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Source: *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Apr. - Jun., 1992, Vol. 112, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1992), pp. 204-221

Published by: American Oriental Society

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# WHAT DID KUMĀRILA BHAṬṬA MEAN BY SVATAḤ PRĀMĀṆYA?

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The doctrine of “intrinsic validity” or *svataḥ prāmāṇya* remains a poorly understood, though central, teaching of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā. This study attempts to explain what the great Mīmāṃsā philosopher Kumārilabhaṭṭa meant by *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, by discussing and evaluating the distinct interpretations of Kumāriḷa’s statements by his commentators Umbekabhaṭṭa and Pārthasārathimīśra. It is shown that, while “intrinsic validity” may not serve as an adequate basis for the defense of the authority of the Veda, as the Mīmāṃsā philosophers intended it, it nevertheless constitutes a significant contribution to general epistemology. It also lies at the very heart of Mīmāṃsā thought insofar as it plays an important role in the arguments for various other important philosophical doctrines of Mīmāṃsā.

PERHAPS THE MOST DISTINCTIVE DOCTRINE of the Mīmāṃsā school of philosophy is that of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* or the intrinsic validity of cognitions. What does this doctrine mean? What is its role in the Mīmāṃsā system? In this study I shall attempt to answer these questions, focussing on the presentation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* in the writings of Kumāriḷa and his commentators.

## I

The doctrine of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* has always appeared philosophically questionable. Not only was it attacked by every ancient school of Indian philosophy apart from Pūrva and Uttara Mīmāṃsā; few modern scholars have been able to see any plausibility in the idea. S. Radhakrishnan, for example, wonders whether the theory of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is not merely a kind of coherence theory of truth, which states that cognition is true insofar as it is consistent with the rest of our knowledge. Would that be truth, he asks, or merely a test of truth?<sup>1</sup> K. K. Dixit, more recently, puts the issue succinctly as follows: “In a nutshell [Kumāriḷa’s] position is that all cognition is valid unless proved otherwise. . . . But the difficulty is . . . that a piece of cognition not proved to be invalid is not necessarily valid; it might be valid, but it might [also] be otherwise.”<sup>2</sup> However, I shall argue in this essay that the doctrine of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is an interesting and

perhaps even valid philosophical theory, and that, in particular, it does not readily succumb to the sorts of objections that are raised against the coherence theory of truth. Moreover, it is parallel in certain respects to the notion of self-validating cognitions, or “clear and distinct ideas,” which has played so important a role in Western epistemology.

*Svataḥ prāmāṇya* is questionable in other ways. Even if it is, in the last analysis, philosophically defensible, it nevertheless seems at first sight remote from common sense. How would anyone ever have arrived at such a doctrine? Is there an ulterior motive behind it? In particular, why is *svataḥ prāmāṇya* presented as a general theory of knowledge in Mīmāṃsā? For not just the Veda, but all knowledge is said to be valid by virtue of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. Did Mīmāṃsā really first work out a general theory of knowledge and then apply it to the Veda as a special case? Or, seeing that the Veda could be shown to be valid only on the basis of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, was it forced to argue that all knowledge is valid on that basis, so as to remove any appearance of the Veda being an exception? (To be sure, Mīmāṃsā does not proceed openly in that way. But manner of presentation does not always reflect the process of discovery.) I shall also attempt to show, however, that the general theory of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* ties in with other important Mīmāṃsā ideas: it is implied by certain doctrines; other doctrines are implied by it. It is central to Mīmāṃsā.

We may begin to see this, here, by way of introduction, by considering the crucial role played by *svataḥ prāmāṇya* in the Mīmāṃsā argument for the authority of the Veda. According to Mīmāṃsā, the Veda is eternal, without any human or divine author. For we have

<sup>1</sup> *Indian Philosophy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1929), 2:406–7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ślokaṁvārtika: A Study* (Ahmedabad: L. D. Institute of Indology, 1983), 5.

not observed anyone to have composed the Veda in our own time; and tradition has not handed down to us the names of any authors of the remote past. Rather, we only observe people learning the Veda from others who themselves previously learned it. Assuming the past to be like the present, we must believe that it has always been handed down by teachers who themselves *learned* it, never by anyone who *composed* it.<sup>3</sup> Hence, the Veda is beginningless. But then, by virtue of its intrinsic validity, it must be valid for anyone who hears it. All cognition—in this case verbal cognition—is true “of itself” (*svataḥ*), and remains so unless contradicted by other cognition or vitiated by knowledge of a defect in its source (in most cases, a particular sense faculty). Indeed, the instructions of the Veda about dharma are never discovered to be false; and, eternal and without any author, the discovery of any defect in its source is an impossibility.<sup>4</sup>

As dogmatic as this argument at first sounds, it actually reflects a certain anti-fideism, even empiricism, at the heart of Mīmāṃsā. It is closely connected with the belief that dharma, the subject of the Veda, is beyond the ken of humans. In developing their defense of the Veda the Mīmāṃsā philosophers had before them the tempting alternative, adopted by the Buddhists and Jainas, that scripture consists of the deliverances of human beings endowed with supernormal insight, even omniscience. The Jainas believed in the absolute omniscience of the Jina; some Buddhists, on the other hand, most notably Dharmakīrti, believed that the Buddha had a supernormal capacity to know only matters pertaining to how one should live and attain salvation. But Mīmāṃsā fundamentally rejects the ability of humans to know *any* transcendent matters.<sup>5</sup> Appealing, again, to the principle that “the world was never otherwise than it is now,”<sup>6</sup> it asserts, on the basis of the fact that no one is omniscient now, that no one ever was.<sup>7</sup> In his full treatment of the question of omniscience in his

*Bṛhaṭṭikā*,<sup>8</sup> Kumārila shows himself to be a hard-nosed skeptic when it comes to *human* testimony. It would be impossible, he argues, to establish a person’s ability to know transcendent matters unless one had such knowledge oneself. In general, one cannot conclude that someone has knowledge in one area of expertise from having established that he has knowledge in another. Surely, then, one cannot conclude that someone knows what is beyond the world from anything he knows about the world. Besides, Kumārila says, men are for the most part speakers of untruth.<sup>9</sup> We should afford men of the past no more credence than we are able to afford men of today—especially when it comes to religion, where charlatans abound.<sup>10</sup> Skepticism is also extended to the question of the existence of God in Mīmāṃsā, so that the alternative of the Nyāya school, that the Veda is authoritative *qua* the utterances of a *supernatural* omniscient being, is also excluded.

Thus the Mīmāṃsā defense of the Veda is decidedly minimalist. It rests on the fundamental premise of empiricism that one has no right to believe in the existence of that which has never been observed. However, Mīmāṃsā goes a step further in holding that the complete absence of evidence for something—where evidence would be expected—*establishes* its nonexistence. This principle is identified in Mīmāṃsā epistemology as the sixth means of knowledge, *abhāva*, or the absence of other *pramāṇas*, which is distinct from perception, inference, etc. (This *pramāṇa*, significantly, is rejected by most other schools.) By *abhāva*, then, since there is no evidence of an author of the Veda by any other *pramāṇa*, it really is without an author and eternal.<sup>11</sup> But then, by virtue of the intrinsic validity of

<sup>3</sup> ŚV, vākya 366: *vedasyādhyayanam sarvaṃ gurvadhyananapūrvakam / vedādhyayanavācyatvād adhunādhyayanam yathā*; cf. TS 2341, 2343.

<sup>4</sup> TS 2345–49. For an interesting discussion of the influence of the doctrine of the authorlessness of the Veda in Sanskrit culture, see Sheldon Pollock, “Mīmāṃsā and the Problem of History in Traditional India,” *JAOS* 109 (1989): 603–10.

<sup>5</sup> See *MSBh*, 1:17, ll. 5–7; ŚV, codanā 15–18.

<sup>6</sup> TS 2274, where the context is the denial of cosmic dissolution (*mahāpralaya*); cf. ŚV, codanā 98c–99b: . . . *mīmāṃsakaiḥ punaḥ idānīm iva sarvatra dṛṣṭān nādhikam iṣyate*.

<sup>7</sup> ŚV, codanā 117; cf. TS 3185.

<sup>8</sup> Extensive portions of Kumārila’s lost work, the *Bṛhaṭṭikā*, are preserved in Śāntarakṣita’s *Tattvasaṅgraha*. It is not yet established whether the *Bṛhaṭṭikā*, which was apparently much longer than the *Ślokavārttika* and contains many identical or nearly identical verses, was written before or after the *Ślokavārttika*. See Erich Frauwallner, “Kumārila’s *Bṛhaṭṭikā*,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens* 6 (1962): 78–90. Frauwallner argues that Kumārila first wrote the ŚV and then revised his ideas in the *BṚ* after becoming acquainted with Dharmakīrti’s theories. But cf. K. S. Ramaswami Sastri, “Forgotten Kārikās of Kumārila,” *Journal of Oriental Research* 1 (1927): 131–44. See also my “Further Observations on Kumārila’s *Bṛhaṭṭikā*,” forthcoming in the S. S. Janaki felicitation volume.

<sup>9</sup> ŚV codanā, 144: *sarvadā cāpi puruṣāḥ prāyēnāṅṛtavādināḥ*.

<sup>10</sup> TS 3195–97, 3222–25.

<sup>11</sup> See TS 2087–94 for a characterization of the argument for the eternity of the Veda as an application of *abhāva*.

cognition, it is valid. This argument, however, assumes that no evidence of an author of the Veda is provided by the *pramāṇa* of implication, or *arthāpatti*. But is that the case? Even though we do not observe or remember an author of the Veda, isn't it still implied that there must have been one, perhaps beyond the reach of memory? For the Veda consists of language, and how, if not originally uttered by a speaker, could a corpus of injunctions, prohibitions, and other linguistic forms exist? The answer to this question is provided in *Mīmāṃsā* by means of an elaborate philosophy of language which, on the basis of such theses as the eternity of sound, the eternal connection of word and meaning, etc., seeks to establish the possibility of an authorless discourse.<sup>12</sup> The discussion of these issues comprises a major portion of the system. Thus, the *Mīmāṃsā* defense of the Veda is considerably more complex than it at first appears. Nevertheless, the *Mīmāṃsā* philosopher is confident that his theory of revelation is, in the last analysis, simpler, and therefore more true, than any alternative. For, ultimately, it does not posit anything unseen in order to account for the given.<sup>13</sup> It merely interprets the given—the Veda, handed down from generation to generation—in such a way as not to require extraneous explanation. It introduces no authors or seers of the ancient past endowed with abilities never observed among men. And in this, one may see another trait of empiricism, known in the West as Occam's Razor.

There is one final, but very crucial, piece to the puzzle—another aspect of this empiricism, verging on skepticism. And that is the highly rationalized and demythologized interpretation of the Veda itself in *Mīmāṃsā*. This also relates to the argument for the validity of the Veda on the basis of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. For according to the doctrine of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, a cognition is valid intrinsically *unless* it is vitiated by another, contradictory cognition, or by the realization that its source is corrupt. We have so far, essentially, considered only the problem of the source. But isn't the Veda in fact contradicted by other things we know? To be sure, the statements of the Veda about dharma will stand; for we cannot claim to have independent knowledge of the transcendent. But what about sentences of the Veda that pertain to matters of common experi-

ence? *Ṛg Veda* 4.58.3, for example, mentions a being with four horns, three feet, two heads, and seven hands. Certainly we know that there is no such creature! Many other mantras attribute thought and intention to unconscious objects. Still others appear self-contradictory (e.g., "Aditi is heaven; Aditi is the atmosphere," *Ṛg Veda* 1.89.10) or are simply gibberish.<sup>14</sup> Thus, it would seem, at least part of what the Veda says is disconfirmed. One must therefore wonder about the reliability of the Veda as a whole.

It is in order to head off this attack that *Mīmāṃsā* embarks on a program of radical reinterpretation of the Veda. It considers the Veda, essentially, simply as a manual for the performance of the sacrifice. The sacrifice, in turn, brings about its effect not by inexplicable magic but by an ultimately intelligible, though unique, causal property, known as *apūrva*.<sup>15</sup> All mythopoeic content is denied; references to the supernatural are mere eulogies (*arthavāda*) not to be taken literally. The mantras uttered during the sacrifice have no magical sound potency, but serve merely as reminders of the correct sequence of actions;<sup>16</sup> the divinities invoked in the hymns are mere names.<sup>17</sup>

Thus *Mīmāṃsā*, in spite of its identity as the defender of a faith tradition, is marked by pronounced anti-fideistic tendencies. At the basis of this anti-fideism is, as I have suggested, an empiricist spirit. This empiricism in turn seems to rest ultimately on a kind of rigid philosophical realism which insists strictly on the reality of appearances: the world is as it appears and nothing more!<sup>18</sup> No doubt this outlook was

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *MSBh* 1.1.32. The opponent asks: "How do you know that the Veda is not like the utterances of lunatics and children? For in fact, we find such sentences as, 'Trees sat at the sacrificial session'; 'Serpents sat at the sacrificial session'; 'The old bull sings maddening songs.' Now how could the 'old bull' sing? How could 'trees' or 'serpents' sit at sacrifices?" (Jha's translation).

<sup>15</sup> See Wilhelm Halbfass, "Karma, *Apūrva*, and 'Natural' Causes," in *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions*, ed. W. D. O'Flaherty (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1980), 268–302, esp. pp. 273–84.

<sup>16</sup> See John Taber, "Are Mantras Speech Acts?: The *Mīmāṃsā* Point of View," in *Mantra*, ed. H. P. Alper (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), 144–64.

<sup>17</sup> *MSBh* 10.4.23.

<sup>18</sup> As we shall see in the sequel, this attitude of strict realism manifests sometimes as empiricism, other times as Platonism. Taking as real the world as it appears *to the senses*, it functions as empiricism. Considering as real things as they initially present themselves to us *in thought*, it becomes Platonism.

<sup>12</sup> For a recent discussion of the issues of Hindu philosophy of language, see Purusottama Bilamoria, *Śabdapramāṇa: Word and Knowledge* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Kluwer, 1988).

<sup>13</sup> *ŚV*, codanā 153: *evam ca kalpayanty anye yāvad āgama-siddhaye / tāvan na kalpayaty etat samatvaṃ jaimineḥ paraḥ* (with the last *pāda* intended ironically); cf. 97c–99b.

in part motivated by a concern that Mīmāṃsā should appear rational and scientific when juxtaposed to the impressive intellectual creations of the Buddhists. Yet it can also perhaps be seen as an outgrowth of the fundamental scientific attitude of ancient Mīmāṃsā, the analytic exegesis of sacrificial texts. In the end, however, such an attitude seems poorly suited for defending scripture. For the baby is thrown out with the bathwater: the religious spirit of the Veda is excised along with all the falsehood. Moreover, scripture ceases to be a truly independent means of knowledge; for common experience now, to a significant extent, stands in judgment over it. The gods of religion disappear, displaced, in Mīmāṃsā, not even by the God of the Philosophers, but by the eternal, impersonal Imperative of the one, true dharma. One is reminded of the efforts of some of the early modern European philosophers—especially Spinoza and Locke—to demonstrate the harmony of the Bible with Reason, the absolute of the New Age.<sup>19</sup>

To return to the matter of *svataḥ prāmānya*, we can already see from the above how the notion of *svataḥ prāmānya* is an expression of the fundamental tendency of Mīmāṃsā to adhere strictly to appearances (a tendency which as I have said often manifests as empiricism). Given that a cognition initially appears as true, one remains justified in believing that it is true until concrete evidence of its falsehood presents itself. If no evidence of its falsehood ever presents itself, one has reason to think that the initial impression of validity with which the cognition was received reflects an actual fact: it really is true. Thus the doctrine of *svataḥ prāmānya* can be seen, simply, as the claim that we should take our cognitions at face value, like everything else. If in every way they appear true, then they are!

Let us now, however, see how the idea of *svataḥ prāmānya* is presented in the Mīmāṃsā sources.

<sup>19</sup> Therefore two recent attempts to interpret Mīmāṃsā as a genuinely religious philosophy appear to me to be fundamentally mistaken. See Francis X. D'Sa, *Śabdaprāmānya in Śābara and Kumārila* (Vienna: De Nobili Library, 1980); Othmar Gächter, *Hermeneutics and Language in Pūrva Mīmāṃsā* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983); and my reviews thereof in *Philosophy East and West* 33 (1983): 407–10, and 35 (1985): 215–17, respectively. The work of Francis X. Clooney, on the other hand, which also tends in this direction, is more guarded in its claims and precise in its method. See, e.g., “*Devatādhikaraṇa*: A Theological Debate in the Mīmāṃsā-Vedānta Tradition,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 16 (1988): 277–88, and “Why the Veda Has No Author,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55 (1987): 659–84.

## II

*svataḥ sarvapramāṇānām prāmānyam iti gamyatām  
na hi svato 'satī śaktiḥ kartum anyena śakyate 47  
ātmalābhe ca bhāvānām kāraṇāpekṣatā bhavet  
labdhātmanām svakāryeṣu pravṛtīḥ svayam eva tu 48*

Kumārila begins his presentation of the theory of *svataḥ prāmānya* in his *Śloka-vārttika* (*codanā-dhikaraṇa*) with these words. We may translate them as follows.

The validity of all valid cognitions<sup>20</sup> is to be understood as intrinsic, since a potency not existing intrinsically cannot be brought about by something else. And [in general] things depend on [other] causes in arising, but once they exist they exercise their functions by themselves.<sup>21</sup>

What is being said here? On the surface, Kumārila appears to be saying that the *prāmānya* or validity of a cognition must come from the cognition itself; for *svataḥ*, which, for reasons soon to be evident, I have chosen to translate ambiguously as ‘intrinsic’ or ‘intrinsically’, literally means ‘of itself’ or ‘from itself’. But what does *that* mean? Why cannot the validity of a cognition—which presumably means its truth, its accurately representing things as they are in fact—not come from anything besides the cognition itself? One would

<sup>20</sup> The term *prāmānya* is understood in two senses in Indian epistemology: as the property of being instrumental in bringing about true knowledge, and as the truth or validity of a cognition. Accordingly, a *pramāṇa* is either a means of true knowledge, such as perception, inference, etc., or a valid cognition (see J. N. Mohanty, *Gaṅgeśa's Theory of Truth* [Santiniketan: Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, 1966], 2). Since the theory of *svataḥ prāmānya* is concerned with *prāmānya* in the second sense, it will frequently be appropriate to translate *pramāṇa* as ‘valid cognition’. Cf. *Pramāṇavārttika* 1.3: *pramāṇam avisamvādi jñānam. . .*

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Schmithausen, *VV*, 196: “Es ist einzusehen, dass alle Erkenntnismittel aus sich masegbleich sind; denn eine aus sich nicht gegebene Fähigkeit kann (auch) durch anderes nicht bewirkt werden; denn die Dinge mögen zwar für ihr Entstehen auf Ursachen angewiesen sein, aber einmal entstanden üben sie ihre Wirkung aus sich selbst aus.” I prefer to translate *svataḥ* ambiguously as ‘intrinsic’ or ‘intrinsically’ instead of literally as ‘of itself’, in order to allow for the possibility that it means something other than, strictly, ‘of/from [the cognition] itself’. Indeed, we shall see presently that Umbeka interprets it in a nonliteral way.

think that, in the case of perception at least, the integrity of the sense organs would have something to do with validity. Indeed, how is it even possible that the cognition alone can guarantee its own correspondence with its object? And how does the statement of codanā 48—that while things may depend on external factors in coming into existence, they give rise to their own effects of themselves—explain matters?

In this section I shall discuss how two commentators of the *Ślokavārttika*, Umbekabhaṭṭa (eighth century)<sup>22</sup> and Pārthasārathimiśra (tenth century),<sup>23</sup> answer these questions. Umbeka interprets Kumāriḷa to be saying that cognitions are intrinsically valid insofar as their validity *originates or arises* “intrinsically.” Pārthasārathi, on the other hand, interprets Kumāriḷa to be saying that cognitions are intrinsically valid insofar as their validity *is manifest* “intrinsically.” Both of these theories are *prima facie* compatible with Kumāriḷa’s text. Nevertheless, I shall argue that in the final analysis the second theory, that championed by Pārthasārathi, affords a better interpretation.<sup>24</sup>

Let us begin by considering Umbekabhaṭṭa’s proposal. In his *Ślokavārttikavyākhyātātparyaṭikā* Umbeka appears to make some headway interpreting Kumāriḷa’s remarks by suggesting that the word *svataḥ* of ŚV II (= *codanādhikaraṇa*), śloka 47, actually means not literally ‘of [the cognition] itself’, but rather ‘from the normal causes of the cognition’.<sup>25</sup> Thus Kumāriḷa is saying (II.47ab): “It is to be understood that the validity of all valid cognitions comes from the causes of the cognitions themselves (or, from the cognitions’ *own* causes).”<sup>26</sup> According to Umbeka, this means that the validity of a valid cognition, in the sense of its correspondence with its object, is the result of the *normal* factors that give rise to the cognition—

e.g., in the case of perception, the object, the sense organ, the mind, etc. That is to say, when circumstances are normal—when, e.g., the object is of normal size and within the perceptual field of the sense organ; when the sense organ is unimpaired by disease; when the mind is alert—then the combination (*sāmagrī*) of these factors gives rise to a cognition that is true. Our faculties of knowledge are so constituted as ordinarily to give rise to true knowledge. Only when circumstances are abnormal—when the object is far away or obscured; when the sense organ is diseased; when the mind is distracted—can false cognition occur.<sup>27</sup>

Thus the validity of a cognition arises from the same factors as produce the cognition;<sup>28</sup> it arises from its “own,” normal causes. If it did not arise from those factors, then what else would cause it? “For a potency”—or, more generally, any property of a thing—“not existing intrinsically”—i.e., not arising from its own, normal causes—“cannot be produced by something else” (*na hi svato 'satī śaktiḥ kartum anyena śakyate*). The normal causes of a thing produce the *normal type* of that thing. A seed planted in the ground produces a healthy, mature tree. If the seed could not produce it, what could? Similarly, the usual, nondefective causes of cognition will produce a *valid* cognition—if they could not produce one, what else could? Hence one need not postulate the presence of special qualities or “excellences” (*guṇas*) conducive to validity in the causes of a cognition—say, the *proximity* of the object, the *health* of the sense organ, the *alertness* of the mind—in order to account for its validity. Simply the usual causal factors of a cognition will, so long as they are not inhibited in any way, guarantee the cognition’s truth.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>22</sup> See Schmithausen, *VV*, 216n.

<sup>23</sup> See K. S. Ramaswami Sastri, “Date of Pārthasārathimiśra and Sequence of His Works,” *Indian Historical Quarterly* 13 (1937): 488–97.

<sup>24</sup> The positions of Umbeka and Pārthasārathi came to be known in subsequent literature as *svataḥ prāmānyam utpattitaḥ* and *svataḥ prāmānyam jñaptitaḥ*, respectively (see, e.g., Gaṅgeśa’s *Tattvacintāmaṇi*, *prāmānyavāda*). They themselves do not use these expressions.

<sup>25</sup> ŚVVT, 53, ll. 25ff. I have rendered Umbeka’s position somewhat freely, drawing also on Pārthasārathi’s account of it in his *NRM*, for his ideas are somewhat obscured by technicalities in the ŚVVT. See note 29 below.

<sup>26</sup> See *NRM*, 48, ll. 11–12: *svaśabdo 'yam ātmīyavācakaḥ. svīyād eva kāraṇāt tathābhūtārthaviśayatvaḥ jñānasya jāyate. ŚVVT, 54, ll. 23–24: śloke cātmīyavācakaḥ svaśabdaḥ.*

<sup>27</sup> *indriyādisvarūpam eva hy anyanirapekṣam arthāviśamvādijñānoṭpādakam, aṅjanādinām ca doṣopagame vyāpāraḥ, na guṇādhāne. . . . doṣasamavadhāne tu sāmagryantarād vilakṣaṇakāryotpattiḥ: ŚVVT, 54, ll. 2–5.*

<sup>28</sup> *vijñānahetava eva prāmānyasyotpādakāḥ: ŚVVT, 54, ll. 18–19.*

<sup>29</sup> It seems, however, that Umbeka mainly wants to appeal to the case of inference in arguing that the causes of cognition are the causes of validity (ŚVVT, 54, ll. 8–10). This is a poor strategem, in my opinion, which detracts from the fundamentally correct notion that normal causes produce normal effects. In inference, Umbeka argues, that which produces cognition also, necessarily, produces valid cognition. For the middle term of an inference, the *liṅga* or *hetu*, gives rise to the awareness of the probandum, the *sādhya*, only insofar as it is invariably connected with the latter. Smoke, for example, gives rise to the idea of fire only insofar as it is invariably

Thus interpreting Kumārila to be saying that the validity of a cognition *arises* “intrinsically,” Umbeka suggests that Kumārila’s defense of the authority of the Veda on the basis of its *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is essentially as follows:<sup>30</sup> One need not establish that the Veda originated from a complex of causal factors involving features especially conducive to its validity—specifically, the omniscience of the person who uttered it—in order to be confident that it is true. Rather, one need only be sure that it has *not* originated from an abnormal or defective source; for the doctrine of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* tells us that a cognition is valid so long as the factors from which it arises are not abnormal. We know that the Veda does not arise from a defective source, because it has no source at all—it is eternal! Hence, we can be confident that the Veda is true.

Of course, this argument as it stands is rather unconvincing. According to the theory developed by Umbeka, it is actually only correct to say that the validity of a cognition is dependent on the cognition’s *arising from normal causes*, and not that it is dependent on its *not arising from abnormal* ones. Our confidence in the validity of a cognition would therefore, it seems, still have to be established *extrinsically* by ascertaining that the circumstances that gave rise to it were normal. Validity may always *arise* intrinsically, but it will have to be

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connected with fire, and in producing such an idea through invariable concomitance, it produces an awareness that is true. Thus, in the case of inference, the cause of validity is the same as the cause of cognition. Since this is the case for inference, it must be true for the other pramāṇas as well. (Cf. Vācaspatiśiṣya, *NVTT*, 9, ll. 17–18: *anumānasya tu . . . svata eva prāmāṇyam anumeyavyabhicāriṅgasamutthatvāt*. In the continuation, however, Vācaspati denies that perception is valid in the same way. Similarly, Maṇḍana, *VV* 91–92b, accepts *avyabhicāra* as the essence of *prāmāṇya* for inference, but not for perception.)

In his treatment of Umbeka’s position in his *NRM* Pārthasārathi adds another, perhaps more cogent, consideration: if validity were due to the presence of *guṇas* in the causal factors, then presumably a cognition arising from causes wholly devoid of *guṇas* would be wholly devoid of validity. But consider the cognition of a “yellow” conch produced by a jaundiced eye. There is a valid aspect to it, namely, the conch aspect; only the color is wrong. The false yellow color is obviously the result of the defect of jaundice, but the correct conch aspect must be the result of the operation of the eye itself (*NRM*, 48). In sum, our faculties seem to be so constituted as naturally to give rise to valid cognition.

<sup>30</sup> *ŚVVT*, 54, ll. 15–21. Once again, I have made Umbeka’s argument here more explicit than it is in the text.

*determined* extrinsically.<sup>31</sup> It appears, then, that if we are unable to establish *any* cause for a cognition, then we will no more be able to say that is valid than that it is invalid.<sup>32</sup> Such is the case, however, for the cognitions that comprise the Veda. Yet the soundness of this defense of the Veda is not what immediately concerns us, but only whether it is indeed Kumārila’s defense. In fact, it does not seem that it is. Umbeka’s view also has serious flaws as an interpretation of Kumārila.<sup>33</sup>

One notices, to begin with, that by interpreting *ŚV* II.47 along the lines described above Umbeka will have some difficulty accounting for the immediately following verse, II.48: “And things depend upon [other] causes in arising, but once they exist they exercise their functions by themselves.” Presumably, the “things” mentioned in this śloka include the “valid cognitions” of II.47. But, then, this verse (II.48) tells us that cognitions exercise a certain function “by themselves”—in explicit contrast to their coming into existence, which results from external causes—whereas, according to Umbeka, II.47 speaks of a potency that cognitions receive “from their own causes.” In other words, on Umbeka’s reading *svayam* in II.48 and *svataḥ* in II.47 have quite distinct meanings; yet it would seem natural to take them as meaning the same. Again, from II.48 one clearly gathers that intrinsic validity has to do with *cognitions* carrying out a certain function “by themselves,” and so the reading of II.47 should harmonize with that. Umbeka, however, has taken the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* of II.47 to pertain to how the *causes of cognitions* function, viz., as we have seen, they function alone (without *guṇas*), under normal circumstances, to produce cognitions that are valid.

In fact, we find Umbeka, in his commentary interpreting Kumārila, as abruptly changing topics from II.47 to 48: having stated with II.47 that a cognition is valid just insofar as it arises from its normal causes, Kumārila goes on, with II.48, to respond to an anticipated objection.<sup>34</sup> The objection is the following: A

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<sup>31</sup> This is essentially the critique Śāntarākṣita gives of this position. See *TS* 2832–39. It indeed appears that the first Mīmāṃsā theory of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* discussed by Śāntarākṣita in his *TS* (2812–45) is Umbeka’s interpretation of Kumārila.

<sup>32</sup> Umbeka may well have thought, however, that just insofar as a cognition arises, we know that it arises from some cause, and that unless there is positive evidence to the contrary, one is justified in believing the cause to be “normal,” hence the cognition to be valid.

<sup>33</sup> As Pārthasārathi notes in his *NRM*: *bahavaḥ ślokā asmin pakṣe na saṅgacchante*, 49, l. 4.

<sup>34</sup> *ŚVVT*, 55, ll. 14–23.

cognition cannot yield its characteristic effect, which is a determinate judgment or knowledge of its object (*pariccheda, paricchitti*), unless it is known to be true. If a cognition merely presented an idea or impression of its object, that would not constitute judgment. Judgment is more than thinking something *seems* a certain way; rather, it consists in believing that something really *is* a certain way. Judgment involves being convinced that the appearance with which one is presented in the cognition is really true.<sup>35</sup> If that is the case, however, then our cognitions will not yield fixed determinations or judgments until we *confirm* them. We must do that, moreover, through an immediate experience of the causal efficiency or “practical function” of their objects (*arthakriyā*).<sup>36</sup> But that is of course impossible in the case of the Veda, which speaks of things entirely beyond human experience. With II.48, suggests Umbeka, Kumārila counters this objection. A cognition, like anything else, produces its characteristic effect as soon as it arises. It immediately yields a determination or judgment of its object. It does not first occur as indefinite or uncertain and then later, after being confirmed by another cognition, acquire definition or certitude: “things may depend on other causes in arising; but once they exist, they exercise their functions by themselves.”

Thus Umbeka presents us with a rather awkward view of Kumārila’s initial statement of the doctrine of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. The main idea (viz., validity arises from the causes of cognition) is stated in the first verse (II.47), but left undeveloped. Kumārila, rather, immediately launches into a defense against an objection with the second verse (II.48)—an objection that is not stated in the text. It is Kumārila’s practice in the *ŚV*, however, generally to make all objections explicit. In viewing II.48 as a response to an objection, moreover, Umbeka must take the particle *ca* of 48a in a secondary sense, as meaning ‘but’ (*tu*). The next series of *ślokas*, 49–51, are, then, according to Umbeka supposed to explicate why validity cannot come from things other than the causes of the cognition; that is, they refer back

<sup>35</sup> This was a widely accepted principle in Indian epistemology. Cf. Vācaspatimiśra, *NVTṬ*, 3, ll. 10–12: *prameyādīnām tāvat padārthānām tattvajñānam pramānatattvajñānādīnam. na hi pramāṇam tattvenānavadhāritam bodhakatvamātreṇa svagocarāvadhāraṇāyālam. . . . api tu bodhakatvaikārthasamavetenāvabhicāritvena*. Cf. also Śāntarakṣita, *TS* 2840–41.

<sup>36</sup> This would be, in the case of water, e.g., the quenching of thirst. See E. Mikogami, “Some Remarks on the Concept of *Arthakriyā*,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 7 (1979): 79–94.

to the first verse. But in fact, as we shall see shortly, they are clearly concerned not with the *origin* of validity at all but with one’s *awareness* thereof and so do not really connect with the first verse—as Umbeka interprets it—at all.

We find, however, that Pārthasārathimiśra in his *Nyāyaratnākara* commentary on the *ŚV* is able to interpret these two *ślokas* as a single, coherent statement and, moreover, to harmonize them with śl. 49–51. Let us now consider his view. Pārthasārathi develops his position in conscious opposition to Umbeka. He explicitly criticizes Umbeka’s interpretation in the *Svataḥprāmāṇyanirṇaya* section of his *Nyāyaratnamālā*. Thus in discussing Pārthasārathi’s view we will become aware of further inadequacies of Umbeka’s reading of Kumārila.

Pārthasārathi understands *svataḥ prāmāṇya* completely differently than does Umbeka. According to him, *svataḥ prāmāṇya* means that whenever a cognition occurs it *presents itself as true*. The validity of a cognition “is known” from the cognition itself: *buddheḥ svīyam pramāṇatvaṃ svata evāvagamyate*.<sup>37</sup> This does not mean that it is known definitively to be true, but only that it “is manifest” as such. Even false cognitions manifest themselves as true. All cognitions, not just true cognitions, have intrinsic validity, according to Pārthasārathi. The difference between true and false cognitions is that the latter are always eventually overturned by other cognitions, whereas the former retain their intrinsic validity indefinitely. In short, every cognition has a certain inherent force of conviction. We are inclined to believe that it represents matters as they really are, as soon as it occurs. True cognitions retain this force of conviction, but false ones eventually lose it.

Thus the potency or function referred to by the word *śakti* in II.47 and the phrase *svakāryeṣu pravṛttiḥ* in II.48 is more naturally taken by Pārthasārathi to be the same thing in both cases: a capacity that is literally “of itself” or “intrinsic” in the sense of *deriving from the cognition itself*. Pārthasārathi considers that this is either the capacity of the cognition to ascertain its own truth, or else, as Umbeka suggests, the capacity to determine the nature of its object, that is, to give rise to judgment. Even in the latter case, since a cognition cannot determine its object unless there is an awareness of its truth, it is implied that the validity of a cognition *is manifest* from the cognition itself. Let us interpret the word *śakti* in this second way, as referring to the capacity of a cognition to determine its

<sup>37</sup> *NRM*, 51, kārikā 3.



object.<sup>38</sup> II.47, then, states that the validity of all (valid) cognitions *is known* from the cognitions themselves, “since a potency not existing intrinsically [i.e., of the cognition itself] cannot be brought about by something else” (*na hi svato 'satī śaktiḥ kartum anyena śakyate*). What else would be able to yield a determination if not a cognition? Certainly, if a *cognition* were unable to determine its object itself, it could not receive such a capacity from something else. But then, since the capacity to determine its object entails an awareness of its truth, every cognition must involve an awareness of its own truth.

II.48 supports this idea. In general, we think that all potencies, *śaktis*, are intrinsic. What is meant by ‘potency’, *śakti*, it seems, is a dynamic property that is *characteristic* of a thing and makes it what it is, like that of burning in the case of fire. We generally think that things, once they exist, exercise these characteristic *śaktis* or functions without external aids. Pārthasārathi mentions the example of a pot: a pot requires a potter in order to exist; but once it exists it does not require anything else in order to serve as a means of carrying water.<sup>39</sup> Now the characteristic function of cognitions would seem to be that of yielding knowledge—a determination or judgment of their objects. This, once again, involves an awareness of the validity of the cognition. So, to say that cognitions, like everything else, will produce their characteristic effects of themselves as soon as they have arisen is to say that they are necessarily accompanied by an awareness of their own truth. Cognitions, therefore, must present themselves *as true*, be accompanied by conviction, when they occur.

Pārthasārathi then sees the next three ślokaś as explicating the notion that the awareness of the validity of a cognition could not possibly derive from anything besides the cognition (*na . . . kartum anyena śakyate*).

*jāte 'pi yadi vijñāne tāvan nārtho 'vadhāryate*  
*yāvat kāraṇaśuddhatvaṃ na pramāñāntarād bhavet* 49  
*tatra jñāñāntarotpādaḥ pratikṣyaḥ kārañāntarāt*  
*yāvad dhi na paricchinnā śuddhis tāvad asatsamā* 50  
*tasyāpi kāraṇe śuddhe tajjñāne syāt pramāñatā*  
*tasyāpy evam iticcamś ca na kvacid vyavatiṣṭhate* 51

<sup>38</sup> Thus Pārthasārathi, *NR* ad II.48: *tathā jñānam api svot-pattau . . . kāraṇam apekṣatām nāma, svakārye tu viṣayanīś-caye 'napekṣam eva*. But cf. *NR* ad II.47: *yadi jñānasya svaviṣayatathātvādvadhāraṇe svataḥ śaktir na syāt . . .* Cf. also *TS* 2849: *janane hi svatantrāñam prāmāñyārthavinīś-citeḥ / svahetunirapekṣāñam teṣaṃ vṛttir ghaṭādivat*.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *TS* 2850.

Even though a cognition has arisen, an object will not be determined [by it] so long as the purity (*śuddhatva*) of [its] cause has not been ascertained from another pramāṇa. For that purpose, another cognition must arise from another cause. Indeed, as long as the purity [of the cause of the first cognition] is not determined, it will be as though it did not exist. [But] that [second] cognition [which ascertains the purity of the cause of the first cognition] will be valid only if its cause is pure, and so for the [cognition required to ascertain the purity of the cause of the second cognition]. Considering matters in this way, one never reaches an end.

If, indeed, a cognition did not of itself yield a sense of its own truth, it would never be considered true. For it is impossible to establish the truth of a cognition “extrinsically,” by, say, ascertaining the causes of the cognition to be whole or “pure” (*śuddha*). One could only establish the wholeness of its causes by means of a second cognition. That second cognition, in turn, would have to be validated by a third cognition, and so on, *ad inf*. Thus, if a cognition did not carry with it a sense of its own truth, it would never appear as true. Without any authority, it would not yield judgment. But cognitions do yield judgment. Hence they must be intrinsically valid.

In his *Nyāyaratnamālā* Pārthasārathi points out that this passage (II.49–51) poses a serious difficulty for Umbeka’s interpretation.<sup>40</sup> Kumārila here is clearly arguing against the position that validity is “extrinsic” in that it *is known* from things other than the cognition itself. If that is what “extrinsic validity,” *parataḥ prāmānya*, means, then “intrinsic validity,” *svataḥ prāmānya*, must mean that validity *is known* from the cognition itself. Hence Kumārila is talking about how validity is manifest, not, as Umbeka argues, how it originates.

In summary, Pārthasārathi offers a much more coherent reading of Kumārila’s text than Umbeka. II.47–48 constitute a single statement. Thus Pārthasārathi, over against Umbeka, is able to construe the *ca* of 48a in its primary sense, meaning ‘and’. Moreover, he is able to take *svataḥ*, more naturally, as meaning ‘of itself’. Furthermore, II.49–51 on his reading successfully explicate II.47cd. On Umbeka’s interpretation, on the other hand, as we have seen, II.47 and 48 make two distinct statements. II.48, moreover, is a response to an objection that must be postulated. II.49–51 are then supposed to explicate II.47cd, but in fact they seem to be discussing something other than what Umbeka takes

<sup>40</sup> *NRM*, 48, II. 22–25.

II.47 to be addressing. And Umbeka construes *svataḥ* more awkwardly, as ‘from the cognition’s own causes’. So far, Pārthasārathi’s reading of Kumārila’s text seems preferable to Umbeka’s.

ŚV II.52 and 53 conclude Kumārila’s initial statement of his position.

*yadā svataḥ pramāṇatvaṃ tadānyan naiva mṛgyate  
nivantate hi mithyātvaṃ doṣājñānād ayatnataḥ 52  
tasmād bodhātmakatvena prāptā buddheḥ pramāṇatā  
arthānyathāvahetūtthadoṣājñānād apodyate 53*

When there is intrinsic validity, nothing else is sought. For the falsehood [of the cognition] disappears without effort, as a result of not knowing a defect. Thus, the validity of a cognition, due to its having the nature of knowledge, is [in the case of a false cognition] removed by ascertaining a defect in its cause or realizing that the object really is otherwise.

Kumārila appears to be saying with II.52 that nothing besides the cognition itself has to be ascertained in order for it to appear valid. In particular, the possibility of its falsehood does not have to be set aside; for doubt about the truth of a cognition simply does not arise as long as there is no awareness of a defect in the causal factors that gave rise to it (e.g., in the case of perception, the sense organ) or awareness of a cognition that contradicts it.

In the case of a false cognition, however, “the [intrinsic] validity of a cognition, due to its having the nature of knowledge, is sublated by ascertaining some defect in its cause or realizing that the object is really otherwise” (II.53). This statement supports Pārthasārathi’s interpretation in two distinct ways. First, it says that a cognition is intrinsically valid by virtue of being a *bodha*, that is, a *knowledge* of its object. We have seen that knowledge—which is presumably synonymous here with determination or judgment (*avadhāraṇa*, *niścaya*)—entails awareness of the truth of a cognition. To say that a cognition is intrinsically valid by virtue of being knowledge is to say that it is intrinsically valid insofar as it *presents itself* as true. This is the essence of Pārthasārathi’s position. Second, this *śloka* says that the intrinsic validity of false cognitions is annulled upon disconfirming the cognition. That implies that Kumārila means by intrinsic validity not the actual correspondence of cognition and object, as Umbeka understands it, but merely, as Pārthasārathi suggests, a *sense* of the cognition being true. If validity were the correspondence of cognition and object, it would either belong to a cognition or not; it could not initially belong to a cognition and then be removed.

Pārthasārathi, in taking Umbeka to task in his *NRM* for not giving a faithful reading of Kumārila’s text (*bahavaḥ ślokā asmin pakṣe na saṅgacchante*), cites specifically this *śloka*.<sup>41</sup>

However, while Pārthasārathi may present us with a more convincing reading of Kumārila than Umbeka does, his interpretation appears to provide no better defense of the authority of the Veda than Umbeka’s. How can the intrinsic validity of the Veda in Pārthasārathi’s sense guarantee that the Veda is true? As we have seen, *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is something essentially subjective for Pārthasārathi; it is a cognition’s initial *appearance* or *manifestation* of validity. Clearly, the appearance or idea of truth is not the same as truth. Pārthasārathi himself admits, even emphasizes, that cognitions that are in fact false have intrinsic validity, that is, they initially manifest themselves as true. This, as I have noted, is the problem that most of those outside Mīmāṃsā have seen in the doctrine of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. In fact, it undoubtedly in part motivated Umbeka to offer his somewhat distorted reading of the ŚV. Umbeka prefaces his interpretation of the text with a long passage in which he argues that by *prāmāṇya* Kumārila must mean a cognition’s correspondence with—or, more exactly, “non-deviation” from—its object (*arthavyabhicāritva*).<sup>42</sup> He could not mean some internal feature of cognition common to both true and false cognitions, such as its presenting its object in a clear and distinct way or “merely making the object known” (*bodhakatvamātra*).<sup>43</sup> If he did, then obviously the fact that the Veda is intrinsically valid would not entail that it *is* valid! It remains to be seen, then, how Pārthasārathi—and therefore, since Pārthasārathi appears to interpret the ŚV correctly, how Kumārila—believed the Veda to be really true by virtue of its “intrinsic validity.” We shall take up this question in the next section.

<sup>41</sup> *NRM*, 48, ll. 31–32.

<sup>42</sup> ŚVVT, 48–53.

<sup>43</sup> See ŚVVT, 50, l. 5–51, l. 2. Umbeka summarizes his argument, ŚVVT, 53, ll. 22–25, by saying that we know that *prāmāṇya* is nondeviation (*arthāvisamvāditva*) and not “making something known” (*bodhakatva*), by *anvaya-vyatireka*. Where there is deviation, there is no validity, even if an object is presented clearly in awareness. On the other hand, where there is non-deviation, there is validity, even if there is no *bodhakatva*. The *hetu* of an inference, e.g., is valid by virtue merely of corresponding invariably with the *sādhya*; it does not, however, present the *sādhya* clearly in awareness at all! Hence, *bodhakatva* has nothing at all to do with validity.

## III

Before addressing the issue of the relation of intrinsic validity to actual validity, however, we must dispose of a serious challenge to Pārthasārathi's interpretation of *svataḥ prāmānya*, namely, that it is incompatible with the Bhāṭṭa denial of the self-luminosity of cognition. This issue was raised some years ago in an engaging article by S. K. Saksena.<sup>44</sup> However, Pārthasārathi was aware of it in his day and thought that he had provided an adequate answer to it.<sup>45</sup>

According to the doctrine of “non-self-luminosity,” *asvaprakāśatva*, cognition is completely taken up with apprehending its object; it does not simultaneously apprehend itself.<sup>46</sup> That is to say, experience consists only in the awareness of objects by a knower and not at the same time an awareness of the knowing. This view is crucial to the (Bhāṭṭa) Mīmāṃsā defense of realism against idealism; for, reasons the Bhāṭṭa, were it at all possible for cognition to cognize itself, then the object in consciousness might indeed be merely an aspect of

consciousness! The Yogācāra Buddhists, for example, held that all experience can be accounted for solely in terms of cognition having a two-fold structure: when an “object” is experienced by a cognition, one half of the cognition assumes the appearance of the object while the other half assumes the function of knower and perceives the first half. Thus no object outside consciousness need be posited. The doctrine of *svataḥ prāmānya* as we have understood it thus far seems to conflict with this Bhāṭṭa denial of self-luminosity. To say that the validity of a cognition is *known* intrinsically would appear to be to say that a cognition knows itself to be valid.<sup>47</sup> In that case, it must *know itself*.

Obviously, this is a problem only for Pārthasārathi's theory. It does not arise for Umbeka's interpretation, which holds that validity merely *arises* from the causes of cognition. Indeed, Umbeka may also have been motivated to adopt such an interpretation by a concern not to violate the principle of *asvaprakāśatva*. Nevertheless, Pārthasārathi argues that his proposal, understood correctly, is not incompatible with *asvaprakāśatva* either.

For what he means when he says that a cognition conveys a sense of its own truth is that it presents its object as *real*, as definitely the way it is shown to be. Validity is simply the object being “thus,” as the cognition represents it (*viśayatathātva*). All cognitions, except those falling under the category of doubt, reveal their objects as really existing and really having the properties they are represented to have. Thus the validity of a cognition is something to be read off from the object, not from the cognition itself.<sup>48</sup> Certainly, when

<sup>44</sup> “*Svapramānatva* and *Svaprakāśatva*: an Inconsistency in Kumārila's Philosophy,” *Review of Philosophy and Religion* 9 (1940): 27–31.

<sup>45</sup> He considers the problem in connection with ŚV II.82–84. An opponent objects (82) that the validity of a cognition is not intrinsic, for we are in fact not aware that “this is a valid cognition” (*pramāṇam iti*) whenever one occurs. Therefore, validity must be known extrinsically. For if we were not aware of the validity of cognition at all, then it would be of no use in daily praxis (*na cettham agrhītena vyavahāro 'vakalpate*). (This appeals to the principle discussed above that in order to know, one must know that one knows.) Kumārila appears to say in response that the validity of a cognition indeed is not immediately evident, but only known subsequent to its occurrence. Nevertheless, it will still have its effect, i.e., know its object. A cognition does not have to be known in order to yield a determinate experience (*tenāsya jñāyamānavam prāmāṇye nopayujyate / viśayānubhavo hy atra pūrvasmād eva labhyate*, II.84). This statement indeed seems to conflict with Pārthasārathi's interpretation that every cognition carries with itself an awareness of its own truth. Pārthasārathi will argue, as we shall see below, that when Kumārila says that a cognition does not have to be known, he means only that it does not have to be known *directly*. See the relevant passages of the *Nyāyaratnākara* and also *NRM*, 51, l. 8–52, l. 28.

<sup>46</sup> ŚV, śūnyavāda 184:

*vyāpṛtma cārthasaṃvittau jñānam nātmānam ṛcchati  
tena prakāśakatve 'pi bodhāyānyat pratikṣyate*

Cf. the entire passage, 182–185, and also śūnyavāda 74.

<sup>47</sup> *na hi vijñānam ātmānam grhṇāti, netarām ātmīyaṃ prāmāṇyam aprāmāṇyaṃ vā, arthagrahaṇopakṣiṇtvāt*, *NRM*, 51, ll. 8–9.

<sup>48</sup> *na jñānasambandhitvena prāmāṇyaṃ grhyata iti brūmaḥ, kin tu viśayatathātvaṃ tadvijñānasya prāmāṇyaṃ, tanni-bandhanatvāj jñāne pramāṇabuddhiśabdayoḥ. tac cājñātād eva jñānāt svata eva grhītam . . .*, *NR* ad II.84. Cf. *NRM*, 52, ll. 20–27. For this reason Kumārila says with II.84 that a cognition does not have to be known in order to be manifest as valid and serve as a means of knowledge (*tenāsya jñāyamānavam prāmāṇye nopayujyate*; see note 45 above). He means that a cognition does not have to be known by an explicit consciousness. A cognition is known explicitly only subsequent to its occurrence, via an inference from the *jñātatva* or *prakaṣatva* of the object. Cf. also Rāmānujācārya's *Nāyakarata* with regard to Pārthasārathi's discussion, *NRM*, 52: *yadi prāmāṇyaṃ nāmārthavyabhicāritvādīlakṣaṇo jñānadharmā ity aṅgikriyeta, tadā svato bhānam anupapannam. kin tu viśayadharmāḥ kaś cit prāmāṇyaṃ nāma. so 'pi prāmāṇyam*

a cognition occurs, there is no awareness explicitly referring to the cognition of the form “I am a valid cognition; validity belongs to me” (*ahaṃ pramāṇam iti . . . madiyaṃ prāmāṇyam*).<sup>49</sup> The object absorbs all our attention in cognition; cognition itself is invisible or “formless” (*nirākāra*) and does not present itself to our awareness: this is the very essence of *asvaprakāśatva*. Yet a distinct sense of the reality or “thusness” of the object—of being not just a (possibly accurate) idea of a thing but the thing itself—implies the faithfulness of the cognition that presents it. Therefore, without being directly known, every cognition (except doubt) carries with it a sense of its own truth.

I now turn to the main objection against the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* theory, the problem that has been with us since the beginning of this essay, namely, that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* does not entail actual *prāmāṇya*—intrinsic validity is common to valid and invalid cognitions alike. How do Kumārila and Pārthasārathi deal with this issue?

They seem to deal with it primarily by attacking the belief that one might ever know that a cognition is really true.<sup>50</sup> We have already been introduced to this argument. One could never establish the actual truth of a cognition by showing that there is agreement (*saṃvāda*) between the cognition and other cognitions, or that it leads to a direct experience of the causal efficiency (*arthakriyā*) of the object, or that the causes that produced it are endowed with “good characteristics” (*guṇas*) conducive to its validity. Any such approach will lead to a regress. In short, there is no way ever to *establish* objectively that a cognition really corresponds with reality; for to do so one would have to step outside of cognition altogether, as it were, and take a “God’s eye view” of the relation between cognition and what it represents. However, we humans cannot do that. We are dependent upon cognitions in knowing anything. As long as we can check cognitions only by means of other cognitions, themselves in need of verification, we can never be absolutely confident—extrinsically—of the (objective) truth of a cognition.<sup>51</sup>

*ity evamākāreṇa vā jñānasambandhitvena vā na svataḥ pratīyate. kin tu tatsvarūpaṃ jñānād eva pratīyate iti svato bhānam upapannam iti* (NRM 53, ll. 20–24).

Mohanty, I believe, misconstrues Pārthasārathi’s suggestion when he complains that validity in the sense of “suchness” (*tathātva*) is not an “epistemological notion” (*Gaṅgeśa*, 10).

<sup>49</sup> NRM 52, ll. 21–22.

<sup>50</sup> ŚV II.49–51 and 76–79; NRM 57–58.

<sup>51</sup> Hilary Putnam rejects the correspondence theory of truth for this among other reasons. See his *Reason, Truth, and History*

The validity of a cognition, therefore, if it can be known at all, must be known “intrinsically,” by its presenting a sense of its own truth. Indeed, if the validity of cognitions were not known in this way, then, without any authority, cognitions would never yield determinate judgment (*avadhāraṇa*, *niścaya*). As a result, *āndhyam evāśeṣasya jagataḥ*: “everyone would be completely ignorant.”<sup>52</sup>

It is important to note in this connection that Kumārila never claims that intrinsic validity *entails* validity. Surely, then, the criticism that his theory allows for the intrinsic validity of *false* cognitions misses the point! As we have already seen, Pārthasārathi in particular stresses that intrinsic validity is common to true and false cognitions alike.<sup>53</sup> One reason he emphasizes this is, once again, to show the inadequacy of the *utpattitaḥ* interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*—that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* means that validity *comes into being* from the causes of cognition. If intrinsic validity were an actual correspondence between cognition and object that arose in a cognition from its causes, then it certainly would *not* belong to false cognitions; yet Kumārila clearly says that it does. At the same time, Pārthasārathi wishes to argue for the other half of the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine, namely, that invalidity is *extrinsic*—*apramāṇya* is *parataḥ*. A false cognition does not present itself *as invalid*. The invalidity of a false cognition is not, like validity, to be read off from the cognition itself.<sup>54</sup> Rather, all cognitions appear initially as

(Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981), ch. 3, and *The Many Faces of Realism* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1987), lectures 1 and 2.

<sup>52</sup> NRM 58, ll. 3f. Cf. NR ad II.47.

<sup>53</sup> . . . *apramāṇajñānād api prāmāṇyam evātmano 'sad api bodhyate . . .*, NRM 54, ll. 20–21. This challenges the generalization of Mohanty that the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* theory “understands by ‘knowledge’ only true knowledge,” so that the intrinsic validity of a cognition is “an analytic consequence of its conception of knowledge” (*Gaṅgeśa*, 76). Pārthasārathi cites Kumārila extensively in this connection, in particular, TS 2861, 2912a–2913b (cf. ŚV II.85a–86b), and the following lines which are to be found neither in the TS nor the ŚV, but which are nevertheless presumably from the *Bṛhaṭṭikā*:

*mithyāitāt pūrvavijñānam iti nājñāyi tena hi pramāṇavad dhi tenārthas tathāivety avadhāritāḥ anyathātvaṃ kutas tasya sidhyej jñānāntarād rte.*

<sup>54</sup> Pārthasārathi points out that if *only* true cognitions had the feature of intrinsic validity, then it would be immediately evident from false cognitions, even if they did not present themselves *as false*, that they are false, simply because they lack that feature (NRM 54).

true, and one becomes aware of the falsehood of a particular cognition only by ascertaining some other fact, e.g., that the object is really different from the way the cognition suggests it is, or that one's perception is distorted due to an ailment of the sense organ.<sup>55</sup> Ultimately, however, this emphasis on the inability to distinguish true from false cognitions expresses what seems an almost skeptical attitude on the part of Kumāriḷa, viz., that we can never establish with absolute certainty that a cognition corresponds with reality. The *parataḥ prāmāṇya-vādin* is egregiously mistaken in believing that one can. But even the Mīmāṃsaka must recognize that in holding a particular cognition to be true, he is unable to ascertain its objective truth *with finality*.

Is Kumāriḷa, then, really a skeptic? Is he saying, in effect, that since we can never establish the validity of cognition extrinsically, we must rest content with intrinsic validity, even though it is only subjective and may ultimately mislead us? that intrinsic validity, though not the same as real validity, is the best we can do?

No. Kumāriḷa is not a skeptic, and this is not all that he is saying. In spite of elements of skepticism in his epistemology, Kumāriḷa in the end adopts a positive position: a cognition whose initial, intrinsic validity is not sublated by the awareness of a defect in its cause or a contradictory cognition not only continues to appear valid (subjectively) but almost certainly *is* valid (objectively). We commonly suppose that, if over the long run no evidence for a certain state of affairs presents itself, then the state of affairs in reality does not obtain. So, Kumāriḷa suggests, if no evidence of the falsehood of a cognition emerges (in the form of a *bādhakajñāna* or *hetudoṣajñāna*), we may suppose that the situation that would give rise to such evidence—an actual state of affairs that conflicts with its truth—does not exist, hence that the cognition really is true:

*tasmād dṛḍhaṃ yad utpannaṃ vijñānaṃ na viśaṃvadet  
deśāntarādivijñānaiḥ pramāṇaṃ tad asaṃśayaṃ*<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> NRM 52, ll. 28–53, l. 9. See ŚV II.85a–86b:

*apramāṇaṃ punaḥ svārthagrāhakaṃ syāt svarūpataḥ  
nivṛttis tasya mithyāṭve nāgrhite parair bhavet  
na hy arthasyātathābhāvaḥ pūrvenārthas tathātvavat.*

<sup>56</sup> TS 2904. Cf. ŚV II.80:

*tasmād dṛḍhaṃ yad utpannaṃ nāpi viśaṃvādam  
rcchati  
jñānāntareṇa vijñānaṃ tat pramāṇaṃ pratiyatām.*

Kumāriḷa seems to be saying with this śloka: let it be recognized that a cognition that remains unsublated *is* a *pramāṇa*.

Therefore, that cognition which is unshaken<sup>57</sup> and does not conflict with cognitions [occurring] at other times and places is a *pramāṇa* without a doubt!

Similarly, Kumāriḷa implies that when one searches for a refutation of a *bādhakajñāna* (sublating cognition) but fails to find one, that is “because there is no basis,” i.e., presumably, because one's original cognition, called into question by the *bādhakajñāna*, really is false.<sup>58</sup>

II.52, on the other hand, (discussed above) is perhaps more guarded:

*yadā svataḥ pramāṇatvaṃ tadānyan naiva mṛgyate  
nivartate hi mithyāṭvaṃ doṣajñānād ayatnataḥ.*

This suggests, merely, that the concern about the falsehood of a cognition disappears over time, merely as a result of the nonappearance of a defect.

Note, incidentally, that in the last śloka Kumāriḷa carefully avoids saying that one must *establish* that there is no *doṣa*. The subsiding of any concern about the falsehood of the cognition occurs automatically, “without effort.” L. Schmithausen has argued that the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* theories of both Kumāriḷa and Maṇḍanaśrī are undermined by a stipulation that in order for a cognition to be considered valid it must be positively ascertained that there are no *hetudoṣas* or *bādhakajñānas*. (See VV, 199–200, with regard to Kumāriḷa, and 232 with regard to Maṇḍana.) Schmithausen cites in support of his claim about Kumāriḷa, ŚV codanā 67 cd: *doṣābhāve tu vijñeye [guṇāḥ] sattāmātropakāriṇaḥ*. This states, roughly, that *guṇas* function to exclude *doṣas* merely by their presence in the causes of cognition, but not insofar as they are *known*. Thus, one needn't be *aware* of the presence of *guṇas* in order for cognition to be valid (which would lead to the regress of the theory of extrinsic validity), but one should be *aware* of the absence of *doṣas* (*doṣābhāve vijñeye*). But Schmithausen may be taking the word *vijñeye* in this verse more literally than Kumāriḷa intended. In light of II.52, cited above, Kumāriḷa seems to mean not that one must be positively aware or establish that there are no defects, but only *not* aware that there are any (*nivartate hi mithyāṭvaṃ doṣajñānāt. . .*). Similarly, Kumāriḷa says with regard to a cognition that contradicts an earlier cognition, i.e., a *bādhakajñāna* (codanā 60):

*svata eva hi tatrāpi doṣajñānāt pramāṇātā  
doṣajñāne tv anutpanne na śaṅkyā niṣpramānatā.*

I believe that the same analysis applies to Maṇḍana, even though his assertion that one should “know” that there are no *doṣas* is more definite: *tato gate 'bhāve hetudoṣāṇaṃ tathā-khyātiviniścayaḥ* (VV 114d–115b).

<sup>57</sup> Or perhaps: “which has arisen firmly (*dṛḍhaṃ*),” i.e., with a sense of confidence in its truth.

<sup>58</sup> See TS 2868–69: *athānurūpayatnena saṃyaganveṣaṇe kṛte / mūlābhāvān na vijñānaṃ bhaved bādhabādhakam // tato*

Thus any kind of *general* skepticism is unfounded for Kumārila. To be sure, one is sometimes obliged to determine that *doṣas* and *bādhakajñānas* are absent, but only when there is a known possibility that the cognition might be wrong—e.g., when it is dark, when circumstances are conducive to the occurrence of a mirage, etc. Moreover, Kumārila says, one need take only limited steps: “To the extent that a refutation is considered possible with respect to a cognition, and it being to that same extent sought for and not discovered, let reasonable people (*utprekṣamānaiḥ . . . pramāṭrbhiḥ*) . . . not be obsessed [with imagining], ‘Perhaps there still could be a refutation.’”<sup>59</sup> It is unreasonable and inappropriate to worry that a cognition, despite every appearance of being true, might really be false, though one knows not how. “He who out of delusion is concerned about a contradiction [of his cognition], even though one has not arisen, will be filled with doubt and meet with failure in all his actions.”<sup>60</sup>

In the end, then, it appears that Kumārila adopts a common sense position. Every cognition is accompanied by an initial sense of conviction; one is initially inclined to believe of every cognition that it is true. One continues to be so inclined as long as the cognition is not called into question. Almost certainly, however, if the cognition is never overturned, it *is* true. Falsehood cannot conceal itself forever. If, over the long run, the cognition is not shown to be false, then on the basis of its initial, intrinsic validity one is certainly *justified* in believing that it is not false, that it is really true.

At the end of the first section I suggested that the *svataḥ prāmānya* doctrine is an expression of the Mīmāṃsā tendency to adhere strictly to appearances. This tendency frequently takes on an empiricist aspect: one may believe that for which one has concrete evidence

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*nirapavādatvāt tenaivādyam baliyasā / bādhyate. . .* “Suppose that a correct search, according to an appropriate effort, has been made and, due to there being no basis [for one], a cognition refuting the refutation does not arise; then one’s first cognition is refuted by the stronger [sublating cognition], since [the latter] has not been set aside. . . .”

<sup>59</sup> TS 2873–74:

*yāvān evāpavādo 'to yatra sambhāvyaṭe matau  
anviṣṭe 'nupajāte ca tāvaty eva tadātmani  
kadācit syād apīty evam na bhūyas tatra vastuni  
utprekṣamānaiḥ sthātavyam ātmakāmaiḥ pramāṭrbhiḥ*

See the continuation of the passage, 2875–84.

<sup>60</sup> TS 2872:

*utprekṣeta hi yo mohād ajātam api bādhakam  
sa sarvavyavahāreṣu saṁśayātmā kṣayam vrajat.*

See also ŚV II.60.

and no more. The doctrine of *svataḥ prāmānya* says, essentially: one may never consider a cognition to be false without positive evidence of its falsehood. In the case of most cognitions one *is* initially presented with positive evidence of the cognition’s truth; for it *announces itself* as true and compels our assent.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, one has no evidence of its falsehood (in the form of a contradictory cognition, etc.); and surely if it were false, it would eventually reveal itself as such. Hence one is justified in believing that the cognition really *is* true. Although that is not as good as *knowing* it is true extrinsically, via a *pramāṇa*—which however would be futile, since that would lead to a regress—it is almost as good.<sup>62</sup>

When we hear, then, the sentences of the Veda pronounced, they immediately present themselves to us as true, as do other cognitions. We are not aware of any defect in the Veda’s source, such as the humanity of its author; for we know that it has no source. Moreover, we have never been presented with cognitions that contradict it. Thus we have no reason to believe—indeed, we have reason *not* to believe—that we will ever be presented with such cognitions. Hence the Veda not only appears valid. For all intents and purposes it *is* valid: we have reason to believe that no state of affairs that conflicts with its truth exists. This, I believe, is how Kumārila would answer the charge that intrinsic validity does not entail actual validity.

Does this mean that Kumārila holds a “correspondence” as opposed to a “coherence” theory of truth? In a way. He stresses that we can never *establish* that there is a correspondence between cognition and reality. But, once again, there are many cognitions for which we are fully justified in believing that they do correspond to reality, although that is not something we can know. In any case, all Bhāṭṭas ultimately recognize correspondence as the nature of truth. A cognition initially presents itself as valid, Pārthasārathi says, precisely because it presents its object as being really “thus,” as the cognition presents it. On the other hand, a cognition is recognized as false when it is discovered (via another cognition) that its object really is not like that. And, when one thinks that a cognition which is not vitiated *is* valid, one believes not merely that it continues to *appear* valid (by virtue of its intrinsic validity), but that it continues to appear so because it really corresponds to how things are.

<sup>61</sup> Once again, by presenting its object *as real*.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Putnam, *Realism*, 31–40, where he argues for collapsing the distinction between truth and “warranted assertibility” or “idealized justification.”

Ultimately, however, we must judge this interpretation of Kumārila's defense of the authority of the Veda a failure, also. Clearly, the claim that the Veda is without a source, hence, a fortiori, without a *defective* source, is highly implausible. Indeed, it seems that there could be no cause more defective than a non-existent one! On the other hand, the fact that the Veda is not contradicted by other things we know proves nothing, since according to Mīmāṃsā humans are incapable of knowing independently of the Veda any of the transcendental matters of which it speaks. The Veda stands uncontradicted, it seems, merely by default.<sup>63</sup> Thus it would seem that on no interpretation, neither Umbeka's nor Pārthasārathi's, can the notion of *svataḥ prāmānya* serve specifically as a basis for the defense of the authority of the Veda.

Nevertheless, the notion of intrinsic validity still amounts to a significant contribution to epistemology. This becomes evident when we remind ourselves of the crucial role played in the West by the notion of self-evident cognition. Many Western philosophers have held that human knowledge must be grounded on self-validating epistemic states of some kind. Otherwise, knowledge will be without a foundation. Every idea will require corroboration by another idea in turn; thus without total justification of belief, one will never know anything. Therefore, Descartes, for example, sought to base all knowledge on "clear and distinct ideas," the truth of which cannot be doubted (or can only be doubted on an abstract, "metaphysical" level, as Descartes himself attempts in his First Meditation). The paradigm for clear and distinct ideas, he thought, is the *cogito ergo sum*. Similarly, Spinoza claimed that the truth of "adequate ideas," which constitute science, is always manifest: "He who has a true idea knows at the same time that he has a true idea, nor can he doubt the truth of the thing."<sup>64</sup> The views of Spinoza and

Descartes may have been inspired by the ancient Stoic doctrine of "apprehension" (κατάληψις) or "apprehensive presentation" (καταληπτική φαντασία). An apprehensive presentation is a presentation which "arises from what is and is stamped and impressed exactly in accordance with what is, of such a kind as could not be derived from a non-existent object";<sup>65</sup> it is "incapable of deceiving."<sup>66</sup> It is, moreover, distinctive in its certainty and stands out clearly from false or doubtful apprehensions: "a presentation of that kind as compared with all other presentations has a special character of its own, like the horned serpents as compared with all other serpents";<sup>67</sup> "it all but seizes us by the hair . . . and pulls us to assent."<sup>68</sup>

Of course, a crucial difference between these Western theories of self-validating cognitions and the Mīmāṃsā theory of *svataḥ prāmānya* is that while the latter holds all cognitions to present themselves as true, the former assign the feature of self-certainty to only a few ideas—in the case of Descartes, e.g., the *cogito*, the ideas of mathematics, and the proof of the existence of God. Thus Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā is not a form of epistemological foundationalism, which conceives of human knowledge as hierarchically structured, with the mass of what we know resting upon a few cognitions of special status. Rather, it is closer to the common sense empiricism of the eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid, which stresses that *almost*

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self-evidence, which is the basis of Spinoza's definition of an "adequate idea" ("By adequate idea I understand an idea which, insofar as it is considered in itself, with reference to the object, has all the properties or internal signs of a true idea," *Ethics* II, def. 4), and a correspondence criterion, whereby an idea is true insofar as it accurately represents its object ("A true idea must agree with that of which it is the idea," *Ethics* I, ax. 6). Wolfson argues convincingly that these two criteria were compatible for Spinoza, as for medieval philosophers. The internal criterion is to be taken as supplementary to the correspondence criterion, "applicable especially to concepts and judgments about concepts where correspondence with reality cannot be ascertained except by such criteria as self-evidence and self-consistency" (p. 99). I have argued above, essentially, that in Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā also intrinsic validity and correspondence are distinct but compatible definitions of truth.

<sup>65</sup> Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos* 7.248.

<sup>66</sup> Diogenes Laertius, 7.177; see A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), 1:144.

<sup>67</sup> *Adv. Math.* 7.252.

<sup>68</sup> *Adv. Math.* 7.257.

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<sup>63</sup> As Pollock (op. cit., 607) points out, while Mīmāṃsā accepts the doctrine that a cognition cannot be considered false unless falsified by another cognition, it does not recognize the corollary doctrine that only a potentially falsifiable cognition that is in fact unfalsified can be considered true.

<sup>64</sup> *Ethics* II, prop. 43. Cf. II, prop. 43, schol.: "No one who has a true idea is ignorant that a true idea involves the highest certitude. . . . No one can doubt this, unless he supposes an idea to be something dumb, like a picture on a tablet, instead of being a mode of thought, that is to say, intelligence itself." Harry Wolfson has noted (*The Philosophy of Spinoza* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1934], 2:99ff.) that Spinoza actually had two criteria of truth, both of which were discussed in medieval philosophy: an intrinsic criterion of

all our perceptions have initial authority: “all men are by nature led to give implicit faith to the distinct testimony of their senses”;<sup>69</sup> “we are born under a necessity of trusting our reasoning and judging powers; and a real belief of their being fallacious cannot be maintained for any considerable time by the greatest sceptic, because it is doing violence to our constitution.”<sup>70</sup> Thus, Hume’s skepticism about the reality of physical objects, which Reid wants to attack, is unable to get off the ground; for it depends on viewing perception merely as the apprehension of a mental state, an impression, whose actual correspondence with reality is questionable. At the same time, Reid understands, over against such rationalists as Descartes, that our perceptions, though initially authoritative, can always be overturned: they are not apodictic. Nevertheless, they provide for a certain confidence in reality as long as they are not challenged by other perceptions.

Despite these differences, however, we find at the basis of both the foundationalist and the Mīmāṃsā (Reidean) proposals the same insight: there must occur cognitions which present themselves as true—even if they do not absolutely guarantee their own truth—in order for there to be truth at all. The search for evidence must come to an end—either at the very start, or after a finite process—in a kind of knowledge for which the concern for evidence does not arise. This provides a clear answer to the question, whence comes truth? at the heart of all epistemology. Opposed to this answer would be any form of coherentism which says that truth is merely a matter of corroboration by further evidence that is not, in turn, ultimately anchored in some self-validating form of awareness. It is interesting that although such theories have been extensively developed in Western thought—e.g., in pragmatism—Indian philosophers have shied away from them. Significantly, even those schools that attack the Mīmāṃsā doctrine of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* tend to be foundationalist in outlook: although they argue that cognitions are generally true by virtue of being validated by other cognitions, they also recognize that the chain of validation ends with some type of cognition which is intrinsically valid, *svataḥ prāmāṇa*.<sup>71</sup> Typically, this is the

experience of the causal efficiency or practical function of the object (*phalajñāna*, *artha-kriyājñāna*), e.g., of the water one perceived actually quenching one’s thirst.

In conclusion, the doctrine of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* should be seen as more than a mere curiosity in the history of Indian thought. Rather, it represents a viable position in an important philosophical debate—a position, moreover, which probably influenced the epistemological theories of other schools besides the Mīmāṃsā, even as they attacked it. Once one is able to take *svataḥ prāmāṇya* seriously as a philosophical idea, it seems less probable that it was merely invented ad hoc by the Mīmāṃsaka for the purpose of defending the authority of the Veda. Rather, the source of the idea was probably the same systematic reflection on the nature of human knowledge as that engaged in by Western philosophers.<sup>72</sup> A proper historical investigation of the source of this doctrine will, however, have to await a further study.

#### IV

It remains to indicate some ways in which the notion of intrinsic validity is applied in (Bhāṭṭa) Mīmāṃsā to issues besides that of the authority of the Veda. This will further support my contention that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* lies at the very heart of Mīmāṃsā thought. As I have already suggested, the doctrine of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is an expression of the fundamental Mīmāṃsā tendency to adhere strictly to appearances, that is, to regard what appears, and nothing more than what appears, as real. Such rigid realism is evident in almost all the important philosophical doctrines of Mīmāṃsā. We have seen it in the doctrine of the authorlessness of the Veda. It is, however, also evident in such theses as the reality of the external world, the eternity of language, and the existence of the self. *Svataḥ prāmāṇya* plays an important role in the argumentation for these positions; it is the germ, as it were, of realism in Mīmāṃsā. I shall focus here primarily on the role played by *svataḥ prāmāṇya* in the refutation of Bud-

<sup>69</sup> *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969), 625.

<sup>70</sup> *Essays*, 632.

<sup>71</sup> Thus, e.g., Manorathanandin’s commentary on *Pramāṇa-vārttika* 1.3: *arthakriyānirbhāsam tu pratyakṣam svata evārthakriyānubhavātmakam, na tatra parārthakriyāpekṣyate iti tad api svato niścītaprāmāṇyam. ata evārthakriyāparam-parānusaraṇād anavasthādoṣo ’pi duḥstha eva*. See also the

Nyāya theory cited by Vācaspati, *NVTṬ*, 9, ll. 8–11: *na ca phalajñānam parikṣyate prekṣāvadbhiḥ . . .*, etc. Vācaspati’s own theory, however, which is presented in the sequel, is a more or less consistently coherentist position (although he does recognize inference and *saṃvedana* as *svataḥ prāmāṇa*). See B. K. Matilal’s excellent discussion of it in his *Perception* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988), 164–79.

<sup>72</sup> Matilal has elaborated the systematic connections between the Indian and European frameworks in *Perception*, chs. 1, 2, and 5.



dhist idealism and the demonstration of the reality of external objects. I shall, however, also briefly discuss the arguments for the existence of the self and the eternity of words.

In the *nirāḷambanavādādhikaraṇa* of his *Ślokavārtika*, Kumāriḷa, following the Vṛttikāra, formulates the Yogācāra denial of external reality in terms of the following *anumāna*: “the cognition (*pratyaya*) of a post, etc., is false, because it is a cognition, like the cognition of a dream, etc.”<sup>73</sup> That is to say, we know that our waking cognitions of posts, trees, human beings, etc., are illusory just because they have the nature of cognitions; for known illusory experiences, such as dreams, mistaken perceptions, and mirages, have that same nature: they are cognitions, too. Kumāriḷa devotes much of his discussion to arguing that this inference is, in one way or another, self-refuting. It seeks to deny the truth of all our experiences; yet any inference depends on the reality of the relationships between things in the world, in particular, between the *dharma* and *dharmin* of the *anumāna*. What is *nirāḷambanā*? Is that merely something imagined, too?<sup>74</sup> What is a *pratyaya*? Is that, too, without any reality?<sup>75</sup> Indeed, it seems that the inference renders its own terms meaningless. You can only attempt a proof if you assume the reality of the *pakṣa*, the *hetu*, and the *drṣṭānta*; but in this case, assuming that anything is real, you refute your own proof!

These arguments of Kumāriḷa’s seem at first sight somewhat sophistical.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, he supplements them with other arguments that have more force. These are arguments that appeal, directly or indirectly, to the doctrine of intrinsic validity. Even if the inference of the Yogācārin is allowed to stand as formally valid, Kumāriḷa points out, we can easily construct an inference to oppose it, namely: “the notion that a cognition has an external object is valid; for it is an idea devoid of any contradiction, like the idea [that we have upon

waking] that contradicts a dream.”<sup>77</sup> In other words, the notion we receive from every (waking) cognition that its object really exists independently of us, is valid; for, ordinarily, that notion is not overturned by a subsequent cognition, i.e., a cognition revealing the first cognition to be false.

This argument implicitly appeals to the principle of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, which says that a cognition is valid unless and until it is contradicted. Moreover, it repeats the claim that every cognition contains a sense of the reality of the object it represents. In the inference at hand, it is actually the idea accompanying every awareness of an object that “this object is real” which is demonstrated to be valid. The gist of the inference is that there occurs as part of the content of every cognition the notion that the object of cognition is real. This notion, in turn, is in most cases never overturned. But—by *svataḥ prāmāṇya*—cognitions that are not overturned are true. Hence the idea that the object of cognition is real stands and the objectlessness of cognitions is directly refuted.

Kumāriḷa notes more generally that one is justified in asserting that a cognition is “without an object” only when it is overturned by another, specific cognition which ascertains that its object is really otherwise or that there were defects in the causes that gave rise to it. Only specific cognitions, for which there are specific *bādhakajñānas* (sublating cognitions), can be denied, not all cognition in general! Were one able to deny any idea arbitrarily without a *bādhakajñāna*, then there would be no truth at all, and the Buddhist himself would have no defensible position on any issue.<sup>78</sup> He could not, for example, without fear of arbitrary contradiction, hold that all things are momentary. Moreover, a cognition can be sublated only by another cognition that has claim to truth. But the Yogācārin is in effect saying that no cognition is a *pramāṇa*.<sup>79</sup> Thus he undermines the basis of any distinction between a false idea which is subject to refutation and a true idea which is not.

In the end it seems that the “sophistical” arguments of the *nirāḷambanavādādhikaraṇa* play only a subsidiary role in support of the fundamental Mīmāṃsā stance of taking things as they appear. Ultimately, perception itself directly reveals to us the reality of the object. Perception clearly presents objects to us *as external and*

<sup>73</sup> ŚV, nirāḷambana 23: *stambhādiḥpratyayo mīthyā pratyayatvāt . . . svapnādiḥpratyayo yathā*. This is probably an interpretation of *Viṃśatikā* 1. It is interesting, however, that Vasubandhu does not formulate his argument explicitly as an *anumāna* with *pratyayatva* as the middle term. Is this an example of a Hindu philosopher willfully taking a Buddhist argument in its most easily refutable form?

<sup>74</sup> See ŚV, nirāḷambana 38–40, 64–66.

<sup>75</sup> See ŚV, nirāḷambana 41–47.

<sup>76</sup> For one thing, it seems that one could easily answer them by appeal to a theory of two truths. Interestingly, however, Kumāriḷa begins the *nirāḷambanavādādhikaraṇa* with an attack on the notion of *saṃvṛtisatya*.

<sup>77</sup> ŚV, nirāḷambana 79c–80b:

*bāhyārthāḷambanā buddhir iti saṃyak ca dhīr iyam  
bādhakāpetabuddhitvād yathā svapnādibādhadhīḥ.*

<sup>78</sup> ŚV, nirāḷambana 87–88.

<sup>79</sup> ŚV, nirāḷambana 88–89.

independent. This is the emphasis of the Vṛttikāra of the *Śābarabhāṣya*, as Kumāriḷa recognizes. Kumāriḷa presents this fact, which is originally perceptual, in the form of an inference merely in order, scrupulously, to meet inference with inference and show exhaustively that the Yogācāra argument for *nirāmbanātā* is refuted by the two chief pramāṇas of perception and inference alike. Nothing contradicts this perception of the externality of the object and undermines its intrinsic validity—except, again, in specific cases, a specific *bādhakajñāna*. Waking experience in general is not subtled in the way dreams are.<sup>80</sup> Certainly, the notion of the *sāmbanātā* of cognitions, obtained with conviction “from the cognitions themselves” (*rūpāt*), cannot be overturned by so precarious an argument as the Yogācārinś have put forward, which calls even itself into question;<sup>81</sup> for a weaker idea can never overturn a stronger. Thus, by the principle of intrinsic validity, *sāmbanātā* is what is true.

The notion of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* also finds application in the Mīmāṃsā argument for the existence of a self. The Mīmāṃsakas developed a unique argument for the self, related to, but distinct from, previous Nyāya efforts, from the fact that we seem to recognize ourselves in acts of memory.<sup>82</sup> That is to say, when I remember an experience from the past, I do not merely remember an experience undergone by some unidentified person; I also realize that it was I, the person now engaged in the act of remembering, who underwent that experience. Hence I establish that I, who exist now, also existed in the past. Therefore, there is a real self that exists continuously through time. Now this argument assumes that the thought ‘I’ which accompanies all of my experiences expresses a real perception of myself. It is this assumption that the Buddhists attack.<sup>83</sup> There is no self of which I am directly aware from one moment to the next; and there is no self that I actually recognize as identical with myself in memory. I am merely habituated to think the baseless notion ‘I’ from moment to moment. The idea is not founded on a perception; it in fact refers to nothing.

In response to this objection Kumāriḷa simply points out that the notion ‘I’ cannot be considered an error or illusion because it is never overturned by a contradict-

ing cognition.<sup>84</sup> *Svataḥ prāmāṇya* guarantees its truth. Therefore, this aspect of our experience, also, should be taken at face value: the ‘I’ that occurs along with every act of consciousness should be taken like any other idea to refer to some real thing. And when memory presents the subject of a past experience as ‘I’, we must be conscious of the same thing that in the present moment gives rise to the thought ‘I’. Therefore, self-recognition in memory establishes the continuity of the self.

Finally, we may note that a similar appeal to recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) valid by virtue of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is made in establishing the eternality of words. Śābara, commenting on *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.20, argues that we know that words are not produced but are eternal and unchanging because we recognize the same words in different utterances. Each time we use the word ‘cow’, we recognize it as the same word ‘cow’ we used before. Therefore one identical word must exist continuously through time. To the objection that this “recognition” is really an illusion and that, in fact, we are merely mistaking distinct but similar words as identical, Śābara responds: “No; for [people] do not ascertain that the word is similar, but rather that this word is precisely that one [previously uttered]. [Only] if a clear difference [between this and that word] were cognized would one understand [one’s original recognition] to be a delusion.”<sup>85</sup> If our original cognition of identity were overturned by an awareness of mere similarity, then we would know it to be an illusion. But it is not. Therefore we know that words are eternal. The appeal to *svataḥ prāmāṇya* here, once again, is implicit but obvious.

We see, then, that the notion of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is the chief instrument of realism in Mīmāṃsā. It is, in fact, both an expression of realism and a vehicle for it. It is an expression of realism insofar as it amounts to the general thesis that one should take one’s cognitions at face value: if they consistently appear to be true, they are. However, when it is applied to specific types of cognitions, it also serves as a means of justifying specific realist metaphysical doctrines. It gives rise to the doctrine of the reality of the external world when applied to perception, and it yields the doctrines of the reality of the self, as well as other substances, and the

<sup>80</sup> ŚV, nirāmbana 89–90.

<sup>81</sup> ŚV, nirāmbana 65–66.

<sup>82</sup> I have discussed this argument in my article, “The Mīmāṃsā Theory of Self-Recognition,” *Philosophy East and West* 40 (1990): 35–57.

<sup>83</sup> See, e.g., *TS* 204–6, 275–84.

<sup>84</sup> ŚV, ātmavāda 125cd: *na cāhampratyayo bhrāntir iṣṭo bādhakavarjanāt*.

<sup>85</sup> *tan na. na hi sadṛśa iti pratiyanti. kin tarhi? sa evāyam iti. vidite ca sphuṭe ’nyatve vyāmoha iti gamyate: MSBh, 1:106.*

eternal nature of words (and other units of language) when applied to our judgments of the identity of the self and physical objects through time, and the identity of words in separate occurrences. Thus we see that in Mīmāṃsā, as elsewhere, epistemology dictates metaphysics. If “innocent until proven guilty” sums up Mīmāṃsā theory of knowledge, then “what you see is what you get” sums up Mīmāṃsā metaphysics.

One should note, however, that the Mīmāṃsā philosopher is somewhat arbitrary in his realism, that is, in his application of the principle of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. In accepting, for example, the reality of external objects and denying the existence of omniscient persons, Mīmāṃsā is accepting the reality of the appearances of *sense perception*. On the other hand, in affirming the eternality of words, the existence of universals, and the existence of an immortal, substantial self, Mīmāṃsā is

favoring the truth, not of sense perception, but of certain judgments of identity, based on “recognition” (*pratyabhijñā*), that do not appear to be empirical at all. The Mīmāṃsā philosopher thus shifts in his realism from empiricism to Platonism and back, as suits his apologetic purposes.<sup>86</sup>

Be that as it may, it is now, I hope, evident that the doctrine of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is of considerable significance, both as regards to its systematic role in Mīmāṃsā thought and its value as a contribution to general epistemology.

<sup>86</sup> In general, however, the Mīmāṃsaka likes to pose as a hard-nosed empiricist. Thus Pārthasārathi boasts, “Nothing unseen is to be postulated by the Mīmāṃsakas” (*mīmāṃsakais tu na kiñ cid adṛṣṭaṃ kalpanīyam*, NR ad ŚV, codanā 98–99).

#### ABBREVIATIONS

*MSBh* *Mīmāṃsāsūtrabhāṣya* of Śabaravāmin. In *Mīmāṃsā-darśanam*, ed. K. V. Abhyankar. 8 vols. Benares: Ānandāśrama Sanskrit Series, 1973.

*NR* *Nyāyaratnākara* of Pārthasārathimiśra. In ŚV.

*NRM* *Nyāyaratnamālā* of Pārthasārathimiśra. Ed. K. S. Ramaswami Sastri. Gaekwad’s Oriental Series, no. 75. Baroda, 1937.

*NVTṬ* *Nyāyavārttikatātparyāṭikā* of Vācaspatimiśra. In *Nyāyadarśanam*, ed. Taranatha Nyaya-Tarka-tirtha. Calcutta: Metropolitan Publishing House, 1936–44.

ŚV *Ślokavārttika* of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa (with Pārthasārathi’s *Nyāyaratnākara*). Ed. Svāmi Dvārikadāsa Śāstrī. Varanasi: Tara Publications, 1978.

ŚVVT *Ślokavārttikavyākhyātātparyāṭikā*. Ed. S. K. Ramaswami Sastri. Madras: University of Madras, 1971.

TS *Tattvasaṅgraha* of Śāntarakṣita. Ed. Svāmi Dvārikadāsa Śāstrī. Varanasi: Bauddha Bharati, 1982.

VV *Vibhramaviveka* of Maṇḍanamiśra. Ed. L. Schmitshausen. Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse, 247.1. Vienna, 1965.