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possessed by the blind are identical to those possessed by the sighted.)

* Leibniz, G. W. (1765) *New Essays on Human Understanding*, trans. and ed. P. Remnant and J. Bennett, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. (A commentary on Locke's *Essay*, unpublished in Leibniz's lifetime, which contains an excellent treatment of the Molyneux problem on pages 136-8).

* Locke, J. (1688) 'Essai philosophique concernant l'Entendement où l'on montre quelle est l'étendue des connaissances certaines, et la manière dont nous y parvenons', *Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique*, January-March: 49-142, Amsterdam, ed. J. Le Clerc. (Locke's first major publication in the journal of his Swiss friend Jean Le Clerc, whom he met in The Netherlands. It is a substantial abridgement of his as yet unpublished *Essay concerning Human Understanding* and often referred to with the term *Abrégé*, because it was later republished separately and translated into English in 1692 as an extract of a book entitled *A Philosophical Essay upon Human Understanding*.)

* — (1689) *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P.H. Nidditch, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985. (Locke's magnum opus, breathtaking in its scope and depth, still worth consulting on every topic it discusses. The second edition appeared in 1694.)

Molyneux, W. (1688) Letter to Locke of 7 July 1688, in E.S. de Beer (ed.) *The Correspondence of John Locke*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, vol. 3, 482, letter no. 1064.

* — (1692) *Dioptrica Nova*, London: Benjamin Tooke. (A treatise in the tradition of similar works by Kepler and Descartes, which is mainly devoted to the physical aspects of optics, containing also several remarks on the psychology of vision.)

* Syngé, E. (1695) *The Correspondence of John Locke*, vol. 5, ed. E.S. de Beer, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974. (Letter 1984 (pages 494-6) from Molyneux to Locke, quotes in full the interesting letter by Syngé - later Archbishop of Tuam - which anticipates several later objections to Locke's reply.)

MENNO LIEVERS

MOMENTARINESS, BUDDHIST DOCTRINE OF

The object of the Buddhist doctrine of momentariness is not the nature of time, but existence within time. Rather than atomizing time into moments, it atomizes phenomena temporally by dissecting them into a succession of

discrete momentary entities. Its fundamental proposition is that everything passes out of existence as soon as it has originated and in this sense is momentary. As an entity vanishes, it gives rise to a new entity of almost the same nature which originates immediately afterwards. Thus, there is an uninterrupted flow of causally connected momentary entities of nearly the same nature, the so-called continuum (santāna). These entities succeed each other so fast that the process cannot be discerned by ordinary perception. Because earlier and later entities within one continuum are almost exactly alike, we come to conceive of something as a temporally extended entity even though the fact that it is in truth nothing but a series of causally connected momentary entities. According to this doctrine, the world (including the sentient beings inhabiting it) is at every moment distinct from the world in the previous or next moment. It is, however, linked to the past and future by the law of causality in so far as a phenomenon usually engenders a phenomenon of its kind when it perishes, so that the world originating in the next moment reflects the world in the preceding moment.

At the root of Buddhism lies the (never questioned) conviction that everything that has originated is bound to perish and is therefore, with the exception of factors conducive to enlightenment, ultimately a source of frustration. There is no surviving textual material that documents how this law of impermanence came to be radicalized in terms of momentariness. It seems that by the fourth century the doctrine of momentariness had already assumed its final form. Characteristically, the debate became more and more dominated by epistemological questions, while the metaphysical aspect faded into the background.

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1 Exposition

The doctrine of momentariness entails that entities are too shortlived to undergo change. Thus, if an entity has always engendered a new entity of exactly the same kind and with exactly the same properties, the worlds arising at every moment anew would be identical, so that there could be no evolution. This, however, is not the case because the process of reproduction of a given entity may be manipulated by outside factors in such a way that the newly created entity differs qualitatively from the preceding entity. If exposed to fire, for instance, a wood entity does not

give rise to an identical wood entity when it perishes, but to a wood entity which bears the mark of impairment by fire and so is slightly charred. (According to later parlance, the wood as the main cause forms, together with the fire as a subsidiary cause, a causal complex which produces the slightly charred wood entity.) Thus, change is not constituted by the transmutation of persisting entities, but by the qualitative difference between earlier and later entities within a series.

Not only the transformation of series but also their cessation (that is, what is ordinarily conceived of as the utter annihilation of temporally extended objects), is caused by an external agent, which affects the process of reproduction of the object exposed to it in such a way that this process comes to a complete standstill. Hence, in the case of murder, the victim dies because the murderer affects the final moment of the breath of life (*prāṇa*), that is, the vital principle accounting for the body's animation, in such a way that it fails to reproduce itself. Since the final moment (like all preceding ones) passes out of existence automatically, murder is, microscopically speaking, not destruction but the interception of the process of reproduction. In this way the teaching that all entities pass out of existence spontaneously without depending for this upon any external cause is reconciled with the observation on a macroscopic level that wood is burnt by fire, or that one dies when knifed by a murderer.

Independently of the doctrine of momentariness, the Buddhists, like many other Indian schools, also dissected everything spatially into atoms (see MATTER, INDIAN CONCEPTIONS OF). Thus, in the final analysis, the world is made up of momentary atoms, which by their spatial arrangement and by their concatenation with earlier and later atoms of the same kind, give rise to the illusion of persisting compact things. This analysis of existence can be illustrated by referring, anachronistically, to cinematography. Just as the rapid projection of distinct pictures evokes the illusion of continuous action on the screen, so the fast succession of distinct momentary entities gives rise to the erroneous impression that the world around us (and we ourselves) exist continuously without undergoing destruction and being recreated every moment. Similarly, as the change of events on the screen is caused by the qualitative difference between earlier and later pictures on the film reel, so the change in the world is brought about by the qualitative difference between earlier and later entities. Moreover, as people vanish from the screen because they are not featured in the subsequent frame, so things cease to exist because they stop reproducing themselves. Finally, just as each

projected picture only consists of differently shaded points, which by their specific arrangement give rise to the perception of composite shapes, so the world around us consists of nothing but distinct atoms which are arranged in such a way that they convey the impression of compact bodies.

2 Relevance

The Buddhist doctrine of momentariness does not challenge our experiences of macroscopic events as such, but only our interpretation of these events on a microscopic level. The claim that macroscopic objects are constituted by a succession of distinct momentary units only affects the intuitive conception of these objects as self-identical units (think of the notion of an uninterrupted line in contrast to one made up of distinct but contiguous points), but it does not affect the question of how these macroscopic objects behave, whatever their analysis on a microscopic level.

The doctrine of momentariness was not viewed as a purely metaphysical theory without practical relevance. On the contrary, the contemplation of the constant rise and fall of phenomena was employed to induce a particularly poignant experience of their impermanence, thus revealing the unsatisfactory nature of all existence. Moreover, in a Mahāyāna context this contemplation served as a tool for undermining (but not negating) the substantial existence of phenomena. However, since only advanced yogins seem to have been able to perceive momentariness directly, the soteriological significance of this doctrine remains very limited. This explains why it only played a marginal role in the wider context of Buddhist spirituality.

3 Development

The doctrine of momentariness is postcanonic and may have originated in the first century. It is for the first time presupposed in the *Vibhāṣa* (both in the Chinese translation by Xuanzang (Hsüan-tsang) and by Buddhavarman) of the Sarvāstivādins, one of the major Hīnayāna schools of Buddhism. In this scholastic compendium, the better part of which was probably compiled in the second century, the momentariness of all phenomena is not treated as a topic in its own right, but is frequently taken for granted when dealing with other issues.

Doxographical reports and other evidence confirm the impression that it was in the milieu of the Sarvāstivādins that all phenomena, more precisely all conditioned entities (*saṃskṛta*, *saṃskāra*), came to be looked upon as momentary. (The Sarvāstivādins treated space and two forms of suppression of certain

factors as unconditioned entities (*asaṃskṛta*) which have never been created and, hence, are not subject to the law of impermanence, hence the specification at this point that momentariness only applies to conditioned entities and not to all phenomena.) Although the Sarvāstivādins reduced the duration of all phenomena to a moment, they still conceived of their existence much in the same way as they had done before the introduction of the doctrine, insisting that even within one moment they first originate, then persist and decay and finally perish. This treatment violated the common conception of the moment (*kṣaṇa*) as the shortest conceivable unit of time and consequently was rejected by the Dārṣṭāntikas and Sautrāntikas, who are closely related to the Sarvāstivādins and may have evolved from them. These two schools argued that contradictory events cannot take place within one moment. From this they concluded that all things perish as soon as they have originated. Since destruction was conceived of as the spontaneous cessation of existence and not as a time-consuming process, the existence of entities was reduced to mere acts of origination, flashes into existence.

With this radicalization of the instantaneous nature of existence, the doctrine of momentariness assumed its final form. Such a form was adopted by the Yogācāras, one of the two main Indian schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and came to be known by other Buddhists and non-Buddhists. The Yogācāras with a Mahāyāna orientation, however, only accepted the doctrine of momentariness as valid on the level of relative truth. In so far as the doctrine affirms the existence of discrete entities (although they are reduced to mere point instants), it is characteristic of the realism of Hīnayāna Buddhism and at odds with their Mahāyāna stance that all phenomenal entities are ultimately, on the level of highest truth, unreal (see BUDDHISM, YOGĀCĀRA SCHOOL OF).

4 Doctrinal background

The surviving sources do not record how the doctrine of momentariness originated. Hence the reconstruction of this process has to be hypothetical. The anti-substantialist tendency characteristic of Buddhism negates that entities have a substantial core beyond the sum of their properties and thus equates the properties with the entities themselves. Hence, phenomena in Buddhism are called *dharma*s, a term with a wide range of meanings which is used in this context because it may stand for 'property' and 'quality'. Since change was viewed as the replacement of one quality for another, the identification of property and entity led to the position that any qualitative change

implies numeric difference, that is, the substitution of one entity for another. When Buddhists applied this understanding of change to their analysis of ageing they were bold enough to conclude that the ageing body must at every moment vanish to be replaced by a new, slightly modified body. As all things were conceived of as constantly changing, momentariness had to be attributed in this way not only to bodily matter but also to all other things. The conviction that everything is always changing (in as much as it is always subject to ageing) had resulted from the contemplation of the law of impermanence.

The discovery of the doctrine of momentariness in this way was possible because at a much earlier stage the momentariness of all mental entities had already been established in an apparently analogous way. This way was the denial of a permanent Self, a cardinal tenet of scholastic Buddhism which led to the conception of the mind as a flow of mental events conceived of as entities in their own right (see BUDDHIST CONCEPT OF EMPTINESS). Their momentariness was probably deduced from the speed with which mental events normally follow each other. The establishment of the doctrine of momentariness may have benefited from the testimony of yogins who are reported to have access to the direct experience of the incessant rise and fall of phenomena at every moment.

5 Proofs

Such a doctrine, fundamentally at odds with the appearance of the world, met great opposition. Initially, it was rejected by large sections of the Buddhist community, notably the Vātsīputriyas and related schools. Later, when it had gained ground among Buddhists, it was fervently opposed by the Brahmanical schools as it contradicted their postulation of eternal entities of one sort or another (souls, atoms, primary matter, a supreme deity). This rejection made it necessary to defend the doctrine by argumentation.

The oldest transmitted proofs of momentariness are recorded in early Yogācāra sources. They are still primarily directed against other Buddhists and derive the momentariness of all phenomena in three different ways. First, it is presupposed that the mind is momentary – this stance is also shared by Buddhist opponents who do not accept the momentariness of matter – and on this basis it is concluded that matter, too, has to be momentary. This conclusion is based on the demonstration that mind and matter can only depend upon each other and interact as they do because they have the same duration. Second, by referring to ageing and similar processes it is proved

that everything changes all the time and thus undergoes origination and destruction at every moment. This argument rests on the presupposition that any form of transformation implies the substitution of one entity for another. This proof from change reflects the presumable doctrinal background underlying the formation of the doctrine of momentariness. Third, it is argued that everything has to perish as soon as it has originated because, otherwise it would persist eternally. This would be at odds with the law of impermanence. The argument rests on the presupposition that destruction cannot be brought about from without and that it is impossible for an entity to perish on its own account after it has persisted as this would require a change of nature. The latter presupposition reflects the view that self-identical entities cannot change.

VASUBANDHU (fourth-fifth century) marks the gradual transition between the earlier phase when the debate was still confined to Buddhism and the later phase when it was carried out between Buddhists and non-Buddhists. Vasubandhu only adopted the third type of proof, deducing momentariness from the spontaneity of destruction. He developed this idea further with the argument that destruction cannot be caused since, as mere nonexistence, it does not qualify as an effect. Up to the time of DHARMAKĪRTI (c. 600-60) and to a lesser extent thereafter, this proof of momentariness, the so-called inference from perishability (*vināsitvānumāna*), dominated the controversy.

With Dharmakīrti, the doctrine entered a new phase. He developed a new type of proof, the so-called inference from existence (*sattvānumāna*), that derives the momentariness of all entities (without presupposing their impermanence) directly from the fact that they exist. On the basis of the premise that existence entails causal efficiency, Dharmakīrti demonstrates that all existing things have to be momentary as it is impossible for nonmomentary entities to function as efficient causes. This impossibility derives from the idea that, if the entities already produce their effect in the first moment, they also have to produce it again and again at all subsequent

moments of their existence (a situation which is clearly absurd), because their nature then does not differ from their nature in the first moment (lest they be different entities). Nor is it possible for the entities to discharge their causal efficiency gradually, because if they were not able to^(*)

produce their effect completely from the beginning, neither should they be able to do so later as this would entail a change of nature. This argument is also based on the premise that one and the same entity cannot change its properties.

The inference from existence became more prominent than the inference from perishability, although it

never superseded it completely. Its prominence can be explained partly by the logical peculiarity of this proof which gave rise to an epistemological debate about the correct form of a valid syllogism. Since momentariness is to be proved for everything, all entities are the subject of inference (*pakṣa*). Thus, the inference from existence fails to fulfil two of the three classical conditions (*trairūpya*) for a valid syllogism, namely a positive and negative exemplification of the logical nexus (*vyāpti*) between the reason (to be existent) and the argued property (to be momentary) outside the subject (see INFERENCE, INDIAN THEORIES OF).

Among other responses, this problem led to the modification of the conditions of a syllogism in such a way that those *vyāptis* also became accepted as valid where the logical relation between reason and argued property is not induced from other cases. This solution was already developed by Dharmakīrti himself, however, it was neglected until the time of Ratnākaraśānti (eleventh century). He argued that in those syllogisms where the proving property is intrinsic to the subject (*svabhāvahetu*), the logical nexus is to be established by demonstrating that the proving property cannot inhere in a locus that is lacking the argued property.

Frequently, as a corollary of these proofs of momentariness, the Brahmanical arguments against this doctrine are refuted. The most prominent argument – that the recognition of phenomena disproves their contended momentariness – is invalidated by the contention that recognition is a mixture of perception and memory and does not therefore qualify as a valid means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*). The related argument, that the mind cannot be a mere stream of momentary mental entities because memory and the discernment of causal relationships presuppose an enduring subject, is rejected. It is so on the grounds that the knowledge of the past is, by the principle of causal concatenation, passed on from one mental entity to the next. Thus, it is transmitted down to the present moment in a way which we may compare to the transmission of historic data from generation to generation.

Over the centuries the debate on the doctrine of momentariness developed to such an extent that Ratnakīrti (eleventh century) felt the need to deal with the inference from perishability, the inference from existence and the refutation of the proof of duration each in a separate treatise.

See also: BUDDHISM, ĀBHIDHARMIKA SCHOOLS OF; BUDDHIST PHILOSOPHY, INDIAN; MUJŌ; POTENTIALITY, INDIAN THEORIES OF

* Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to proofread the final draft. Hence my correction here of a mistake which must have occurred in the editorial process. (AVR)

References and further reading

The pertinent textual material has to be accessed in the following studies where it is presented in reliable translations (in English, French, or German) which can also be consulted by readers without Indological training.

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- Oetke, C. (1993) 'Bemerkungen zur buddhistischen Doktrin der Momentanheit des Seienden. Dharmakīrti's Sattvānumāna' (Remarks on the Buddhist Doctrine of Momentariness. Dharmakīrti's Sattvānumāna (Inference from Existence)), *Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde* 29, Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetsich und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien. (Employs contemporary analytical logic for the analysis of the *Sattvānumāna*.)
- Rospatt, A. von (1995) 'The Buddhist Doctrine of Momentariness: A Survey of the Origins and Early Phase of this Doctrine up to Vasubandhu', *Alt- und Neu-indische Studien* 47, Stuttgart: Steiner. (Deals with the early phase of the doctrine of momentariness and analyses its doctrinal background on the basis of earlier proofs of momentariness; presents the most complete collection of primary sources (all translated into English) available on the subject matter.)
- Steinkellner, E. (1968/9) 'Die Entwicklung des Kṣaṇikatvānumāna bei Dharmakīrti' (The Development of the Kṣaṇikatvānumāna (Proof of Momentariness) by Dharmakīrti), *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 12-13: 361-77. (Traces the development of the *Sattvānumāna* by Dharmakīrti.)

ALEXANDER VON ROSPATT

MONBODDO, LORD (JAMES BURNETT) (1714-99)

In speculating that orang-utans' vocal organs must have been designed for speech, Monboddo was convinced that these creatures were primitive humans who had not yet entered society. His chief contribution to the history of linguistics and anthropology turns upon two propositions: that language is not natural to man, and that

close physical resemblance between species is evidence of biological relation.

By training as a jurist and through his writings as a linguist and anthropologist, Monboddo was one of the most learned figures in eighteenth-century Scotland. Appointed a law lord or judge on the Scottish Court of Session in 1767 (from which his title derives), he drew lifelong inspiration from the classicism of Thomas Blackwell, whose writings on Homer and Augustus had helped to convince him of the decline of modern man and the decadence of modern forms of speech by contrast with the heroism of the ancient Greeks and Romans and the poetic resonance of their languages. More hostile to the empiricist tendencies of contemporary British philosophy than any other predominantly secular writer of the Scottish Enlightenment, he sought to rescue the glorious achievements of ancient science, ethics and rhetoric in reformulating an essentially Aristotelian interpretation of the human faculties, published in six volumes from 1779 to 1799, entitled *Antient Metaphysics* (see ENLIGHTENMENT, SCOTTISH).

A similar enthusiasm for classicism over modernity is manifest in Monboddo's more influential work of roughly the same period, *Of the Origin and Progress of Language*, also published in six volumes between 1773 and 1792. In addition to commenting on the splendours of ancient Latin and Greek, this text discusses the nomenclature of a variety of exotic languages, including Huron, Carib, Eskimo and Tahitian, which Monboddo had learned through dictionaries and travellers' reports. His attempt to trace the natural history of languages as an expression of both the universal capacities of the human mind and the specific genealogies of diverse cultures drew Monboddo in the direction of the nascent sciences of etymology and historical linguistics along lines developed by Sir William Jones (1746-89), with whom he corresponded. But he was even more drawn to the anthropological linguistics sketched in the *Discours sur l'inégalité* (Discourse on the Origin of Inequality) (1755) of Jean-Jacques ROUSSEAU, from which Monboddo adopted and developed two main propositions: first, that language must be cultivated and mastered in society and hence is not natural to man; and, second, that the 'orang-utan' (in the Enlightenment a generic term for all the great apes) is human, since the inarticulacy of this creature so similar to a human being is attributable to its not yet having had the opportunity to enter society and therein to exercise its larynx, pharynx and other organs of speech. Monboddo imagined that analogous physical traits characteristically signify homologous functions, so that unless Nature had been so