

Karman(-theory) in the MBh: Appendix: Selected text passages

Note:

Decimal numbers and catchwords in brackets refer to the relevant section(s) of the body of the paper and in particular to the list of axioms in section 3.

All quotations of the Sanskrit text of the MBh are taken from the electronic version of Tokunaga-Smith. For easier reference I have copied the relevant passages to accompany the translations or comments.

The order of presentation of selected passages is simply the sequence in the running text of the MBh – without any attempt at historical (cf. section 5) or theoretically systematic order.

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1,70-80; 1,81-88

[1.8 selection] [3.1 revivification]

“Yayāti” (1,70-80) and “The latter days of Yayāti” (1,81-88) are two subtexts of the - Adiparvan which can be identified from secondary literature as dealing with KT. The Yayāti-episode proper seems to be included in this characterization of the subtexts simply because it forms a narrative prelude, so to speak, to The Latter Days. However, alerted by the methodological postulate to identify the theorems of the KT, Kaca’s fate during his studentship with Śukra can be read as an example for “rebirth (without retribution)”. Śukra knows a “life-giving magic” (71.46, vB1:178) by which he revivifies the Dānavas killed in battle against the gods. (Let it be noted that the chapter is strictly episodic; there are no *discussions* about rebirth or revivification, no argumentative context. Yet, in the process of reading history backwards, I am struck by a text which makes gods and anti-gods so perseveringly cling to life and want to come back to it. The story would not be convincing as narrated episode unless the presupposed theorem of revivification as a possible and desirable part of brahminical lore were shared knowledge.) Śukra’s student Kaca is killed twice by the Dānavas; the second time (his ashes having been mixed into Śukra’s wine) he has to come out of Śukra’s belly when called back. This is clearly seen as a “birth” (it makes Kaca share with Śukra’s daughter Devayānī the same father and thus disqualifies him from marrying her, his “sister”). The further life-story (should we call it fate?) of both of them is determined by the curses which they pronounce against each other – actions which bear effect and function as punishment, but not on the agent (which could be read as evidence for a theorem about the causality of actions without retribution for the agent, and for a theorem about the moral quality of actions and intentions – Devayānī wanting to marry Kaca – which deserves punishment or reward. One might add the motif of the memory about the former existence (71.42, here attributed to the teacher’s grace). – These are elements (of KT?) which those who developed the KT (or those who imported and adapted it from Greater Magadha) may have shared as cultural background.

1,73.29

[3.3 retribution within same life]

ātmaḍoṣair niyacchanti sarve duḥkhasukhe janāḥ |
manye duṣcaritaṃ te 'sti yasyeyaṃ niṣkṛtiḥ kṛtā //1,73.29/

Retribution within the same life is pronounced as axiom, then applied to the specific case of Devayānī.

1,75.2-3

[3.3.1.1 retribution through punishment of descendants]

nādharmas carito rājan sadyah phalati gaur iva |
putresu vā naptrsū vā na ced ātmani paśyati |
phalaty eva dhruvam pāpam guru bhuktam ivodare //1,75.2/

In the quarrel about social status between Devayānī and Śarmisthā and their fathers, Vṛṣaparvan pronounces another axiom: Evil deeds bear (evil) fruits (retribution), if not as punishment of their agent, then on his descendants. (The axiom mentions only sons and grandsons, the episodic conflict is between daughters and fathers. [2.8 Persons])

1,75.11

[3.4 Fate explains biographical events]

sarva eva naravyāghra vidhānam anuvartate |
vidhānavihitam matvā mā vicitrāḥ kathāḥ kṛthāḥ //1,75.11/

Later, when Yayāti inquires about how Śarmisthā could be or have become Devayānī's slave, the latter makes appeal to fate as explanation: "Every one, tiger among kings, follows after fate. Take it as ordained by fate, and do not ask all kinds of questions." vB, MBh1:186 – the last pāda is translated idiomatically and rather freely; one could take it as the refusal to theorize about the situation.

Fate is known from many other passages as an instance that serves to explain differences in individual life circumstances or social rank. To inquire about the reasons for social differences is the kind of question explained by a theory. The verdict of fate qualifies as an axiom or theorem in such a theory. Here, however, there is not "theory" because there are no arguments; rather, Devayānī's remark must have been meant as flippant (she knows as well as the reader that the situation is the outcome of her doing). As evidence for the existence of a "theory of fate" to explain the same question which the "theory of moral retribution" explains differently, the sentence is all the more convincing.

12,78.40-41

[4.7 transfer of karman]

saṁkrāmayisyasi jarām yatheṣṭam nahuṣātmaja |
mām anudhyāya bhāvena na ca pāpam avāpsyasi //1,78.40/
vayo dāsyati te putro yaḥ sa rājā bhaviṣyati |
āyusmān kīrtimāṁś caiva bahvapatyas tathaiva ca //1,78.41/

On the whole the Yayāti episode is as much about the conflict between devas and asuras as it is about the conflict between brahmins and kṣatriyas and about brahmin supremacy. Read in search of traces of KT the concern about proper behaviour (*dharmesū*) and the fear of brahmin revenge in case of breach of dharma (shown by Vṛṣaparvan no less than by Yayāti) are instances of belief in the unavoidability of the effects of deeds and instances of belief in the moral quality of actions linked to the agent. Thus, the transfer of Yayāti's old age to one of his sons can be seen to follow the model of a "transfer of karman" (cf. 79.3); this is felt to be irregular (against the theorem of cause and effect, against the norms of dharma). It takes a brahmin's verdict to make this work and a brahmin's assurance that no "evil" will ensue.

1,81-88

[3.7 retribution in a next life]

The second part of the episode begins with Yayāti living as forest dweller (*vanavāsin*) and ascetic (the ascetic practices are detailed in the longer version of the story motivated by Janamejaya's question). He attains heaven; after some time he is made to fall from heaven but does not fall until the surface of the earth (retribution plus rebirth, failed).

While in heaven, Indra makes Yayāti recount the advice he gave to his youngest son – a sermon about the values and behaviour befitting renunciators (equanimity, non-violence, truthfulness, compassion, etc.). One should check the history of *saṃnyāsa* as context for KT!

1,82.7

[3.3.4.1 Destruction of merit through wrong behaviour]

ākruśyamāno nākrośen manyur eva titiksatah |
ākrośtāraṃ nirdahati sukr̥taṃ cāsyā vindati //1,82.7/

A small detail of a retribution theory or of a “transfer of effects” theory is interspersed (metrically set off from its context): “The wrath of a forbearing man burns the abuser and reaps all his good deeds.” (vB1:197 – the contradiction between being forbearing and burning with one's wrath remains unresolved).

1,84.4-10

[3..3.4.2 destruction of merit through rewarding experience, e..g. heaven] [3.6 decree of divine Arranger explains biographical events] [3.3.4.2 Merit is destroyed through rewarding experience] [3.3.3 Good deeds are rewarded in future, a yonder world]

Yayāti is thrown out of heaven due to his haughtiness. During his fall he is greeted and questioned by the seer Astaka and responds with an explanation of his equanimity (11) by the influence of fate (*daiva*, *diṣṭa*), combined the ordinance of a “Disposer” (*dhātṛ*, vB1:200) and the theorem that everything will be absorbed in *prakṛti* and that sorrow and happiness are equally transient.

pratikūlam karmanām pāpam āhus
tad vartate 'pravane pāpalokyam |
santo 'satām nānuvartanti caitad
yathā ātmaśāṃ anukūla vādī //1,84.4/
abhūd dhanam me vipulam mahad vai
viceṣṭamāno nādhigantā tad asmi |
evam pradhāryātma hite nivisto
yo vartate sa vijānāti jīvan //1,84.5/
nānābhāvā bahavo jīvaloke
daivādhīnā nastaceṣṭādhikārāḥ |
tat tat prāpya nā vihanyeta dhīro
diṣṭam balīya iti matvātma buddhyā //1,84.6/
sukham hi jantur yadi vāpi duḥkham
daivādhīnam vindati nātma śaktyā |
tasmād diṣṭam balavan manyamāno

na samjvaren nāpi hr̥ṣyet kadā cit //1,84.7/
 duhkhe na tapyen na sukhena hr̥ṣyet
 samena varteta sadaiva dhīrah |
 distaṃ balīya iti manyamāno
 na samjvaren nāpi hr̥ṣyet kadā cit //1,84.8/
 bhaye na muhyāmy āṣṭakāham kadā cit
 samtāpo me mānaso nāsti kaś cit |
 dhātā yathā mām vidadhāti loka
 dhruvaṃ tathāham bhaviteti matvā //1,84.9/
 samsvedajā aṇḍajā udbhidās ca
 sarīsrpāḥ krmāyo 'thāpsu matsyāḥ |
 tathāsmānas tr̥ṇakāsthā ca sarvaṃ
 dista kṣaye svām prakṛtiṃ bhajante //1,84.10/
 anityatām sukhaduḥkhasya buddhvā
 kasmāt samtāpam āṣṭakāham bhajeyam |
 kim kuryām vai kim ca kṛtvā na tapye
 tasmāt samtāpaṃ varjayāmy apramattaḥ //1,84.11/

If there is one question at the basis of these different elements it would probably be how to motivate and justify equanimity over against those who do not have it or who question its possibility or its utility. However, this does not fit easily with what Yayāti recounts about his sojourn in different and ever higher worlds. He falls because and when he has become *ksīṇapunya*, one whose merit is exhausted (which implies that his sojourn in all those higher worlds with their pleasures and rewards are to be understood as recompensation of merit – a case of the illustration of a theory of retribution combined with a theory of heavens (or more generally of yonder worlds, be they heavens or hells).

1,85

[2.1 Questions]

This chapter contains a discussion between Aṣṭaka and Yayāti. A. poses a series of questions which any KT would seem to have to answer:

Why (for what reason, *kāraṇa*) does one leave heaven(s) and come to earth? (1) [cf. 3.3.4.2

Destruction of merit through rewarding experience]

How does one become one whose merit is exhausted? (3)

Which attribute (characteristic, *kimviśiṣṭa*) leads to which world (lit. to whose residence)? (3)

What happens to those who have died, their bodies devoured by animals? (6)

How do the dead return? (9)

Is the body of the returned embryo (*garbha*) the same or a different one? (vB reads *kāyena* for the “meaningless” *kāmena*.) (12)

In which way (*kena*) does he acquire body, limbs, senses, consciousness? (13)

How does the reembodied being recognize himself? (17)

What does one have to do to attain pleasant worlds? (21)

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3,179-221 :: Karma and human destiny according to Mārkaṇḍeya (cf. Long:49-52)

Another subtext, rather a group of subtexts, identified in secondary literature as dealing with KT, is the encounter of the Pāṇḍavas with Mārkaṇḍeya during their exile (cf. van Buitenen's

summary). Of the long and intricate dialogue or collection of instructions (tracts) I include only a few observations on ch. 180-181.

3,180.39

[3.12.2 Theory is proven by appeal to authority] [2.8 Persons] [3.12.2 authority]

From the introduction of Mārkaṇḍeya on the episodic level it is worth noting that Mārkaṇḍeya is characterized as many thousands of years old, grown old in self-mortification. The models of vedic culture and religion do not mature to their rank of authority by undergoing rebirth.

vaiśampāyana uvāca:: tathā vadati vārṣṇeye dharmarāje ca bhārata !
atha paścāt tapovrddho bahuvarṣasahasradhrk !
pratyadrśyata dharmātmā mārkaṇḍeyo mahātapāḥ !!3180.39!

This relates to how M. is characterized by Yudhiṣṭhira in ch. 186. Y.'s characterization of Mārkaṇḍeya combines a number of theoretical elements (presupposed, not argued). M.'s old age is linked to his being witness to cosmological processes (beginnings and destructions). The question is about "the causes of everything". The phrase is revealing also about the epistemological presuppositions of a theory: M. is authoritative because he has directly experienced what he knows and talks about. *If* an explanation of the causes of what happens in the world is part of KT, it also would have to be based on experience – the experience of those who want to be liberated or who are liberated (released). [3.12.1 Theory is proven by experience]

etat pratyaksataḥ sarvaṁ pūrvavṛttam dvijottama !
tasmād icchāmahe śrotaṁ sarvaḥetvātmikāṁ kathāṁ !!3186.11!
anubhūtaṁ hi bahuśas tvāyāikena dvijottama !
na te 'sty aviditaṁ kiṁ cit sarvalokeṣu nityadā !!3186.12!

3,181.4-8

[2.1 Questions]

bhavaty eva hi me buddhir dr̥stvātmānaṁ sukhāc cyutaṁ !
dhārtarāstrāṁś ca durvṛttān rd̥hyataḥ prekṣya sarvaśaḥ !!3181.4!
karmaṇaḥ pūruṣaḥ kartā śubhasyāpy aśubhasya ca !
svaphalaṁ tad upāśnāti kathāṁ kartā svid īśvaraḥ !!3181.5!
atha vā sukhaduhkheṣu nṛnāṁ brahmavidāṁ varā !
iḥa vā kṛtaṁ anveti pāradehe 'tha vā punaḥ !!3181.6!
dehī ca dehaṁ samtyajya mṛgyamānaḥ śubhāśubhaiḥ !
kathāṁ samyujyate pretya iḥa vā dvijasattama !!3181.7!
aihalaukikāṁ evaitad utāho pāralaukikāṁ !
kva ca karmāṇi tiṣṭhanti jantoh pretasya bhārgava !!3181.8!

Y. poses five questions to Mārkaṇḍeya. I differ from vB in my understanding of the first question: "Is man the performer of his good and bad deeds and does he harvest his own fruits, or is god the doer?" (vB2:574: "the thought occurs to me that man is the agent of all acts, for good or for evil, and that he reaps his reward – so how does God act?") This question is put in the innerworldly perspective of one life, based on experience (the good people are not rewarded by happiness; while bad people prosper, v. 4).

Applying the doctrine (it is not an experience, rather it is contradicted by experience!) of retribution to the other world is introduced as an alternative (*atha vā*, v. 6) – the second question (vB translates as “Is it true that ...?”). The done deed (*kṛtam*) follows either here or in another body.

A “soul” (*dehin*) must be postulated if something connects the two bodies (the idea that karmic impulses work without a carrier substance – like a billard ball pushing another – is not considered) – this is presupposed in the third question: “How is the soul followed (“chased”) by and joined to the good and bad acts when (or after) leaving the body (OR: “If the soul is followed by good and bad deeds, how is it connected with them...) either in yonder world (i.e. before being reborn) or in this world (after taking on another body)?”

Fourth question: “Is an act confined to this world, or does it pursue one to the next? And where do the acts stay, Bhārgava, when a man is dead?” (vB, MBh2:575) ‘How’ and ‘where’ are two different questions which point at two different elements of the theory.

“Where do the acts stay when a man is dead?” (fifth question)

3,181.9

[3.12.3 Theory is proven by asking the right questions]

mārkaṇḍeya uvāca:: tvadyukto 'yam anupraśno yathāvad vadatām vara !
viditaṁ veditavyaṁ te sthityartham anupṛcchasi !!3181.9!

The first verse of Mārkaṇḍeya’s answer perhaps contributes to what a “theory” is expected to do: The question aims at fixing (establishing) what should or can be known as known; perhaps one could paraphrase ‘establish as doctrine (*viditam*) what has been only theoretical (*veditavyam*).’ (vB, MBh2:575 slightly differently: “you know what is there to know and you ask to establish the doctrine”, which might indicate that the doctrine to be established was a disputed one in need of establishing.)

3,181.10

[3.3.4 Happiness is reward for having done good]

atra te vartayiṣyāmi tad ihaikamanāḥ śṛṇu !
yathehāmutra ca naraḥ sukha-duḥkhāṁ upāśnute !!3181.10!

Verse 10 announces an answer to a question which Y. did not put (“how here and beyond a man finds happiness or unhappiness” vB, MBh2:575). If Y’s questions presuppose KT, then the theory is here understood to (or claims to) explain *how* individuals experience pleasure (happiness) and suffering (unhappiness.) (‘How’ is to be distinguished from ‘Why’.)

3,181.11

[3.17 Plurality emanates from a common source] [3.6 The decree of a divine Arranger explains biographical events]

nirmalāni śārīrāṇi viśuddhāni śārīrīṇām !

sasarja dharmatantrāṇi pūrvotpannah prajāpatiḥ !!3181.11!

M. begins by introducing a Creator (god), *prajāpati*, and a “theory” of a golden age (golden by ethical, biological and psychological criteria). The theory of a creator god transposes the responsibility for what happens to human beings in the world (happiness or unhappiness) from man to god. If this is recognized as answer to Y.’s question any statement about the beginning of the world (creation, emanation, etc.) turns into an element of KT. This particular creation theory concerns the relation of body and soul, the soul being essentially pure. [3.14 Body and soul can be distinguished]

3,181.12

[3.13 Action presupposes a body]

amoghabalasamkalpāḥ suvratāḥ satyavādinah !
brahmabhūtā narāḥ puṇyāḥ purāṇāḥ kurunandana !!3181.12!

If it takes a golden age at some theoretical beginning of world and life to make “pure” bodies plausible, we may conclude that authors and listeners shared the view that the body (in contrast with the soul) is something impure which – judging from how people are said to have behaved originally – has something to do with how one acts in and with this body.

3,181.13-16

[3.12 A theory is proven by what happens while dying]

sarve devaiḥ samāyānti svacchandena nabhastalam !
tataś ca punar āyānti sarve svacchandacāriṇah !!3181.13!
svacchandamaranās cāsan narāḥ svacchandaḥjīvinah !
alpabādhā nirātāṅkā siddhārthā nirupadravāḥ !!3181.14!
drastāro devasamghānām rṣinām ca mahātmanām !
pratyakṣāḥ sarvadharmānām dāntā vigatamatsarāḥ !!3181.15!
āsan varṣasahasrāṇi tathā putrasahasriṇah !

What distinguishes these “ancient men” from present ones is the capacity to determine the moment of death and the cosmic region in which they wanted to live. Again we may conclude that in the present time of the text it was the lack of mastery over dying and a shared belief that one alternately lives in this world and in some yonder world that determined the attitude to living in this body.

3,181.16cd-21

[3.5 Time explains different conditions of life] [3.1 Life is a repeated event]

[3.2 All actions have an effect] [3.3.2 Evil is punished in hells] [3.7 Retribution operates in a next life (rebirth)]

tataḥ kālāntare 'nyasmin prthivītalacāriṇah !!3181.16!
kāmakrodhābhibhūtās te māyāvyājopajīvinah !
lobhamohābhibhūtās ca tyaktā devais tato narāḥ !!3181.17!
aśubhaiḥ karmabhiḥ pāpās tiryakṇ narakagāminah !
saṁsāreṣu vicitreṣu pacyamānāḥ punaḥ punaḥ !!3181.18!
mogheṣṭā moghasamkalpā moghajñānā vicetasah !

sarvātisaṅkinaś caiva samvrttāḥ kleśabhāginah !
 aśubhaiḥ karmabhiś cāpi prāyaśaḥ paricihnitāḥ !!3181.19!
 dauskulyā vyādhibahulā durātmāno 'pratāpinah !
 bhavanty alpāyusah pāpā raudrakarmaphalodayāḥ !
 nāthantah sarvakāmānām nāstikā bhinnasetavah !!3181.20!
 jantoh pretasya kaunteya gatiḥ svair iha karmabhiḥ !

There is no explanation (“theory”) in our text about why this changed apart from an unspecific reference to a different period of time (*kālāntare 'nyasmin*, “Then in the course of time ...” vB2:575) from which, however one might conclude that the belief in (recurring) changes of time is yet another element connected with KT. According to the description of the text, the moral depravation of human beings, the retribution for evil deeds, and the (retributive) punishment in hells or animal existences (“rebirth, transmigration”, *samsāra*) form a conceptual unit. More than one axiom is applied in this passage. (Or, from the perspective of literary analysis, the passage qualifies as collection of distinguishable statements.)

V, 21ab seems to summarize the answer to question 2 which, thus, would consist in the above description of the *fact* of retribution through rebirth.

3,181.21cd-25

[3.15 The effects of actions attach to the soul.]

prājñasya hīnabuddheś ca karmakośah kva tiṣṭhati !!3181.21!
 kvasthas tat samupāśnāti sukṛtam yadi vetarāt !
 iti te darśanam yac ca tatrāpy anunayam śṛṇu !!3181.22!
 ayam ādiśarīreṇa devasrstena mānavah !
 śubhānām aśubhānām cā kurute samcāyam mahat !!3181.23!
 āyuso 'nte prahāyedaṁ ksīnaprāyaṁ kalevaram !
 sambhavaty eva yugapad yonau nāsty antarābhavah !!3181.24!
 tatrāsya svakṛtam karma chāyevānugatam sadā !
 phalaty atha sukhārho vā duḥkhārho vāpi jāyate !!3181.25!

The next section is introduced by explicit reference to Y.’s question no. 3. But M. does not really answer it, unless by teaching that there is no interval between embodiments (which does away with the need for an explanation of how the effects of (bodily) deeds can be stored outside of a body after this body’s death.) The deeds follow the body like a shadow.

3,181.26-27

[3.21 Liberation is brought about by knowledge]

kṛtāntavidhisamyuktah sa jantur laksanaiḥ śubhaiḥ !
 aśubhaiḥ vā nirādāno lakṣyate jñānadrṣṭibhiḥ !!3181.26!
 eṣā tāvad abuddhīnām gatiḥ uktā yudhiṣṭhirā !
 atah param jñānavatām nibodha gatim ūttamām !!3181.27!

In vB’s translation the next two verses refer to another opinion (“theory”): “They who lack the eye of insight believe that this creature is governed by the rule of death and is unaffected by either good or bad markings; but this has been declared to be the course of the stupid, Yudhiṣṭhira, now learn the superior course of the wise beyond that.” (vB2:575) vB reads

ajñānadr̥ṣṭibhiḥ in 26d (with avagraha, cf. p. 831). No matter whether the view is ascribed to the ignorant or to the wise, there seems to have been the opinion that there are beings (perhaps those who are not endowed with intelligence, e.g., animals?) which are not or cannot be marked by good and bad deeds. The teaching to which the text gives importance concerns the knowledgeable who go “a highest way” or “to an ultimate goal”.

The chapter ends with a eulogy of knowledge as (further) force influencing human destiny after death (29-31), a list of three complementary forces influencing man’s destiny (“fate”, “chance”, “their acts”, vB2:576) and verses in longer metre explicating four options of how behaviour in this world and the fate in yonder world are connected (35-41).

These interpretative remarks no less than the text (and its proper translation and understanding) must suffice to document the difficulty of identifying KT in the MBh and to justify that I interrupt the presentation of the “Session with Mārkaṇḍeya” at this point.

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11. Strīparvan

11.2-7 is a section entitled “Vidura’s ‘Way of Understanding’ and the ‘Mystery of Rebirth’”. The chapters contain frequent references to axioms of KT (they are not among those identified as dealing with KT, e.g. by Hill) and are a response to Dhṛtarāṣṭra’s lament:

11.1.17-19

[3.2 All actions have an effect.] [3.3.2 Evil will be punished in future.] [3.6 The decree of a divine Arranger explains biographical events, different conditions of life.] [3.4 Fate explains biographical events, different conditions of life.] [3.3.1 Misery is punishment for evil done.] [3.9 Effects of action can affect others.]

na smarāmy ātmanah kim cit purā saṃjaya duṣkṛtam !
yasyedaṃ phalam adyeha mayā mūḍhena bhuḥjyāte !!11001.17!
nūnam hy apakṛtam kim cin mayā pūrveṣu janmasu !
yena mām duḥkhabhāgeṣu dhātā karmasu yuktavān !!11001.18!
pariṇāmaś ca vayasah sarvabandhuḥsayaś ca me !
suhṛnmitravināśaś ca daivayogād upāgataḥ !
ko 'nyo 'sti duḥkhitataro mayā loke pumān iha !!11001.19!

(Dhṛtarāṣṭra speaks:) “Samjaya, I do not recall doing anything wrong in the past that might have yielded as its fruit what I suffer here and now as a dazed fool. But obviously I did something wrong in earlier births, since the Creator has joined me to such wretched deeds. The waning of my powers, the destruction of all my kinsmen, the annihilation of my friends and allies have all come upon me through the operation of fate.<endnote>_ Is there a man in the world more miserable than I?” (JLF, MBh7:31, with an important endnote on “fate” p. 661)

Retribution is assumed for the same life and for rebirth. Divine intervention is assumed. Fate appears as a parallel explanation. When Vaiśampāyana tells Dh. (v. 23) “You did nothing of your proper business because you were greedy and too eager for results” we have an ethical dimension to retribution. Effects of wrong action (politically or morally wrong? – check terminology) effect the agent as well as others (e.g., those killed in consequence of his

actions). If Dhṛtarāṣṭra is searching for an explanation (theory?), it would be an explanation of (the reasons of) his misery.

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12. Śāntiparvan

The first subtexts of the ŚP (7-19 and 20-38) narrate attempts to persuade Y. to take over the royal responsibilities. What is revealing for the cultural dimensions of KT is exactly this context of kingly duties rather than the goals and values connected with *mokṣa*.

12,7-19 represent series of statements of opinions (discussions? [2.8 persons] [2.6 Discourse.]) of different representatives of family and society (including citations of other discussions about the same topic – Janaka and his wife [2.2 Intertextuality.]). The arguments of 12,7-19 need to be examined for explicit and implicit counterpositions. Fatalism and a philosophy of Time (e.g., 12,26.5-12) are also a kind of KT [3.4 Fate explains biographical events, different conditions of life]. Time substitutes the retribution theory (26.5), it is offered as explanation or theory for cases which retribution cannot explain (.6) [3.5 Time explains biographical events, different conditions of life.]; Time theory is more comprehensive as it explains also the changes in nature (.8-10) – which allows to identify a question which KT should also answer: are all actions, all changes effects of previous actions; and that will lead logically to the question whether and how it all started. Birth and death and change in nature are the common element in the listed phenomena, that for which explanation is thought (by a theory of Time) – but is theory made by just giving a name to the unseen, inexplicable force that causes birth, death and change?

I jump directly to **12,32**, a systematizing chapter which enumerates various theories. This throws a different light on the preceding chapters, the episodes of which do not spontaneously look like illustrations of KT.

vyāsa uvāca:: īśvaro vā bhavet kartā puruṣo vāpi bhārata !
haṭho vā vartate loke karmajam vā phalam smṛtam !!12032.11!
īśvarena niyuktā hi sādhu asādhu ca pārthiva !
kurvaṇti puruṣāḥ karma phalam īśvaragāmi tat !!12032.12!
yathā hi puruṣaś chindyād vrkṣam paraśunā vane !
chettur eva bhavet pāpam paraśor na katham cana !!12032.13!
atha vā tad upādānāt prāpnuyuh karmanah phalam !
dandaśastrakṛtam pāpam puruṣe tan na vidyate !!12032.14!
na caitad istam kaunteya yad anyena phalam kṛtam !
prāpnuyād iti tasmāc ca īśvare tan niveśaya !!12032.15!
atha vā puruṣaḥ kartā karmanoh śubhāpāpayoh !
na param vidyate tasmād evam anyac chubham kuru !!12032.16!
na hi kaś cit kva cid rājan diṣṭāt pratinivartate !
dandaśastrakṛtam pāpam puruṣe tan na vidyate !!12032.17!
yadi vā manyase rājan haṭhe lokam pratisthitam !
evam apy aśubham karma na bhūtam na bhaviṣyati !!12032.18!
athābhīpattir lokasya kartavyā śubhāpāpayoh !
abhipannatamam loke rājñām udyatadandanam !!12032.19!
athāpi loke karmāṇi samāvartanta bhārata !

śubhāśubhaphalam ceme prāpnuvantīti me matih !!12032.20!
 evam satyam śubhādeśam karmanas tat phalam dhruvam !
 tyajā tad rājaśārdūla maivam śokē manah kṛthāh !!12032.21!
 svadharṁ vartamānasya sāpavāde 'pi bhārata !
 evam ātmaparityāgas tava rājan na śobhanah !!12032.22!
 vihitānīha kaunteya prāyaścittāni karminām !
 śarīravāms tāni kuryād aśarīrah parābhavet !!12032.23!
 tad rājañ jīvamānas tvam prāyaścittam carisyasi !
 prāyaścittam akṛtvā tu pretya taptāsi bhārata !!12032.24!

No comment, just Jim's translation (with the endnotes following):

[3.6 The decree of a divine Arranger explains biographical events, different conditions of life.] [3.2 All actions serve a purpose, have an effect] [3.12.2 appeal to authorities] [3.8 Effects of action are reaped only by the agent.] [3.3 The effect of actions is determined by the moral quality of the action ("retribution", without rebirth).] [3.4 Fate explains biographical events, different conditions of life.] [3.18 Ethical norms must determine actions (*dharma*).] [3.22 The effect of actions can be modified.] [3.14 Body and soul can be distinguished.]

"Bhārata, the doer of deeds may be the Lord,<endnote> or it may be man. Or maybe chance operates in the world. Or maybe what happens are the consequences produced from one's past deeds, as is taught in tradition.

When men who have been commanded by the Lord<endnote> do a good or a bad deed, the consequences of that deed go to the Lord. For obviously if a man were to chop down a tree in the forest with an axe, the evil would belong just to the man doing the chopping and not at all to the axe.

"But maybe those men do acquire the consequences of those deeds by taking them over from him."<endnote>[fn: That is, from the Lord. :fn]

No, the evil done through meting out punishment or wielding weapons does not belong to the man who does those things.[fn: That is, the evil occasioned by punishment or war does not belong to the men who only carry out the orders of another. :fn] It would not be right, son of Kuntī, that one should acquire consequences effected by another. Therefore assign it to the Lord.

Or, it may be that man is the doer of deeds good and evil,[fn: = the second of the four possibilities Vyāsa listed in stanza 11. :fn] and there is nothing more to it than that. So then, do another good deed.<endnote>

Now truly, king, no one, anywhere, ever deviates from what has been decreed,[fn: "Decreed" is often a synonym of "fate"; fate is a regular subtheme of this general theme, but was not listed among Vyāsa's four possibilities in stanza 11. :fn] so the evil done through meting out punishment or wielding weapons does not belong to the man who does those things.

Or, king, if you think the world is based on chance,[fn: = the third of Vyāsa's four possibilities. :fn] then there never has been a bad deed, and never will there be one. And furthermore,[fn: Vyāsa adds another point rebutting the primacy of chance. :fn] people require that good and evil be accounted for,<endnote> and what is most accounted for in the world is kings' wielding the rod of punishment.

And Bhārata, deeds do come back around in the world,[fn: Regarding the fourth item on his list, Vyāsa affirms his belief in karma as taught by tradition. :fn] and men acquire their good and bad consequences; that is what I believe about it.

So the command to do good is right, the consequences of deeds are certain. O tiger among kings, abandon this. Do not let your heart settle into grief. As you have been following your

proper Law, Bhārata, even if it has been subject to criticism, abandoning yourself like this is not becoming, king. Expiatory measures have been prescribed here, son of Kuntī, for those who have done deeds. One should perform them while still in possession of his body, for once he is deprived of his body, he shall perish. So, king, you will perform expiation while still alive. If you have not done expiation, you will roast when you die, Bhārata.” (JLF, MBh7:241f.)

The endnotes document better than I could that there is not *one* theory and to which extent any statement in the text requires explanation:

“32.11. *the doer of deeds may be the Lord*: The basic categories in the review of action given here, as elsewhere in the *MBh*, distinguish humans controlling events (the efficacy of *pauruṣa karman*, “human action”) and their not controlling them. This second category, where events are not controlled by people, is then generally divided between events happening with some kind of design or intention (nature, “*svabhāva*, at the universal level], fate” [*daiva, diṣṭa, vidhāna, niyati*], the consequences of previously done action, or what is effected by the Lord, the Designer, or Arranger [*Vidhātṛ*], and the Creator” [*Dhātṛ*]) and those that just happen, absurdly, without any design (chance” [*hatha, yaddreccā*], and Time” [*kalā*]). Key passages in the *MBh* that treat this issue are found in an argument against Yudhiṣṭhira’s general conduct that Draupadī pursues vigorously soon after the Pāṇdavas begin their exile in the forest. See in particular *MBh* 3.31.1-42 and 3.33.1-55, especially, verses 20 ff. of the former, where Draupadī paints a frightening picture of Gods control of human behavior, and verses 10 ff. and 30 ff. of the latter.

But though this passage uses some of the themes and categories of the discussion in the third book of the *MBh* (which was focused upon the issue of the meaningfulness of human action), it is focused on a different issue. In the passage here Vyāsa tries to alleviate Yudhiṣṭhira’s sense of personal responsibility by presenting five different ways to view the issue of responsibility for what one does (the violence wrought by kings, in particular) and then stating that a human being, the king in particular, is not culpable for the violence he wreaks.

32.12-13. *commanded by the Lord: īśvarena niyuktāḥ*. The first understanding of action Vyāsa mentions, the Lords performing actions by using people, resembles closely Draupadī’s sarcastic diatribe in 3.31.20-42, which ends with her bitter statement that of course the Lord is mighty enough to evade suffering the consequences of his violent deeds. The word *īśvara* here might be interpreted merely to signify a person’s master,” or boss.” The logic of Vyāsa’s points would still hold, but that restricted sense of the word does not seem commensurate with the way the *MBh* sets up this theme here and elsewhere. ((Cf. the *bhakti* solution in the BhG, section 5 of the paper.))

32.14ab *by taking them over from him: tadupādānāt*. I take this verse as an objection to the thesis advanced by Vyāsa in 12 and 13. The objection has the same subject as verse 12 above (*puruṣāḥ*, “men”), qualified in the same way as stipulated there (*īśvarena niyuktāḥ*, “commanded by the Lord”). Thus the objector describes here an understanding in which people take responsibility from God for actions he has determined by “taking them over from him,” that is, presumably by their own desiring the fruits of those actions and by their own forming of an intention to perform them.

32.16. *So then, do another good deed: tasmād evaṃ anyac chubam kuru*. Vyāsa’s cryptic evaluation of action that the human agent and only the human agent is responsible for seems

to be only a flat rebuttal of Yudhisthira's belief that he has done something fundamentally wrong. This evaluation of royal violence is consistent with Vyāsa's overall views, as expressed recently in the "Persuasion of Yudhisthira" (e.g., at 23.8-14). Vyāsa will shortly counsel Yudhisthira to perform expiation (*prāyaścitta*) to undo the wrong that was involved in his fighting the war. Again we must bear in mind the fundamentally rhetorical nature of this speech. Vyāsa's purpose is to get Yudhisthira moving on the path of kingship, not to state consistently a philosophy of human action.

32.19. *people require that good and evil be accounted for: athābhipattir lokasya kartavyā śubhapāpayoh.* The word *abhipatti* signifies, broadly, "apprehension," but the word involves more than merely cognitive apprehension." More than the intellectual differentiation of good and evil events, the apprehension signified by *abhipatti* is the taking, or assigning, of responsibility for good and evil as deeds—deeds which, like all karma, start with a person's desires and end with that person's enduring the future consequences of his or her deed. The argument that everything that happens is mere chance involves no such *abhipatti* of the good and evil people experience. Vyāsa implies that he thinks people cannot, or should not, abide such chaos." (JLF, MBh7:708f.)

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I include a few statements from RDhP about effects//retribution, mostly without rebirth!

51.14

[3.3.3 Good deeds will be rewarded in future, later in this life, or in heaven(s).]

pañcāśatam sat ca kurupravīra !
śeṣam dinānām tava jīvitasya !
tataḥ śubhaiḥ karmaphalodayais tvam !
sameṣyase bhīṣma vimucya deham !!12051.14!

<Tristubh> "Hero of the Kurus, fifty-six days remain for you to live.<endnote>_ Then you will abandon your body and realize the rewards of your good deeds." (JLF, MBh7: 283)

51.16

[3.3.3 Good deeds will be rewarded in future, later in this life, or in heaven(s).]

vyāvrttamātre bhagavaty udīcīm !
sūrye diśam kālavaśāt prapanne !
gantāsi lokān puruṣapravīra !
nāvartate yān upalābhya vidvān !!12051.16!

<Tristubh> "O hero among men, as soon as the blessed Sun has turned back to the northern direction under the compulsion of Time, you will go to the heavenly worlds which a wise man never leaves." (JLF, MBh7:283)

Never leaving does not allow for reincarnation, though the heavenly worlds are a place for retribution (cf. 51.14).

58.13-16

[2.2 intertextuality] [3.3.3 Good deeds will be rewarded in future, later in this life, or in heaven(s).] [3.3.2 Evil will be punished in future, later in this life, or in hell(s).]

utthānam hi narendrānām brhaspatir abhāsata |
 rājadharmasya yan mūlam ślokaṃś cātra nibodha me !!12058.13!
 utthānenāmrtam labdham utthānenāsura hataḥ |
 utthānena mahēndrena śraisthyam prāptam divīha ca !!12056.14!
 utthāna dhīraḥ puruṣo vāg dhīrān adhitisthati |
 utthāna dhīram vāg dhīrā ramayanta upāsate !!12058.15!
 utthāna hīno rājā hi buddhimān api nityaśah |

”Pay attention to these stanzas where Brhaspati has declared that the kings' own energetic efforts are the foundation of their performance of their Meritorious, Lawful Duties.

‘The nectar was gained through energetic effort, and the Asuras were killed through energetic effort. Great Indra gained his preeminence in heaven through energetic effort.’

‘The man who is adept in making energetic efforts stands above those who are skilled in speech. Those skillful with speech wait upon and entertain the man who is adept at energetic effort.’

‘The king who is deficient in making energetic efforts, even if he is keenly intelligent, is constantly subject to his enemies' assaults, like a serpent that has no venom.’”

(JLF, MBh7: 303)

Indra's example (*divi*īha ca*) implies a beyond in which effort (= action) is retributed.

62.1

[3.3.3 Good deeds will be rewarded in future, later in this life, or in heaven(s).] [3.18 Ethical norms must determine actions (*dharma*).]

śivān sukhān mahodarkān ahiṃsrām! lokasammatān |
 brūhi dharmān sukhopāyān mādvidhānām sukhāvahān !!12062.1!

Yudhisthira's question summarizes a number of attributes of “action” which betray something like a karman theory. JF's translation “Lawful, Meritorious Deeds” stands for the one Skt. word *dharmān*.

62.8

[3.3.3 Good deeds will be rewarded in future, later in this life, or in heaven(s).]

yo yasmin kurute karma yādṛśam yena yatra ca |
 tādrśam tādrśenaiva sa guṇam pratipadyate !!12062.8!

”Whatever sort of work someone performs in relation to whatever things – and however and wherever – in exactly corresponding ways he attains the attributes corresponding to that exact work.” (JLF, MB7:320f.)

62.10-11

[3.5 Time explains biographical events, different conditions of life.] [3.5.1 Time repeats itself (cyclically).]

Talks about Time as agent. (Partly incomprehensible verse, cf. JF:730)

kālasamcoditaḥ kālah kālaparyāya niścitaḥ |
 uttamādhama madhyāni karmāni kurute 'vaśah !!12062.10!
 antavanti pradānāni purā śreyah karāni ca |

svakarmanirato loko hy akṣaraḥ sarvato mukhaḥ !!12062.11!

“Time, which is driven by Time and fixed by the turnings of Time, necessarily does deeds high, low, and middling; some are finite gifts, and formerly some effected the highest good.<endnote>_ It[fn: = Time. :fn] is a never-decaying, universal realm absorbed in its own work.” (JLF, MBh7: 321)

66.26f.

[3.9 Effects of action can affect others (“transfer of karman”).]

A passage about the transfer of merit and evil:

yo dharmakuśalā loke dharmam kurvanti sādḥavah |
pālītā yasya viṣaye pādo 'mśas tasya bhūpateḥ !!12066.26!
dharmārāmān dharmaparān ye na rakṣanti mānavān |
pārthivāḥ puruṣavyāghra teṣāṃ pāpaṃ haranti te !!12066.27!

“Where the strictly virtuous men of society are protected – those men who are conversant with Law and do their Lawful Deeds – the king in that kingdom receives a quarter portion.[fn: Of the Merit (*dharma*.) :fn] And, O tiger among men, when kings do not protect people who delight in Law, who are devoted to Law, they get the evil of their people. And, blameless Yudhisthira, all those who are supposed to assist kings in protecting their subjects get a share in the Merit done by those others.[fn: Usually a person acquires karma only through his or her own deeds. :fn]” (JLF, MBh7:331f.)

At the end of this chapter and of this section on dharmic behaviour, the yogic ideal comes in not literally as renunciation but as an attitude of mind. If this indicates a relative chronology (cf. BhG), passages without this “Überhöhung” might qualify as relatively older.

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12,168 (=DS174)

(cf. paper section 4.)

If the theoretical weight which I attribute to “context” is justified the whole of the MDhP turns into a context for KT since the first chapter of this large section of the MBh evokes KT.

bhīṣma uvāca:: sarvatra vihitō dharmāḥ svargyah satyaphalaṃ tapaḥ !
bahudvārasya dharmasya nehāsti viphalā kriyā !!12168.2!

Y. had asks about the lifestyle of the adherents of stages of life (*āśraminām*, which Deussen/Strauss take as referring only to those practicing asceticism) in contrast to that of kings earlier explained; the first verse of Bhīṣma’s answer summarizes the theory of retribution (or; if isolated even more strictly, only of the effectiveness of actions, perhaps even only of ritual actions). However, “heavenly” (*svargyah*, which could indicate the origin of dharma, “from heaven”) (more likely) describes its fruit (“leading to heaven”): the dharma which extends to everybody//everywhere and leads to heaven is (a kind of) asceticism that is sure to bear fruit. (DS translate quite differently due to difference of readings; that tradition introduced the dimension of “after death” (variant *pretya*) does have to do with KT!)

The chapter teaches about how to deal with misery and pain: overcome desire (*trsnā*), cultivate knowledge, live in equanimity. Within the ‘intertextual’ narration of what a sad king was taught by a brahmin are verses attributed to a frustrated courtesan. [2.2 Intertextuality.]

anartho 'pi bhavaty artho daivāt pūrvakṛtena vā !
sambuddhāham nirākārā nāham adyājīṭendriyā !!12168.51!

I quote Deussen’s translation because it allows me to illustrate my pladoyer *not* to read KT into the text where it may not have been intended or expressed.

“61. (6519.) Auch Unglück kann zum Glück ausschlagen vermöge des Schicksals oder der Werke in einer frühern Geburt; ich bin erwacht, ich bin frei von sinnlichen Gestalten, ich bin jetzt nicht mehr eine, welche die Sinne nicht überwunden hatte.”

Retribution is there, “frühere Geburt” is interpretation! *Pūrvakṛta* might refer to the earlier behaviour of Piṅgalā in this life of hers. On the other hand, to have conquered the senses might refer to an explanation of what determines and activates human behaviour which would be philosophical if reference is to an analysis of sense activity in the psychological and ontological setup of human beings. To deny rebirth in one case and to see a reference to a systematic reflection about the human senses is both due to my specific perspective and may lead to overinterpretation in both directions, the exclusions as much as the included implications. [3.3 The effect of actions is determined by the moral quality of the action (“retribution”, without rebirth).]

12,168.53 (=DS174.62)

[3.12.4 Theory is based on arguments.]

bhīṣma uvāca:: etaiś cānyaś ca viprasya hetumadbhiḥ prabhāṣitaiḥ !
paryavasthāpito rājā senajin mumude sukham !!12168.53!

In the last verse of the chapter Bhīṣma characterizes the conversation between Senajit and the brahmin as “philosophical” by calling it “reasoned”. This deserves noting because it would include the topics touched upon as falling into the domain of “theory”, perhaps even of karma theory.

12,187 (=DS194)

[2.5 Context] [3.16 Action presupposes plurality.] [3.17 Plurality emanates from a common source through a process of emanation.] [3.17.2 Levels of (metaphysical) reality.] [3.22.2 Effects of actions can be modified by mental detachment.]

The formulated question comprises two topics (explicated in *502), the nature of the (Inner) Self and the origin of “this” (which might be the *adhyātman* or “this world” as suggested by the interpolation).

The answer is a tract which answers not just one question (and this may be true for most theories). The following tract apparently answers the first question in just one verse (3); there follows a description of the origin of the senses and their objects from the Great Elements (5-13). There follows the request or demand to know the Attributes (listed but not called *guṇa*) as conditions//modifications based on “it” (i.e., everything mentioned so far?). To know the senses and the coming and going of everything originated (*bhūta*) leads to tranquility (‘how

can *śama* be reached?’ would be the question to which this statement answers). *Buddhi* leads the *gunas*, which might be the Attributes but could also be what the senses cognize (transport to the *buddhi*). Sense experience is the topic of the next section, topically connected with the Attributes through what is taught about the threefold conditions (*bhāva*) (14-23). 24-44 contain a description of the characteristics, functions, effects of the Attributes. (‘What distinguishes or how can one recognize *tamas*, *rajas*, and *sattva*?’) Only the next verse concerns KT directly. It begins a section describing the life and the attitude of the liberated person (one might use the passage as documenting the idea of *jīvanmukti*).

tyaktvā yah prākṛtaṁ karma nityam ātmaratir munih !

sarvabhūtātmabhūtaḥ syāt sa gacchet paramām gatim !!12187.45!

“The sage who having given up (abandoned) action that springs from the Matrix [and] who rests content in [or with] his Self, his self identical with the self of all beings (cf. Malinar2007:111-113) reaches the ultimate goal.”

My point is not what this text tells us about cosmogony or about epistemology or about liberation (the passage answers many a question about these topics and is in that sense theoretical) – there exists quite a bit to read *about* this chapter. What the occurrence of KT here illustrates is how some elements of a theory gain significance (“meaning”) by their contexts and connections; and vice versa, an apparently isolated or seemingly misplaced element may provide context (and meaning) to the surrounding doctrine(s). In the example of 12,187.45, the description of the *gunas* that precedes has no connection with KT and cosmogony or metaphysics or renunciation; but the mention of *prakṛti*, its activities and the ascetic’s joy about *ātman* creates such a context. The *gunas* explain what causes the impulse for activities and why activities may be so different. Another explanation is provided by describing how the senses function. The two theorems are connected by the theorem of emanation of plural entities from a single source (which has a metaphysical-cosmogonic and a psychological-epistemological dimension). (The emanation-theorem is an answer to the second formulated question, v. 1.) Verse 45 answers to a question like ‘Why and how is liberation possible?’ The answer is made up of a complex theory that allows me to consider the epistemological theorem about five senses and their corresponding objective realms and their dependence (ontologically as well as epistemologically) on *manas* and *buddhi* (i.e., basically elements of what is later called Sāṃkhya philosophy) as subservient to a KT which in turn answers questions of ‘salutology’.

I quote also 12,187.58 because, read with an “atomizing” analytical approach, it documents a KT which contradicts or modifies the axiom of the unavoidable effect of action by postulating that there is a special mode of acting (with detached mental attitude) which does not produce effects *and neutralizes* the effects of earlier acts. There is no rebirth involved (it is even explicitly excluded by *iha*); and there is no retribution theory (actions may have effects of different qualities but are not morally classified in good and bad).

yat karoty anabhisamdhīpūrvakam !

tac ca nirṇudati yat purā kṛtam !

nāpriyam tad ubhayam kutah priyam !

tasya taj janayatiha kurvatah !!12187.59!

“What somebody does without attachment (or purpose) repels what he did earlier; it produces for the agent nothing unpleasant, both of it (pleasant and unpleasant), much less (anything) pleasant in this (life or world).”

Cp. Deussen p. 186: “Wer da handelt ohne vorangehende Absicht und zugleich abstößt, was er vordem getan hat, für den besteht beides nicht mehr, die Unlust und noch weniger die Lust. Das bewirkt an einem hinieden vollständig [die Erkenntnis].”

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203.37ff.

[3.14 Body and soul can be distinguished.] [3.21 Liberation is brought about by knowledge or in Consciousness.] [3.15 The effects of actions attach to the soul.] [3.1 Life (birth, life, and death) is a repeated event.]

The *puruṣa* (37) = *ātman* (39) is the same in all beings, is the subject of the cognitions activated by the senses, exists in the body, can be perceived through *yoga* (39), is accompanied (followed) by the bodies, is separate from the body as can be concluded from dream experience, it is permeated by action, produced by action, led elsewhere by action (*karmanā*, sg.). Which leads to the announcement of further instruction about how reemodiment functions (43).

yathā dīpaḥ prakāśātmā hrasvo vā yadi vā mahān !
jñānātmānam tathā vidyāt puruṣaṁ sarvajantuṣu !!12203.37!
so 'tra vedayāte vedyam sa śrṇōti sa paśyati !
kāraṇam tasya deho 'yaṁ sa kartā sarvakarmanām !!12203.38!
agnir dārugato yadvad bhinne dārau na drśyate !
tathaivātmā śārīrastho yogenaivātra drśyate !!12203.39!
nadīsv āpo yathā yuktā yathā sūrye marīcayah !
saṁtanvānā yathā yānti tathā dehāḥ śārīrinām !!12203.40!
svāpnayoge yathaivātmā pañcendriyasamāgataḥ !
deham utsrjya vai yāti tathaivātropalabhyate !!12203.41!
karmanā vyāpyate pūrvam karmanā copapadyate !
karmanā nīyate 'nyatra svakṛtena balīyasā !!12203.42!
sa tu dehād yathā deham tyaktvānyam pratipadyate !
tathā taṁ sampravakṣyāmi bhūtagrāmaṁ svakarmajam !!12203.43!

12,205 (=DS212)

[3.11 Actions are polluting.] [3.16 Action presupposes plurality.]

The chapter deals with the question why action is to be considered a pollution of the embodied soul. Sense activity, the resulting ‘Conditions’ like desire and anger, and the Attributes as their determining base are all mentioned to qualify action as negative. This negative evaluation may have a moral component (through the ‘echo’ of dharma mentioned earlier in the chapter and through the pleasantness of the worlds to be attained), but the more central idea is that of pollution which needs to be burnt or melted away. “He who desires to keep the body going, even if he commits nothing improper, if he gives a loophole to action, he does not attain pleasant worlds.” (5)

śārīravān upādatte mohāt sarvaparigrahān !
kāmakrodhādibhir bhāvair yukto rājasatāmasaiḥ !!12205.4!
nāśuddham ācāret tasmād abhīpsan dehayāpanam !
karmaṇo vivaram kurvan na lokān āpnuyāc chubhān !!12205.5!
lohayuktam yathā hema vipakvam na virājate !

tathāpakvakaṣāyākhyam vijñānam na prakāśate !!12205.6!
yaś cādharmam caren mohāt kāmālobhāv anu plavan !
dharmyam panthānam ākramya sānubandho vinaśyati !!12205.7!
śabdādīn viṣayāms tasmād asamrāgād anuplavet !
krodhaharsau viṣādaś ca jāyante hi parasparam !!12205.8!

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From the Śuka-Vyāsa-Saṁvāda:

12,229.2 (=D237.2)

[3.23 Knowledge (“theory”?) should accompany actions.]

śuka uvāca:: kiṁ taj jñānam atho vidyā yayā nistarati dvayam !
pravṛtilakṣaṇo dharmo nivṛttir iti caiva hi !!12229.2!

In the translation of Deussen Śuka is asking about that attitude towards and that lifestyle which leads to crossing duality as depending on “Tun”; in Skt the opposition is between *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*. But he is asking about a knowledge (and *jñāna* and *vidyā* seem to name different kinds of knowledge or two different aspects of cognition) which implies that reaching the goal depends not just on doing (or abstaining from doing) something, but reaching the goal depends on a practical behavior as much as on the knowledge that accompanies it. Practice involves theory.

12,230 (D238)

[3.12.4 Theory is proven by arguments.] [3.22 The effect of actions can be modified by mental detachment.] [3.21 Liberation is brought about by knowledge or in Consciousness.] [3.23 Knowledge (“theory”?) should accompany actions.] [3.17 Plurality emanates from a common source through a process of emanation.] [2.8 Persons]

Since there is no new question the chapter should continue the answer to Śuka’s question in 12,229.2. Verse 1 emphatically states that knowledge must accompany action if the latter should succeed. Let us leave open for the moment whether this could mean acquaintance with the underlying KT, or the Consciousness from which all acting instances can be reduced, or a mental attitude (like equanimity) which is called “knowledge” simply because it is not actual performance of a deed.

V. 2 is unclear and allows for different readings (*karma svabhāvo* or *karmasvabhāvo*, as D translates?). The second half poses a question (and thus topicalizes “theory”). If v. 3 talks about “here and there” it seems to find in v. 1-2 only two options which would be an argument to translate v. 2 rather with Deussen (“Aber nun fragt sich, ob dabei das eigentliche Wesen des Werks in der Erkenntnis oder vielmehr in dem Werk besteht.” p. 357). With v. 5 compare 224.51; there is no option for an avagraha here; there should therefore be two options in the above verse as well. In 5b read *phalavṛttis svabhāvataḥ*, definitely a *lectio facili*or, but I cannot construe the printed form (“from the nature of activating results”, i.e., *svabhāva* not used as a technical term for Consciousness as (material) cause?).

1. ... Only someone endowed with knowledge succeeds in all respects while acting. If this were not so there, there would be doubt concerning the decision for action (or for a specific act).
2. What then is action – that called this Nature, or knowledge, or again the act?
3. In this or in that (case) one would want to know whether this knowledge concerns the *puruṣa*. I shall describe this by argument and observation, listen!

4. Some people call human effort the cause with regard to human actions, others prefer fate and again others Nature.
5. Human act, fate, and the activation of the result from Nature, this triad is separate, is not different according to others. ((Perhaps: “But this separately existing triad is not distinguished, according to some.”))
6. It is so, and also it is not so, and also both, and also both not. Those who insist on action speak of unequal, those who insist on Being ((sattva as synonym of svabhāva!)) view them as same.

vyāsa uvāca:: eṣā pūrvatarā vṛttir brāhmanasya vidhīyate !
 jñānavān eva karmāṇi kurvaṇ sarvatra sidhyati !!12230.1!
 tatra cen na bhaved evaṃ saṃśayaḥ karmaniścaye !
 kim nu karma svabhāvo 'yaṃ jñānaṃ karmeti vā punaḥ !!12230.2!
 tatra ceha vivitsā syāj jñānaṃ cet puruṣaṃ prati !
 upapattyupalabdhibhyāṃ varṇayisyāmi tac chrṇu !!12230.3!
 pauraṣaṃ kāraṇaṃ ke cid āhuḥ karmasu mānavāḥ !
 daivaṃ ēke praśamsanti svabhāvaṃ cāpare janāḥ !!12230.4!
 pauraṣaṃ karma daivaṃ ca phalavṛttisvabhāvataḥ !
 trayam etat prthagbhūtaṃ avivekaṃ tu ke cana !!12230.5!
 evam etan na cāpy evam ubhe cāpi na cāpy ubhe !
 karmasthā viśamaṃ brūyuh sattvasthāḥ samadarśinaḥ !!12230.6!

The passage serves me to document *that* there is KT in the MBh. The passage can serve this purpose in spite of the lack of clarity or rather because of it. I postulate that the implicit references to discussions, arguments and empirical evidence must have been clear to the author and could have been clear to his audience. We can even assume that these were discussions amongst brahmins (cf. v. 1). Knowledge about acting, acting accompanied by knowledge (about the principle to which acts and knowledge can be reduced because they sprang from it, i.e., about a Sāṃkhya type of metaphysics and cosmogony – *purusa*, *svabhāva*, *sattva*) point to the existence of theories about action even though the theory is not spelled out.

I note a quite dominant insistence on brahmins and the Veda in this chapter. And there is no reference to rebirth! Note also the last verse in this chapter which seems to list the topics to be treated by a theory on acting:

sargaḥ kālo dhṛtir vedāḥ kartā kāryaṃ kriyā phalam !
 etat te kathitaṃ tāta yaṃ mām tvam paripreçhasi !!12230.21!

21. Emanation, time, continuity (persistence), the Vedas, agent, purpose of action, performance, and result, about all that I have told you, my friend, since you ask(ed) me about it.

Never mind that Śuka actually did not ask about it, at least not in these terms. But in the milieu from which such a text stems these were topics reflected and discussed about. My claim or my hypothesis is that all of them belong to KT.

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12,267.32-38 (=DS276.32-38)

[3.16 Action presupposes plurality.] [3.7 Retribution operates in a next life (rebirth).] [3.19 Liberation, deliverance, freedom is possible (“salutology” or “soteriology”).]

The passage closes a chapter that answers to the question about emanation and dissolution. One can regard all the preceding topics, i.e., the constituents of reality and body (senses, elements, Attributes, etc.) as leading to this conclusion and thus as belonging to the theory formed by these axioms. The passage combines most of the theorems that form the ‘classical’ karma theory as combination of retribution and rebirth. A (metaphysical) knowledge, called Sāṃkhya knowledge, about what there is and about the origin (less about its destruction, in this passage) is the condition for reaching the ultimate (which according to the last verse must be distinguished from becoming *brahman* (*brahmatva*, *brahmabhāva*). KT is presented as part of Sāṃkhya, or Sāṃkhya as the explication of a salutology in which action (and thus any theoretical statement about action) serves to explain why and how reaching the ultimate goal is a Liberation (from acts and from the effects of action which presuppose a body and senses and a binding mechanism).

yathaivotpadyate kiṃ cit pañcatvaṃ gacchate tathā !
punyapāpavināśānte punyapāpasamīritam !
deham viśati kālena tato 'yaṃ karmasambhavam !!12267.32!
hitvā hitvā hy ayaṃ praiti dehād dehaṃ kṛtāśrayaḥ !
kālasamcoditaḥ kṣetrī viśīrṇād vā grhād grhaṃ !!12267.33!
tatra naivānutapyānte prājñā niścitanīścayāḥ !
krpaṇās tv anutapyante janāḥ sambandhimāninaḥ !!12267.34!
na hy ayaṃ kasya cit kaś cin nāśya kaś cana vidyate !
bhavaty eko hy ayaṃ nityaṃ śarīre sukhaduḥkhabhāk !!12267.35!
naiva samjāyate jantur na ca jātu vipadyate !
yāti dehaṃ ayaṃ bhuktvā kadā cit paramāṃ gatim !!12267.36!
punyapāpamayāṃ dehaṃ kṣapayan karmasamcayāt !
kṣīnadehaḥ punar dehī brahmatvaṃ upagacchati !!12267.37!
punyapāpākṣayārthaṃ ca sāmkyam jñānaṃ vidhīyate !
tatksaye hy āśya paśyanti brahmabhāve parāṃ gatim !!12267.38!

32. In the same way as something originates it goes (back) into the group of five (elements). When meritorious and evil have been annihilated (lit. at the end of the annihilation), he then in the course of time enters a body which is instigated by meritorious and evil (and) which owes its origin to actions (OR: makes action possible). [3.17 Plurality emanates from a common source through a process of emanation.] [3.7 Retribution operates in a next life (rebirth).]

33. Depending on what was done the owner of the field leaves repeatedly and goes from one body to another, driven by time – or from the dismantled house to another. [3.7 Retribution operates in a next life (rebirth).]

34. About this the wise who have reached firm decision are not in the least troubled. Petty people, however, who believe that (the fieldowner) is bound are troubled. [3.12.2 Theory is proven by appeal to authorities.]

35. He (i.e., the fieldowner, the soul) does not belong to anyone, is not anybody, nor is there anybody belonging to him. He is eternally only one (and the same) in the body as subject of pleasure and suffering. [3.14 Body and soul can be distinguished.]

36. A living (human) being is not really born, nor does it really perish. Having experienced the body he eventually goes to the ultimate goal. [3.19 Liberation, deliverance, freedom is possible.]

37. When the owner of the body (*dehin*) due to (OR: after) the accumulation of actions discards the body that consists of meritorious and evil, he goes, the body once again destroyed, to the state of *brahman*. [3.21 Liberation is brought about by knowledge or in Consciousness. (?)]

38. The enumerating (Sāmkhya-)knowledge is ordained for the purpose of destroying the meritorious and the evil. For, once it is destroyed, one sees in the state of *brahman* the ultimate goal. [3.21 Liberation is brought about by knowledge or in Consciousness.]

12,297.8 (=DS311.8)

[3.2 All actions serve a purpose, have an effect.]

yathā jñāne paricayaḥ kartavyas tatphalārthinā !

tathā dharme paricayaḥ kartavyas tatphalārthinā !!12297.8!

“Just like somebody who strives for the result of knowledge must accumulate with regard to knowledge, so somebody striving for the result of Righteousness must accumulate with regard to that.”

This sounds like KT. But there is no mention of rebirth and none of retribution. One can infer acceptance of the axiom that there is a causal connection between a purpose and its realisation and that the ‘fruit’ is obtained by the subject of the intention (and not somebody else). One can infer acceptance of the axiom that there is a cumulative process of “collecting results”. If the result of intentions is something that can be collected one might find a hint at the axiom that the result of the realisation of intentions is something substantial (“Tatsubstanz”). The sentence is formulated impersonally, which might indicate that it states a generally valid observation or a rule or ‘law’. It contains an hortative or imperative aspect, which might lead to suspect that this general truth was not generally accepted.

Overinterpretation? Quite likely so. But rather to conclude that this is not KT because it does not argue, does not explain, my approach motivates me to see such a verse as, not formulating KT but as documenting the existence of KT and indicating (by applying) some of its axioms.

The question (12,279.3) put by a son of Janaka to Yājñavalkya is:

bhagavan kim idam śreyasḥ pretya vāpīha vā bhavet !

puruṣasyādhruve dehe kāmasya vaśavartinah !!12297.3!

“Sir, what Good exists, after death as well as in this life, in the unstable body for a man who operates under the influence of desire?”

Context is created by the literary form of a question, and by elements of content like ‘salvation’ (*śreyas*), attainable after or before death, for human beings, the attitude to the body, evaluation of impermanence, desire as undesirable, dependence on the power of negative forces (like desire). At this point it remains open whether *puruṣa* might mean the spiritual principle in man rather than the empirical person.

Each of these elements (e.g., attitude to the body) would have to be researched, classified and interpreted line by line (back to step one) in the whole text. In their specific constellation they form a theory which in this case may not be a KT (action is not mentioned) but which occur frequently enough as elements for explaining action to be considered as contextually typical for KT.

12,298 (=DS312)

yudhiṣṭhira uvāca:: dharmādharmavimuktam yad vimuktam sarvasaṁśrayāt !

janmamṛtyuvimuktam ca vimuktam punyapāpayoh !!12298.1!

yac chivam nityam abhayam nityam cākṣaram avyāyam !

śuci nityam anāyāsam tad bhavān vaktum arhati !!12298.2!

1. Yudhiṣṭhira said: What is freed from Normative Values and their opposite, not dependent on (“freed from”) any kind of resort (or reference point, relation), and freed from birth and death, freed from the meritorious and the evil,

2. what is auspicious, always (eternally, constantly) without fear, and always indivisible, immutable, pure, always without any exertion – please tell me about that, Sir.

Such a question presupposes that *dharmādharmā*, dependence on (ontological) resorts (i.e., material causes, origins), the (quite likely repeatedly experienced) processes at birth and at death, the moral evaluation (of intentions, deeds committed for their realisation, and effects), transitoriness, the danger and fear of not succeeding, the trouble and effort of trying to go beyond what is designated by all these negative attributes – such a question presupposes that about all that one has talked before, is basically agreed, or at least knows what is being talked about. Read against the matrix of KT the questions refer to explanations (“theories”) about the norms of prescribed proper conduct, the structure of dependent levels of reality emanated from a common source, the theory of rebirth and about how continuity functions at conception and during the bodily dissolution while dying, the doctrine of an agent or subject that is essentially pure but can be polluted by its involvement in experience and activity – axioms that indeed form a KT. (Am I overinterpreting? For once I do not think so.)

Bhīṣma announces an “episode” and begins by quoting the questions asked in the episode. Someone at some time must have been convinced that an answer to Janaka’s questions implied an answer to Yudhiṣṭhira’s questions. Janaka asks:

5. O you inspired seer, how many senses are there? How many productive levels of reality does tradition teach about? What is the unmanifest (i.e., unevolved, not emanated) highest *brahman*, and what is even beyond that?

6. And, inspired Lord (eminent brahmin), please speak about origin and destruction and the reckoning of time to me who craves for your favour.

7. I am asking from ignorance while you are a storehouse of knowledge. I want to hear about that, about all of it, authoritatively (without doubt, uncertainty or indecision).

Is this KT, does it presuppose KT? Yes, if the theory of emanation explains how effects of actions (be they carried out by the senses or governed by the laws of time) function; if the attribution of activity to the senses (and other instances) is the kind of knowledge that liberates someone who strives to reach the Highest from which everything mobil, transient and active has emanated. Is this *mokṣadharmā*? Yes, if knowledge about the world from which one wants to be liberated helps to reach that goal and if such knowledge helps to realize the required mental attitude and mode of life. Does that make the chapters following upon these questions deal with KT even if *karman* is not explicitly reflected upon or talked about? Indirectly, in a wider sense and through inclusion of the theoretical contexts and logical ramifications of KT, yes.