

Inference is not a valid source of knowledge, after Carvaka.

Carvaka don't admit inference as a valid source of knowledge. If inference is to be regarded as a *pramāṇa*, it must yield knowledge about which we can have no doubt and which must be true to reality. But inference cannot fulfil these conditions, because when we infer, for example, the existence of fire in a mountain from the perception of smoke in it, we take a leap in the dark, from the perceived smoke to the unperceived fire. A logician, like the Naiyāyika, will perhaps point out that such a leap is justified by the previous knowledge of the invariable concomitance between smoke and fire and that the inference stated more fully would be: all cases of smoke are cases of fire, this (mountain) is a case of smoke, therefore, this is a case of fire. The Cārvāka points out that this contention would be acceptable only if there is a causal relation between them? The Cārvāka reply would be that a causal relation, being only a kind of invariable relation, cannot be established by perception owing to the same difficulties.

The Cārvāka would further point out that a causal or any other invariable relation cannot be established merely by repeated perception of two things occurring together. For one must be certain that there is no other unperceived condition (*upādhi*) on which this relation depends. For example if a man perceives a number of times fire accompanied by smoke and on another occasion he infers the existence of smoke on the perception of fire, he would be liable to error, because he failed to notice a condition (*upādhi*), namely, wetness of fuel, on the presence of which alone fire is attended with smoke. So long as the relation between two phenomena is not proved to be unconditional, it is an uncertain ground for inference. And unconditionality or absence of conditions cannot be established beyond doubt by perception, as some conditions may always remain hidden and escape notice. Inference or testimony cannot be used for proving this unconditionality without a *petitio principii* because its validity also is being questioned here.

It is true that in life we very often act unsuspectingly on inference. But that only shows that we act uncritically on the wrong belief that our inference is true. It is a fact that sometimes our inference comes true and leads to successful results. But it is also a fact that sometimes inference leads to error as well. Truth is not then an unfailing character of all inferences; it is only an accident, and a separable one, that we find only in some inferences.

Inference cannot be regarded, therefore, as a *pramāṇa*—a sure source of valid cognition. Major premise, stating the invariable relation between the middle term (smoke) and the major (fire), were beyond doubt. But this invariable relation (*vyāpti*) can be established only if we have a knowledge of all cases of smoke and presence of fire. This, however, is not possible, as we cannot perceive even all the cases of smoke and fire existing now in different parts of the world, to speak nothing of those which existed in the past or will exist in the future. No invariable, universal relation (*vyāpti*) can, therefore, be established by perception. Neither can it be said to be based on another inference, because it will involve a *petitio*

principii, since the validity of that inference again has to be similarly proved. Nor can this vyāpti be based on the testimony (śabda) of reliable persons (who state that all cases of smoke are cases of fire). For, the validity of testimony itself requires to be proved by inference. Besides, if inference always depended on testimony, no one could infer anything by himself.

But it may be asked: though it is not possible to perceive all individual cases of smoke and fire, is it not possible to perceive the constant class-characters (sāmānya) like 'smokeness' and 'fireness' which must be invariably present in all instances of smoke and fire respectively? If so, then can we not say that we at least perceive a relation between smokeness and fireness and with its help infer the presence of fire, wherever we perceive smoke. The Cārvāka replies that even if we grant the perception of a relation between smokeness and fireness, we cannot know therefrom any invariable relation between all individual cases of smoke and fire. To be able to infer a particular fire, we must know that it is inseparably related to the particular smoke perceived. In fact, it is not possible even to know by perception what 'smokeness' or the class-character universally present in all particular instances of smoke is, because we do not perceive all cases of smoke. What is found has to be universally present in the unperceived ones. The difficulty of passing from particulars to the universal, therefore, remains here as before.

But it may be asked: if we do not believe in any fixed universal law underlying the phenomena of the world, how would we explain the uniformities that experienced objects possess? Why is fire always experienced to be hot and water to be cool? The Cārvāka reply is that it is due to the inherent natures (svabhāva) of things that they possess particular characters. No supernatural principle need be supposed to account for the properties of experienced objects of nature. There is neither any guarantee that uniformity perceived in the past would continue in future.

A modern student of inductive logic would be tempted to ask the Cārvāka: 'But can we not base our knowledge of the invariable relation between smoke