāṇa*). Numerous topics mentioned in the *NS* took on new connotations or were subjected to new interpretations vis-à-vis early *vāda* traditions. Vātsyāyana faced this as his starting point for his systematic interpretation of the *NS*, and he strengthened the tendency to focus on *pramāṇa*-s and other epistemological topics in the *NBh*. But this shift happened gradually, without any considerable theoretical upheaval, and this is reflected, in my estimation, by the fact that analyses subject to epistemological constraints often display very strong parallels with those subject to logical ones. A clear conceptual demarcation between epistemological and argumentational procedures was first drawn by Diṅnāga, through his distinction between *parārthānumāna* and *svār-thānumāna*, and it made itself felt in subsequent philosophical discourse. I will not take a theoretical stance regarding this distinction. But the lack of this distinction in my reading the *NBh* is intended both to avoid an anachronism and to reflect Vātsyāyana's way of thinking more accurately.

Nāgārjuna and in both Nyāya[44] and Sāṅkhya circles.[45] There are numerous texts that report that the indirect argument occupies an important position within the debate traditions in ancient India. But the relation as it was conceived between the different kinds of indirect arguments and *tarka* cannot be assessed on the basis of our present knowledge of these complex themes. The topic of indirect argument and proof in Indian philosophical traditions requires a detailed discussion, one beyond the scope of the present discussion. What can be undertaken here is to review the understanding of *tarka* as a *reductio ad absurdum* argument.

Reductio ad absurdum means literally 'reduction to absurdity' and denotes a type of logical argument used to refute a claim by pointing out contradictory or absurd consequences from one or more of its premises. Historically it goes back to Aristotle's phrase ἡ εἰς ἄτοπον ἀπαγωγή ('reduction to the absurd'). It is used in modern symbolic logic in a rather strict sense, but in a looser one it denotes any argument which leads to a conclusion that everyone will accept as absurd. Identifying *tarka* with *reductio ad absurdum* argument is to go astray, for a *tarka* does not prove the absurdity of some given hypothesis but rather demolishes one of several alternative possibilities in order to make some other alternative more compelling. While the proposition rejected by the *reductio*—granting that *tarka* could be a *reductio* argument in the looser sense—is one of possible alternatives, it is not always the contrary of the presumption. Only in cases where only two alternative possibilities are considered in a *tarka*, and these two have mutually contradictory truth values, could we interpret *tarka* as a *reductio* argument. The distinguishing features are that, first, *tarka* can be applied to alternative possibilities which do not logically exclude each other, and that, secondly, the given alternative possibilities are considered with their justifying or falsifying reasons for each on its own merits—something that would have no place in the analytic scheme of *tarka* as a *reductio* argument. Thus it is plausible enough to assume that the *tarka* was not originally intended to weigh two contradictory alternatives, even though the

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[44] Oberhammer (1963) has already noticed this point in pp. 91–92:

> Eine Definition des *tarkaḥ* begegnet erstmalig in den Nyāyasūtren: *avijñātatattve 'rthe kāraṇopapattitas tattvajñānārtham ūhas tarkaḥ*. Eine ausführliche Deutung dieses Sūtram finden wir bei Pakṣilasvāmin; dabei ist bemerkenswert, daß bei ihm zwischen der Deutung des *tarkaḥ* und jener der fünf zusätzlichen Beweisglieder eine überraschende Übereinstimmung besteht: *avijñāyamānatve 'rthe jijñāsā tāvaj jāyate ... evam etan netarad iti*. Die Gliederung des *tarkaḥ* besteht daher in *jijñāsā* und *vimarśaḥ*, welcher von Pakṣilasvāmin auch als *saṃśayaḥ* wiedergegeben wird, sowie der *kāraṇopapattiḥ*, wobei *kāraṇam* hier von Pakṣilasvāmin wohl im Gegensatz zu den Sūtren als *pramāṇāni* gedeutet wird, und schließlich dem Feststellen, daß etwas so und nicht anders ist.

What Oberhammer calls "die fünf zusätzlichen Beweisglieder" is the five parts of argumentation not included in the *pañcāvayava*-s (or rather, to be exact, *pañca bhāgāḥ*, as recorded in *NBh*[J1], *NBh*[J2] and *NBh*[T] in contrast to the *textus receptus* reading *pañcāvayavāḥ* printed in *NBh(E_D)*, p. 4, 13–14) in *NBh*. They display a strong parallelism with other topics explained in relevant texts, for example in the *Yuktidīpikā* (= *YD*) and the *CaS*; cf. Kang (2006, pp. 159–160). In the *Yuktidīpikā* we find explanations of these 'additional five members' associated with the *pañcāvayava*-s shortly after the explanation of indirect proof, but the text does not explicitly relate them to indirect proof. See *YD*, p. 89 and Oberhammer (1963, p. 92).

[45] For example, the *Ṣaṣṭitantra*, which belongs to the Sāṅkhya tradition, describes it. Frauwallner reconstructed the Sanskrit text in Frauwallner (1958, p. 125); a translation is provided on pp. 128–129.

examples given in the *NBh* seem to indicate that it was. The choice of examples in the *NBh* was intended, in my view, to illustrate an ideal type of *tarka* argument. Generally, the term '*prasaṅga*' is used in the history of Indian philosophy in a way very near to a *reductio* argument in the strict sense: to denote an argument that undermines an assumption taken for granted by demonstrating the absurd consequences it leads to. Considering all these essential differences, Matilal's equation of *tarka* and *prasaṅga* simply overshoots the mark.[46]

A separate attempt to track back the meaning of *tarka* in association with the term '*ūha*' in *NS* 1.1.40 is not much more promising. '*Ūha*' is also a word with a wide range of meanings. In Pūrvamīmāṃsā, '*ūha*' is used in the meaning 'the modifications of ritual detail accepted on the basis of estimation'. Often '*ūha*' is used as a synonym of '*yukti*'.[47] But the occurrence of '*ūha*' in *NS* 1.140 does not imply that the use of terms like '*tarka*' was influenced by Sāṅkhya circles concerned with the *tantrayukti*.[48]

Tarka in the *Nyāyamañjarī* and *Nyāyakalikā*

As a representative text of later Naiyāyika treatises, I will take the passage on *tarka* in Jayanta Bhaṭṭa's *opus magnum*, the *Nyāyamañjarī* (= *NM*). The *NM* is worth considering not only on account of its significant position in later Nyāya tradition, but also because it is a rather independent treatise, reorganizing as it does topics dealt with in the *NS* in a way quite untypical of commentaries. In the *NM* we find somewhat different elucidations of a number of characteristics of *tarka* from those found in the *NBh*, but interestingly enough, some essential features of *tarka* noted in the *NBh* are otherwise retained.

> *avayavānantaraṃ prathamasūtre tarkasyoddeśāt uddeśānukrameṇa tasya lakṣaṇam āha:*
>
> *avijñātatattve 'rthe kāraṇopapattitaḥ tattvajñānārtham ūhas tarkaḥ.* [*NS* 1.1.40]

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[46] *Tarka* as explained in later Naiyāyika texts—for example, in *Nyāyakusumāñjali* III.7, mentioned in Matilal (1986, p. 79, n. 10)—is of a different character. If the relation of logical implication is subjected to a *tarka*, the latter is restricted to acting as a means of proving the validity of the presupposed implicative relation (*vyāpti*).

[47] Halbfass (1991, p. 184, n. 15):

... another important term with a wide range of connotations – from "conjectural modification" (in Mīmāṃsā) to "reasoning" in the sense of *yukti* – is *ūha* (sometimes combined with *apoha*; e.g. Vyāsa and Vācaspati on Yogasūtra II, 18; Medhātithi on Manu II, 6; ed. J.H. Dave, I, 163; already *Avadānaśataka*, ed. J.S. Speyer, I, 209).

In his commentary on *CaS* Sū. 11.25, Cakrapāṇidatta equates *yukti* with *ūha*: *Āyurvedadīpikā* in *CaS*, p. 72a, 8–9:

evam anena bhavitavyam ity evaṃ rūpa ūho 'tra yuktiśabdenābhidhīyateḥ sā ca....

[48] The discussion offered in Oberhammer (1963, pp. 93–94) seems to be based on rather implausible speculation.

"avijñātatattve 'rthe" iti sāmānādhikaraṇyanirdeśāt artha eva anya-padārtho na puruṣaḥ, puruṣo hi ṣaṣṭhyā niradekṣyata "avijñātaṃ tattvaṃ asya" iti.

tattvapadopādānena dharmiṇaḥ sāmānyadharmamātraviśiṣṭasya[49] *vijñātatvaṃ sūcayati. "kāraṇopapattitaḥ" iti*

saṃśayajñānollikhyamānapakṣadvayānyatarapakṣotthāpanānukūlakāraṇāvalokanaṃ tarkasyotthāpakam[50] *āha. ata evāvijñātatattve 'rthe bhavantāv api bubhutsāvimarśau na tarkatāṃ prāpnutaḥ. "tattvajñānārtham" iti sākṣāt pramāṇatām asya nirasyati. pramāṇānugrahan tu viṣayapariśodhanadvāreṇa*[51] *vidadhat tattvajñānāya kalpate. "tarka ūhaḥ" iti paryāyopādānasya*[52] *prayojanaṃ vakṣyāmaḥ.*

tenāyaṃ sūtrārthaḥ: avijñātatattve sāmānyato jñāte dharmiṇy ekapakṣānukūlakāraṇadarśanāt tasmin sambhāvanāpratyayo bhavitavyatāvabhāsaḥ, taditarapakṣaśaithilyāpādānena[53] *tadgrāhakaṃ pramāṇam anugṛhaṇat*[54] *sukhaṃ pravartayan, "tattvajñānārtham ūhas tarkaḥ" iti. yathā vāhakelipradeśādau*[55] *ūrdhvatvaviśiṣṭadharmidarśanāt puruṣeṇānena bhavitavyam iti pratyayaḥ.*[56]

Tarka (deliberation) is mentioned in the first *sūtra* of the *NS*, immediately after the members [of the five-membered argumentation form]. Whence, following the [customary] order in which [such things are] mentioned [in the *sūtra*], a characterization of *tarka* is [next] stated:

Deliberation is [a type of] reflection in which reasons are given [for assumptions] regarding an object whose [true] nature is not known in order to obtain knowledge of its [true] nature. (*NS* 1.1.40)

"Regarding an object whose [true] nature is not known" [here]—as [the *sūtra*], [presupposing] a common objective reference [of the two words '*avijñātatattve*' and '*arthe*' in the *sūtra*], teaches—"object" in this passage [refers to] categories other than "person." For if a person were intended [by the word '*avijñātatattve*', it would have been formulated] in the genitive case:

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[49] *NM(E$_M$)*: *sāmānyadharmamānnaviśiṣṭasya.*

[50] *NM(E$_V$)*: *tattvasyotthāpakam.*

[51] *NM(E$_V$)*: *viśeṣapariśodhanadvāreṇa.*

[52] *NM(E$_M$)*: *paryāyapadopādānasya.*

[53] *NM(E$_V$)*: *-āpādane*; *NM(E$_M$)*: *-āpādanena.*

[54] *NM(E$_V$)*: *anugrhya tān.*

[55] *NM(E$_V$)*: *bāhya-.* But *NM(E$_V$)* shows in other passages the reading with *vāhakeli-*, for example, *vāhakelipradeśaviśeṣadarśanaṃ* in p.108, 16, as in *NM(E$_M$)* II, p. 586, 09; further, *vāhakeli-* in *NM(E$_V$)*, p. 108, 24; 109; 2; 109, 4 etc.

[56] *NM(E$_V$)* III, p. 107, 1–14; *NM(E$_M$)* II, pp. 584, 3–585, 2.

"the [true] nature is not known to him".[57] The use of the term '*tattva*' indicates that the bearer of [some] quality is known as a specific [representative of that quality] only in virtue of [its being] a common quality. "The reasons [for assumptions] are given" refers to the educing function of *tarka*, namely its surveying of adequate reasons for educing, of two [alternative] positions, the one marked as subject to doubt. For this reason, although there are two [alternative] considerations [prior] to recognizing an object whose [true] nature is not known, these two do not constitute a *tarka*. [The phrase] "in order to obtain knowledge of the [true] nature" obviously deprives this [*tarka*] of the status of a means of valid cognition. Serving, though, as it does, as a support for [some] means of valid cognition, in virtue of its clarifying the object (*viṣaya*), [*tarka*] contributes to the cognition of the true nature. The motivation for using the synonymous words [in the phrase] "deliberation is [a type of] reflection" we will explain below.

Hence the meaning of the *sūtra* is the following: In the case where—once [some underlying] reason which favours one [of two conflicting] positions has been detected—[an object] whose [true] nature is not known is cognized on the basis of [some] generality it [manifests as] the bearer of a quality, there is confidence in the appropriateness [of asserting that quality] in it. This is a manifestation of the stringency—governing the [ultimate] understanding of that [bearer of the quality]—with which the means of valid cognition is supported, inasmuch as the ineffectualness of the [other] position rules [this latter] out. [After this elucidation] it is easy to continue [with the passage] "Deliberation is [a type of] reflection [applied] to obtain knowledge of [true] nature of the object."

It is of the following [sort]: The bearer of [some] quality having been observed to be specified by its uprightness in a place where there is [also] a coachmen's stick etc., [there is] confidence [in one's judgment] that "this must be a person."

What stands out in this passage from the *NM* is the explanation that *tarka* supports the means of valid cognition (*pramāṇa*) through its clarification of the object (*viṣaya-pariśodhana-dvāreṇa*). What is meant by 'clarification of the object'? The crucial point about the function of a *tarka* is, following the formulation of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, that [it generates] 'confidence in the appropriateness [of asserting a quality] (*sambhāvanāpratyaya*)', after considering the reasons which make the acceptance

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[57] This passage recapitulates the interpretational problem posed by the compound *avijñātatattve* in *NS* 1.1.40, as discussed in the *NV* (in *NV(E_D)*, p. 131, 10ff.) in detail: whether the passage should be analysed (*vigraha*) as *avijñātaṃ tattvaṃ yena* (the *tarka* concerns a person who does not cognize the [true] nature of an object) or *avijñātaṃ tattvaṃ yasya* (the *tarka* concerns an object whose [true] nature is not known). Jayanta Bhaṭṭa gives a remarkably different explanation: A hypothetical formulation with the genitive case in *NS* 1.1.40 ("*avijñātaṃ tattvaṃ asya*") would imply that *artha* relates to a person who does not cognize the true nature of some matter. This goes against Uddyotakara: A construction with the genitive case ("*avijñātaṃ tattvaṃ yasya*") would imply that the *tarka* is to be understood as pertaining to an object ("*athāpy avijñātaṃ tattvaṃ yasya tad vastvavijñātatattvam, tasminn avijñātatattve iti ṣaṣṭhīvigraheṇātiyuktam etat.*"), not to a person who does not truly cognize the object. The whole difference stems from the different antecedent of the genitive pronoun. Uddyotakara relates it to *tarka*, and Jayanta Bhaṭṭa to the cognizing person. This difference is reflected in the choice of pronoun: Uddyotakara chose the relative pronoun *yad*; Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, the demonstrative pronoun *idam*.

of one of the two alternative possibilities compelling. ("This is a manifestation of the stringency—governing the [ultimate] understanding of that [bearer of the quality]—with which the means of valid cognition is supported, inasmuch as the ineffectualness of the [other] position rules [this latter] out.") In this way the one remaining alternative seems to be the one called for. This, as explained in the *NM*, is how *tarka* supports the *pramāṇa*-s. And such support is termed 'clarification of the object'. The variant reading given in *NM(E_V)*, *viśeṣapariśodhanadvāreṇa* suggests that one scribe took the main purpose of a *tarka* to be to clarify the difference between the two alternative possibilities. In any case, the important point is, in my opinion, that the characteristic feature of *tarka*—defined on the basis of the concept '*vibhāga*'—is still highlighted in the formulation '*viṣayapariśodhana*'.

Some further explication of how Jayanta Bhaṭṭa understood *tarka* can be found in the *Nyāyakalikā* (= *NKali*), which is probably one of his works:[58]

> *avijñātatattve dharmiṇi ekatarapakṣānukūlakāraṇadarśanena*[59] *tasmin*
> *sambhāvanāpratyayarūpa ūhas tarka ucyate. yathā vāhakelipradeśe*
> *ūrdhvatvadarśanāt puruṣeṇānena bhavitavyam iti sambhāvanāpratyayaḥ.*
> *na cāyaṃ saṃśayaḥ. aśvakelipradeśe puruṣavat sthāṇor asambhāvyatvena*
> *samakakṣyatayā sthāṇutvapuruṣatvayor anullekhāt. na ca puruṣanirṇayo*
> *'yam rātrāv api sthāṇunikhananasambhāvanayā*[60] *tatpakṣasya*
>
> *sarvātmanānapanodanāt. puruṣaniścayahetūnāṃ ca śiraḥpāṇyādiviśeṣāṇām*
> *apratibhāsāt. sa cāyaṃ tarka ekatarapakṣaśaithilyajananena dvitīye pakṣe*
> *pravartamānaṃ nyāyaṃ viṣayaśodhanadvāreṇānugṛhṇātīti pṛthag ucyate.*[61]

Regarding the bearer of a quality whose [true] nature is not known, the reflection distinguished by confidence—based on an insight of reason which educes one of two positions—in the appropriateness [of asserting a quality] in the [bearer of that quality] is called deliberation. This is like the confidence in the appropriateness [of asserting], where there is a cane of a coachman, and its raised position is observed, "There must be a person [wielding it]". And this is not a [case of] doubt (*saṃśaya*). For it is not clear whether it is a tree trunk or a person rather than a cane [to urge on] a horse [with], given the inappropriateness [of recognizing] any common quality between standing on a shrub and a tree trunk [that is] similar to a person. It is not a case [either] of ascertainment that [the object is] a person, for it is reasonable that this is an [erect branch] of a buried tree trunk, [seen] at night, and that such a position

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[58] Marui (2008) has established as plausible that the *NKali* is one of Jayanta's works alongside the *NM*.

[59] The conjecture *ekatarapakṣānukūlakāraṇadarśanena* is based on the corresponding passage in the *NM* cited above. This conjecture, which I prefer, was kindly suggested by Prof. Hiroshi Marui when he has provided me a copy of *NKali(E_B)*; it is my pleasant obligation to express my gratitude for his great help and further interpretational advices. Maybe the word *-darśana* led to the variant reading *-artha-darśanena*. In the *NBh* I know of no occurrence of the compound *kāraṇadarśana*, but in the *NV* it appears several times in the context of the three kinds of *anumāna* mentioned in *NS* 1.1.5: see *NV(E_D)*, p. 43, 19ff. But *kāraṇa* in these lines of the *NV* has the sense of cause in the pair *kāraṇa* and *kārya*, which is remote from the reason in the context of logical reflection.

[60] *NKali(E_B)* shows a misprint of this word: *sthāṇunirava-*.

[61] *NKali(E_B)*, p. 13.5–14.

(i.e. point of view) has not been completely eliminated. Furthermore, no reasons for identifying [the object] as a person, namely the distinction on the basis of head and hand etc., have appeared. And this deliberation (*tarka*) points up the ineffectualness of one of the two positions (points of view) and in so doing activates reasoning (*nyāya*) in regard to the other position. [In this way *tarka*] supports [the means of valid cognition] by clarifying the subject matter. [This is the reason why *tarka*] is explained separately [in the *Nyāyasūtra*].

What deserves our attention in this passage is the formulation of the first sentence, "*avijñātatattve dharmiṇi ekatarapakṣānukūlakāraṇadarśanena tasmin sambhāvanāpratyayarūpa ūhas tarka ucyate*," which is an indirect gloss of *NS* 1.1.40. What is peculiar is the formulation *ekatarapakṣānukūlakāraṇadarśanena* explaining the first two words in *NS* 1.1.40, namely *avijñātatattve 'rthe*. This passage of the *NKali* points out that it is the reason (*kāraṇa*) that is grasped, not any additional quality (*dharma*) of the object. This means that the purpose of the *tarka* is the ascertainment of one of two possibilities; it is not a search for an observed additional quality as factual support for one or the other possibility, but merely one which does not obviously support one of the two.[62] In the case of the concrete example given in the *NKali*, we can easily understand that the rightness of something observed is not dependent on additional information obtained through perception. Such information is already given in advance of the *tarka*. What actually takes place in the cognizer is the reflection on the adequacy of the alternative possibilities; this accords with the explanations given by Vātsyāyana in the *NBh* regarding the essential feature of the *tarka*. Regardless of the interpretation offered by Jayanta Bhaṭṭa of how *tarka* should be understood in contradistinction to *saṃśaya* and other relevant terms, it is obvious that he intends to demonstrate that the *tarka* does not require or postulate further factual information, in other words, some observed additional quality of the object that is the subject of the *tarka*. This is in line with my interpretation based on the explanations given in the *NBh*. No information about the object perceived furnishes a reason for any supposition. For anything to be a reason, it should cover the whole given context being evaluated, to see if it provides any stringent grounds for the acceptance of one possibility. This conceptual procedure is carried out without further factual data from the outside. This feature of *tarka* is, so far as I understand, what is pointed out by Vātsyāyana and Jayanta Bhaṭṭa with the aid of the terms '*vibhāga*' and '*viṣayapariśodhana*'.

Tarka in the Tarkasaṅgraha

The conceptual procedure described by Vātsyāyana and Jayanta Bhaṭṭa is indicative of the fact that for them *tarka* is a mental weighing of alternative possibilities

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[62] Doubt will hardly be cast upon this interpretation by accepting the reading *ekatarapakṣānukūlārthadarśanena*, given that the word *artha* need not be taken in the meaning of a concrete physical object, while the word *darśana* can be understood in the meaning of 'understanding' or 'cognizing'.

without the interference of further factual data. But this characterization is not specific enough to distinguish *tarka* from other concepts dealt with in the Nyāya tradition and to justify regarding *tarka* as a key term in *NS* 1.1.1—central enough to warrant separate treatment of it as such in the following tradition. In any case, the characterization of *tarka* as a procedure based on reason and not on any additional perceptual information has been confirmed. This loose understanding would have allowed for a much more general usage of the term '*tarka*' so as to include all objects examined with human reason.

An example of such a later radical usage of the term '*tarka*' can be found in the *Tarkasaṅgraha* (= *TS*) of Annam Bhaṭṭa. The *TS* begins with the following prefatory verse (*maṅgala*) in *TS* I:

nidhāya hṛdi viśveśaṃ vidhāya guruvandanam |

bālānāṃ sukhabodhāya kriyate tarkasaṅgrahaḥ ||[63]

Bearing the lord of the universe in my heart

[and] offering salutation to my teacher,

for easy understanding among beginners

I compose this *Tarkasaṅgraha*.

And on the title of his own work, Annambhaṭṭa gives explanations in his auto-commentary on *TS*, *Tarkasaṅgrahadīpikā* (= *TSD*):

"*tarkasaṅgraha*" *iti, tarkyante pratipādyanta iti tarkā dravyādisapta-padārthāḥ, teṣāṃ saṅgrahaḥ saṅkṣapeṇa svarūpakathanaṃ kriyata ity ar-thaḥ. kasmai prayojanāyeti, ata āha* "*sukhabodhāyā*" *iti. sukhena anāyāsena yo bodhaḥ padārthajñānaṃ tasmā ity arthaḥ. nanu bahuṣu tarkagrantheṣu satsu kim artham apūrvagranthaḥ kriyata iti, ata āha:* "*bālānām*" *iti. teṣām ativistṛtatvād bālānāṃ bodho na bhavatīty arthaḥ. grahaṇadhāraṇapaṭur bālaḥ, na tu stanandhayaḥ.*

[Now] the passage "*tarkasaṅgrahaḥ*" [in *TS* I]: The seven categories, namely substance etc., are *tarka*-s in the sense that they are deliberated upon [and] assented to; a *saṅgraha* of them means that an explanation of [their] essence is given in a condensed form. Toward what purpose? For easy understanding, it is stated. 'With ease' [means] without pain, the 'understanding' which [represents] the purpose [of this work means] the knowledge of categories. One objection could be made: For what purpose has this new work been composed, [considering] the numerous works on *tarka* already existing? It is stated: "[For the sake] of beginners" [in *TS* I]. This means that on account of their extreme elaborateness the understanding of beginners is not [sufficiently advanced]. One with ability to grasp and keep in mind [is what is meant by the word] '*bāla*' [in this passage], and not a suckling.

This explanation of the term '*tarka*' in the auto-commentary is exceptional. All seven categories listed in the *TS* II[64] are called *tarka*-s. The fact that the term

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[63] *TS*, p. 1, 5–6.

[64] *TS* II in *TS*, p. 2: *dravyaguṇakarmasāmānyaviśeṣasamavāyābhāvāḥ sapta padārthāḥ.*

'*tarka*' designates not only the cognizing activity but also the object of such activity is not astonishing in itself.[65] But its usage here is very exceptional and calls for some explanation.

In the sub-commentary on the *TSD*, the *Prakāśikā* of Nīlakaṇṭha we can find a further short explication:

> *tarkapadasyāropārthakatvabhramaṃ vārayituṃ dravyādisādhāraṇatarkatvaṃ nirvakti "tarkyante" iti.*[66]

> To avoid any misunderstanding of the deliberateness with which the word '*tarka*' [in *TS* I] is emphasized, the expression "*tarkyante*" is used [in the auto-commentary, the *Tarkasaṅgrahadīpikā*], pointing up the fact that the generality shared by substance etc. [partakes of] the nature of *tarka*, [by means of which these categories can be deliberated upon].

The point being made here is that the categories listed in *TS* II are called '*tarka*' because they are all objects arrived at by *tarka*. The indistinct character of *tarka*, at least in the explanation given by Nīlakaṇṭha, has seemingly contributed to the usage of the term '*tarka*' to denote all the topics (in the later syncretic Vaiśeṣika tradition, all the categories are termed '*tarka*'). In this sense, the term '*tarka*' can be taken to represent the whole system of Nyāya.

How a specific method of dealing with a given epistemological or logical problem, in this case *tarka*, came to stand for Nyāya methodology or the Nyāya tradition itself is a question with far-reaching consequences that I cannot deal with at present. It is possible that the self-understanding of Naiyāyika-s formulated around the concept of '*ānvīkṣikī*' at the beginning of the *NBh* is cognate with the characteristic Nyāya methodology that takes the form of reflective deliberation. Such a reflective analytic character of the Nyāya tradition might be associated with the peculiar aspect of *tarka*, namely *vibhāga* (analysis). Thus the unconventional usage of the term '*tarka*' in the *TS* and the *TSD* is merely an extension of the meaning of this term as accepted by Vātsyāyana and Jayanta Bhaṭṭa.

The Hazards Inherent in *Tarka*

From the discussions above we have arrived at the position that the essential feature of *tarka*, at least as explained by Vātsyāyana, is its analytic approach (*vibhāga*) to the subject of discourse. This understanding of *tarka* is, as I have tried to demonstrate above, in accordance with Jayanta Bhaṭṭa's understanding as formulated in the words "clarification of the object" (*viṣayapariśodhana*). When we take this characteristic of *tarka* seriously, the fact that *tarka* was often loaded with a negative connotation, on the one hand, and considered as the characteristic feature of the

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[65] Such a usage is common in Nyāya tradition for other terms as well, including '*pratyakṣa*' and '*anumāna*'.

[66] *Nīlakaṇṭha-Prakāśikā*, pp. 95, 4–96, 2.

Naiyāyika approach to epistemological and logical problems, on the other, can be better appreciated.

As a maieutic process, *tarka* does not resort to any additional perceptual information. It thus holds the door to solving any given problem open to everyone. Its argumentational appeal consists in the fact that the subject matter and possible states of affairs are differentiated in a seemingly exhaustive way, in the light of the available sum of information. It brings us a step forward, though it cannot offer us a definitive solution to the problem at hand, since all considerations weighed under it are valid only for the chosen hypothesis set forth under the limited factual information available. For the advocates of this method, *tarka* is a generally applicable method for all kinds of topics in cases where investigators are not provided with exact factual information (*tattva*) on the subject matter. In this sense it can be considered as the representative method of the Nyāya tradition.

However, this method can be utterly misleading. The universal applicability of *tarka* is its strong point, but at the same time it is a serious drawback. For any given object we can suggest alternative qualities seemingly applicable to that object, and ask which alternative is the suitable one. One good example would be the questions addressed to the Buddha (*avyākata pañha*) to which he refused to give either an affirmative or negative answer.[67] Such questions, depending on the interpretation and analysis of them, may lead to different kinds of mainly non-formal fallacy: the fallacy of many questions ('Are you still beating your wife?'), the false dilemma ('Are you a good man or a bad man?') or a category fallacy ('How many iron filings does a unicorn attract?'). When such a question has been put forward for a *tarka*, an argumentative or epistemological quandary is the guaranteed outcome, at least from the Buddhist standpoint. Any reasonable analysis of the logical or factual implications is beside the point, and a pseudo-analysis results. In such a way, *tarka* can become an easily misused quasi-formal method. The fact that it does not stand or fall on the basis of factual information was, I surmise, the reason for the widespread negative connotation of the term '*tarka*'. The widespread reluctance against *tarka* in ancient Indian intellectual traditions including Buddhist disapproval of *tarka* as unreliable speculation could be understood on the bases of the analysis discussed in the present paper. It is not my intent, however, to propose or suggest a hidden chronological outcome in the sense that the *tarka* as analyzed by Vātsyāyana would have been the historical reason for its negative evaluation.[68] What I would like to establish is rather a mild thesis that the *tarka* as analyzed by Vātsyāyana could reveal the historically essential aspect of the *tarka*. An aspect which is supported by understandings found in later Naiyāyika texts that could help us understand and explain in a coherent way, the ambivalent estimation of *tarka* found in the Indian intellectual history.

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[67] I am not assuming any direct historical connection of *avyākata pañha* with *tarka*. Detailed discussions and analysis of this the theme, *avyākata pañha*, not to mention the diverse interpretations and theoretical developments in the history of Buddhism itself, exceed the scope of the present paper.

[68] The negative estimations of *tarka* found in early Indian philosophical texts seem, in my view, to allude rather the attitude connected with *tarka* putting the given authority in question—it would have been the reason for criticizing *tarkin*—than the speculative reflection itself.

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