

Quotations, references and re-use of texts in Indian philosophical literature

Elisa Freschi

An urgent problem in all philological enterprises is the risk of an increasing loss of significance of philology in modern studies. The present project aims at contributing to the reconstruction of the cultural history of Indian philosophy and, more widely, to a deeper appreciation of what a text is and of how to approach it.

The study of the ways authors dealt with other texts is in fact a significant, though largely unexplored, field within Indian philosophical literature. This study may have major implications for the critical reconstruction of a text, the evaluation of its role within the historical development of the ideas it represents and the understanding of Indian compositional habits. Moreover, this study may put into question the attitude to texts as authored entities by showing how heavily such an attitude depends on special historical circumstances and has, hence, not always and everywhere been the rule.

A study of quotations, etc.¹ will throw light on how Indian authors composed their texts using previous texts, either as acknowledged sources or as re-usable building blocks, like Christians who built their basilicas re-using columns taken from temples dedicated to, e.g., Jupiter.

1 Proposed Output

The final aim of the present study is to publish a collection of essays discussing case-studies, derived from distinct spheres of Indian philosophical literature (Buddhist epistemology, Buddhist comments on the Canonic *sūtras*, Jaina doxography, Mīmāṃsā, Grammar, etc.) that illustrate concrete usages of quotations, references and re-uses of texts and that throw light on some fundamental questions, such as the link between the number of quotations, etc., and the fortune of a text. As for my part in the enterprise, I have written a draft of the introduction (all criticisms and suggestions are more than welcome) and of my contribution, focusing on the use of previous textual materials in Rāmānujācārya, a late (post-13th c.) Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā author.

A further output of the project should be the elaboration of a common way to mark re-used textual materials. Until now, they are often marked in different ways according to the scholars identifying them (e.g. with “Cf.” or “=” or just the indication of the source). Ernst Steinkellner (see below, §??) elaborated a proposal for their classification, but his method did not gain general acceptance and it has been criticised by some scholars because of its evaluative character (the judgement about who quoted whom is in fact in many cases —especially in non-dated texts and religious texts— less smooth than at first sight expected).

¹ For a more detailed terminological discussion on “quotation”, etc., see *infra*, §??.

2 Methodological issues

I would like to focus on the point of view of the human beings who composed, read and re-used the texts analysed. Hence, I will explore what attitudes authors display in their use of texts. Therefore, the evidence I have been collecting about the frequency of formulas indicating quotations, references, etc., will be used in order to reconstruct such a general attitude. In short, I plan to undertake a philological study and not just a textual-critical one. Although textual criticism is an essential part of philology, philology should be broader than that and include an appreciation of contextual, historical and philosophical meaning side by side with the use of manuscript sources, which otherwise cannot be suitably edited. This philological approach is, according to the present author's opinion, the best way to understand past authors' works in the way they have been conceived, read and interpreted. Moreover, since the present project focuses on philosophical literature, a historical-philosophical methodology seems the most suitable one. A purely historical approach might miss the specificity of philosophical texts —thus failing to correctly evaluate the meaning of the use or absence of quotations, references or re-uses of texts. On the other hand, a purely philosophical approach might fail to appreciate the importance of the historical context in which a certain idea or text developed.

The textual-critical reconstruction of a certain text is both a preliminary condition for various aspects of the proposed study and a desired output of it. In this sense, I hope that a general appraisal of the way Indian authors worked with texts may be of help in re-defining what we want to achieve by critically editing a text. For instance, I propose that the fundamental question to be addressed is to establish which text one is trying to edit (the original author's one? the one commented upon by X or Z at a certain moment of time? the one copied by the copyist whose manuscript one is presently reading?). Understanding the way a text is built on other texts and how an author conceives of his/her text may improve one's awareness of possible answers and perhaps may show that an edition of the original author's (or commentator's) text is not *necessarily* the only or the best option.

Although I plan to be its catalyst, the present study is by definition a collaborative enterprise (in fact, many of the ideas proposed in the next pages have been elaborated through discussions with colleagues, especially with Him-mal Trikha). Apart from contributing my own essay to the collection, it will be my role to make sure that all contributions follow a clear plan so that the collection forms a cohesive unity. I have laid down my key questions and my methodological approach to their exploration in my Introduction, which has already been sent in its preliminary form to the other participants, in order to make cross-fertilization among our studies possible.

I hope this enterprise will also show how collaborative work may contribute to the solution of issues which are often too time-consuming to be dealt with by a single scholar. Collaborative work may also provide a better analysis of what are the most urgent goals of contemporary philology (and philologists).

Provisional results and hypotheses of the present project will be discussed in a public multi-authored blog together with other scholars interested in the project.

I will highlight some of the key issues in the following sections².

² For a more detailed presentation of the complexity of the problem, see the attached paper.

3 Why should one study quotations?

Textual-critical reasons:

- In order to achieve better text editions (e.g., one needs to know whether a quotation embedded in a later text is a reliable witness –this also depends on the general attitude towards the kind of text quoted).³
- In order to restore lost or partially lost texts⁴.

Historical-critical reasons:

- In order to gain a better understanding of Indian texts and/within their history (e.g., does the lack of quotations of a certain author by later texts mean that s/he was not influential?⁵) .
- In order to better evaluate the relation of Indian authors to other authors (whom do they quote more frequently? do they feel like naming revered teachers, or do they rather name only adversaries?...).
- In order to better understand Indian habits of reading and writing/composing texts (did they quote even longer passages literally? did they quote ad sensum? did they have a small library of texts behind their desk?).

In order to address these problems, I would like to focus on collecting and evaluating the following data:

- Forms of quotation/embedment.
- Marks of quotation.
- Frequency of unmarked quotations and their reasons.
- Function of quotations within a given text.

³ K.Preisendanz writes: "Dense incidental as well as continuous expository commentaries [...] can sometimes be used—by means of their *pratīka*-s and other quotations or quasi-quotations—to correct the available text of the basic work as transmitted in a dominant line of manuscript transmission which may not necessarily reflect the original text precisely; they can also make us aware of alternative versions of the basic text which were current in India" ([?]: 611).

⁴ In the passage immediately following the one quoted above, K.Preisendanz writes: "[Commentaries] may even allow us to reconstruct the *mūla*-text of lost works. As an example [...] Mallavādin's *Dvādaśāranayacakra* immediately comes to mind, made available through Śiṃhasūri's commentary and Dharmakīrti's *Hetubindu* reconstructed from Arcaṭa's *Hetubīndutīkā* with the additional utilization of its Tibetan translation" (2008:611-2).

⁵ On the same subject, but from the standpoint of Western Ancient and Medieval authors, Ch.Schulze denies the direct link between number of quotations and fortune of a text: "Fehlende Zitate bei späteren Schriftstellern können mannigfaltige Ursachen haben –früher Textverlust, Überstrahlung durch spätere Autoritäten, Unpassendes für den eigenen Gedankengang (z.B. weil man einer anderen Schultradition anhängt als der Vorgänger) usw.–und müssen keineswegs einer Abwertung des Autors und seiner Professionalität entspringen" (2004:21).

4 Form of quotations

Broadly, one can point to two possible ways of analysing the different kinds of re-uses of older materials:

1. From the point of view of the literality of the re-used textual material:
 - Quotations (the content is the same, the form may be slightly modified)
 - References (only the content is the same)
 - Inter-language (ideas which are broadly common at a certain time and cannot be traced back to a certain author).
2. From the point of view of the explicitness of the re-use:
 - Passages acknowledged as having been authored by someone else
 - Passages silently embedded in one's own text

A first attempt of classifying quotations has been proposed by Ernst Steinkellner⁶ and then improved by him and by his research group. I derive from these attempts the basic distinction between quotations, edited (i.e., non-literal) quotations and references.

I derive the idea of an “interlanguage” from María de las Nieves Muñiz discussion of an *interlingua* available to Renaissance to Neoclassical authors in Europe⁷. This scholar argues that one cannot always settle whether, e.g., G. Leopardi directly read the author whose ideas he refers to. The same ideas might have well been part of a shared background of commonly agreed notions. Such an “interlanguage”, I might add, can also include textual passages whose author(s) is (are) no longer known and which can be compared to Western proverbs or antonomastic uses.

A further element worth considering is the *evaluation* of the text quoted or embedded. In fact, since many embedded texts may again embed older ones, the presence of, e.g., a positive evaluation of a Buddhist author in a Jaina text may be an evidence for the fact that the sentence is part of a larger passage extracted from a Buddhist source⁸.

More precisely, it would be interesting to understand,

- whether authors and readers felt the need of literal quotations at all.

⁶ In his pioneering essay “Methodological Remarks on the Constitution of Sanskrit Texts from the Buddhist *Pramāṇa*-Tradition”, *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 32 (1988): 103-129.

⁷ María de las Nieves Muñiz Muñiz, “Citazioni implicite e lettura illuministe nello *Zibaldone*”, international workshop *Con voce d'altri: scrittura, riflessione, citazione*, organized by the Leopardi Centre, University of Birmingham, in Rome, Sapienza University, 21st May 2010. Unfortunately, the author has not elaborated on the idea of an interlanguage in her published works. However, she kindly informed me that this essay will be published before the end of 2011.

⁸ I thank Helmut Trikha for having pointed out a similar case in his PhD thesis *Schluß mit ungültigen Perspektiven! Polemik gegen das Vaiśeṣika in der Satyaśāsanaparīkṣā des Digambara Vidyānandin vor dem Hintergrund des kritischen Perspektivismus der Jainas*, Universität Wien, 2009.

- whether literal quotations are explicitly marked (at least as a rule) by, e.g., “so has been said” (*ity uktam*) or similar expressions.
- whether non-literal quotations are marked (at least more often than not) by, e.g., “so it is maintained” (*iti manyate*) or similar expressions.
- whether literal quotations occur more often than non-literal ones marked as such and, if so, if their source is also mentioned.
- which kinds of texts are literally quoted (sacred texts? texts by revered teachers? adversaries’ ones? texts the readership is expected to know and would hence be disturbed to find changed? texts the readership is not expected to know and hence needs to be acquainted with?)?
- whether indications of a quoted passage (e.g., *iti śruti*, *iti smṛti*, *iti prasiddha*, *iti dṛṣṭa*, *ity āmnāta*) are reliable?

The more technical side of these questions (that is, frequency and number of quotations and their marks) would be better answered through a certain amount of case studies in different fields of Indian philosophy. For instance, I suspect that traditions more closely linked to writing might have developed different habits from ones still “suspicious” about the written form of a text. However, this hypothesis is in need of confirmation.

I am indebted to Helmut Krasser for making me aware of a further problem in judging the reliability of literal quotations. In fact, due to the paucity of manuscripts and of reliable critical editions, one is often confronted with ambiguous cases. A divergence between a text of Dharmakīrti and the same text quoted in Dharmottara may lead, for instance, to the following options: (1) Dharmakīrti has been inexactly quoted by Dharmottara, or (2) Dharmottara’s text with Dharmakīrti’s quotation has been poorly transmitted or edited, or (3) Dharmottara was quoting literally, but Dharmakīrti’s text has been poorly transmitted or edited. Notwithstanding this important *caveat*, a preliminary study (preferably based on manuscript sources) may throw some light on the general Indian attitude towards quotations and on the particular attitude of a certain school (e.g., Buddhist Epistemology, Nāvyā Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā). I am inclined to think that some general conclusion can be drawn in this regard, since my own studies on Mīmāṃsā texts show a surprising consistency of results. Furthermore, a comparison with the data derived from Buddhist epistemology texts (at least as analysed, for instance, by Ernst Steinkellner, *op. cit.*) shows that 1) the Buddhists epistemology works show consistency in their use of older texts, and 2) that their usage differs substantially from that of the Mīmāṃsā works.

5 Quotations and originality

Apart from the points already mentioned, quotations may be also a useful device to understand an author’s compositional habit and his/her “originality”. This concept is in bad need of a definition that applies to Indian contexts. In fact, Indian authors may rather be flawed because of plagiarism and are all by and large non-original. Westerners look in vain for treatises about a certain theme and find instead commentaries and commentaries on commentaries, or at

most half-commentaries (such as Jayanta Bhaṭṭa's *Nyāyamañjarī*, which comments only on a selection of *Nyāyasūtras*). But, looking at the way one builds texts through quotations, etc. and through departing from quotations, etc., one eventually understands that an Indian author's skill (and "originality") can be found indeed in his apt arrangement of them. Himā Trikha, for instance, notes how the argumentative steps and the quotations constitute different segments of the text (Trikha, *op. cit.*, p.129). That is, Vidyānandin may use several quotations (including loose and unmarked ones) but his structure of the text is independent of them. They are—in Trikha's terminology—*Bausteine* of his text. This is also shown by the fact that arguments are not quoted *en bloc*, but rather piecemeal (*ibi*, p.137).

5.1 Is there anything specific to philosophical texts?

Philosophers always use other thinkers' materials. In a certain sense, they cannot avoid to rethink what has already been thought precisely because they are (acute) thinkers, and cannot escape the stimulus consisting in other people's thoughts. However, the case of Indian philosophers is even more striking. To begin with, philosophical texts probably developed out of a tradition of debate and hence are often presented in the form of a debate between various interlocutors. Moreover, authors freely use previous texts to build their own one and often pretend they are writing nothing but a commentary on a former, authoritative, text. In many cases, their own texts are hardly more than a jigsaw of preceding texts' statements. The study of Rāmānujācārya's way of dealing with previous texts shows, however, that although the rough material the author uses is mostly already present in former works, the framework and the organization of this material is his original contribution, as are the assessment of the relative strength of his sources' arguments and, hence, their critical evaluation. Thus, the author is a critical compiler (and not just a copyist), who largely uses his predecessors' works, but only insofar as he is convinced by the strength of their arguments. In sum, the argument is considered more important than the authorship.