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DOES INDIAN EPISTEMOLOGY CONCERN JUSTIFIED TRUE BELIEF?*

Of the various topics which are taken up in classical Indian philosophy,
prāmāṇyavāda, equated with epistemology in the critical literature, strikes
the Western philosopher of today as being most akin to something of deep
concern to him. On the basis of the translations of the Sanskrit literature
provided in the best contemporary expositions of Indian thought, questions
about the nature of knowledge and truth appear to be clearly broached in
Indian texts, and the intricacies of some of the analyses to be found in those
texts rival the intricacies of analysis as practiced by the best of recent and
living Anglo-American professional philosophers.

In my opinion the most outstanding exposition of Indian thinking on the
topic of *prāmāṇyavāda* is to be found in the work of Jitendranath Mohanty,
and most notably in his ground-breaking book, *Gaṅgeśa's Theory of Truth.*[1]
In his Introduction to a translation of the *(Jñapti) Prāmāṇya* section of
Gaṅgeśa's *Tattvacintāmaṇi* Mohanty first disambiguates a number of key
terms and lays out in exemplary fashion the issues which appear to separate
the two sides in the classical polemic concerning whether the awareness
of *prāmāṇya* is "intrinsic" (*svataḥ*) or "extrinsic" (*parataḥ*). This review
distinguishes the positions not only of the many important Indian systems
involved — Mīmāṃsā, Advaita and Nyāya — but also succinctly identifies
the positions of subschools within these as well as the opinions of individual
philosophers found in their writings. This Introduction is followed by a
faithful translation of Gaṅgeśa's chapter with copious explanatory remarks
without which the *Tattvacintāmaṇi*, extremely laconic in its style, could not
be understood by anyone not initiated into Sanskrit and Navyanyāya. The
entire volume is a tour de force, a subtle, critical illumination of the most
intricate kind of materials calling for that rare combination, brilliance as
Indologist and philosopher rolled into one.

Though the paper that now follows takes issue with some of Mohanty's
conclusions, this in no way should be thought to mitigate against what I have
just said about the book. It is only because of rare efforts such as his that
it becomes possible to push further into important matters and argue issues in
a fashion that promises to provide general insights.

Mohanty's conclusion to his Introduction is that both the *svatah* and *paratah* theories about awareness of *prāmāṇya* are "valid in their own ways"[2] because two critical terms, "jñāna" and "prāmāṇya", have different meanings for the proponents of the two competing views. Translating "jñāna" as "knowledge", Mohanty writes

"The *svatah* theory understands 'knowledge' in a strict sense such that the theory becomes an analytic consequences of its conception of knowledge",

whereas

"the *paratah* theory takes 'knowledge' in a rather weak sense so as to include within its scope both true knowledge and false knowledge."[3]

As for "prāmāṇya", translated as "truth", Mohanty distinguishes some three different senses of this term that are held by one or another of the *svatah* proponents, and says that "The Naiyāyikas mean something else by truth",[4] since the *paratah* view is referring to the truth of a belief, whereas the *svatah* theorists are talking of the truth of knowledge. The former allows of an opposite; the latter does not. Thus

"the two points of view do not necessarily clash but may be brought into a happy reconciliation",[5]
"both the theories are thus in their own ways correct."[6]

The conclusion Mohanty arrives at is that the *svatah* vs. *paratah prāmāṇya* controversy is another illustration of what I have called[7] the "incommensurability thesis", to the effect that no real substantive issue has been joined since, though the two parties think they are talking about the same thing, they aren't. An issue taken by classical Indian philosophers over many centuries to involve a fundamental clash of views turns out to be merely verbal. As a result, Mohanty adds, some things the tradition says, e.g. about the related question of the origins of truth, turn out to be things they shouldn't have said; because of verbal confusion, they should have said something else.[8]

Now there are, I realize, those who find the incommensurability thesis inherently attractive, promising eventual sweetness and light free from controversy. I am not one of those. It seems to me that Mohanty's conclusion downgrades the importance of epistemological discussions in Indian philosophy. Thus, to take a pertinent example out of Mohanty's own material, Gaṅgeśa's attempt (beautifully explained by Mohanty) to find a formulation common to all the proponents of *svataḥprāmāṇya* so that Nyāya arguments

against that thesis will apply to all versions of the thesis at once, turns out to be a kind of pointless effort, since if the incommensurability thesis is true the Nyāya arguments miss the opposition completely. More generally, one would suppose that the many generations of thinkers as subtle and profound as those responsible for the polemics in question would have been clever enough to recognize that the issue they were expending so much energy on was a verbal one. I think the issue was not a verbal one, that it represented a real and important confrontation of opinions. Furthermore, to see what the issue is cannot help but illuminate wider issues of comparative study, since Indian epistemology features a conception of knowledge which is nonequivocally shared by all its schools but nevertheless contrasts with the currently favored conception of knowledge in Western philosophical analysis. Since all is not well with the current conception of knowledge in Western philosophical analysis, it would seem that any epistemologist should be interested in exploring the matter.

Specifically, Mohanty takes as a "phenomenological description" of knowledge the account of it, widely held in contemporary analytic philosophy, as justified true belief.[9] My argument in this paper is that Mohanty's conclusion (reported above) is conditioned by his acceptance of the justified true belief account of knowledge, but that such an account is foreign to Indian thought, so that Mohanty's conclusion distorts the situation and leads to the unwelcome claim of incommensurability. Having argued for these points I shall go on to speculate whether the Indian conception of knowledge can be analyzed at all, if so, how, and whether any Western notions are illuminated by such analysis.

Mohanty chooses to translate the Sanskrit term "jñāna" as "knowledge", following others. He does this despite his own admission that such a translation is "definitely misleading"[10] and in fact incorrect. Having admitted that, he then "proposes" to use the English word "knowledge" in the way the Nyāya uses "jñāna".[11] He notes, however, that the word "pramā" translates as "knowledge",[12] and he himself uses "knowledge" regularly to render "pramā". Thus he has the same English word rendering two distinct Sanskrit expressions, expressions which on his own showing connote distinct senses. Since this evidently invites confusion, I prefer to provide my own exposition of the two notions, leaving the Sanskrit terms untranslated until I have argued the case for the proper translations.

A *jñāna* is, in the relevant sense for us,[13] an act[14] of awareness. It does

not name a disposition (say, to respond in a certain way when meeting a certain sort of thing). A *jñāna* is something which happens at a time, an occurrent. If it involves belief, it does so only in the sense of a believing as a fleeting act of awareness. A *jñāna* is not a belief in the dispositional sense. And not all *jñānas* are beliefs even in the occurrent sense — believing is, or may be, only one sort of *jñāna*. Any act of awareness which has intentionality constitutes a *jñāna*. Entertaining a doubt, vaguely sensing the presence of something or other, drawing a reductio ad absurdum inference, and understanding someone's meaning are all *jñāna*. None of them are believings. And since they are not beliefs (in any sense) none of them are true beliefs, and none of them are justified true beliefs. Rather, a *jñāna* is, as indicated, *an* awareness. It is not knowledge, or even *a* knowledge *per se*, though it remains open to further scrutiny whether all, some or no acts of awareness constitute instances of knowledge in some sense other than justified true belief.

A *pramā* is an awareness which has a certain essential property, called *prāmāṇya*. Mohanty renders "prāmāṇya" as "truth" and argues that there are "different types of concepts of truth to be met with in the different versions of the *svataḥ* theory."[15] But I do not find that he demonstrates this claim. He has not shown that the several versions of the *svataḥ* theory represent different meanings of "prāmāṇya". They may be different theories about how we become aware that something answers to a single concept. Indeed, Gaṅgeśa clearly assumes the latter to be the case. Otherwise he would hardly have proposed his account of what the several versions of the *svataḥ* theory have in common with his own, i.e., what *prāmāṇya* is.

Gaṅgeśa's approach is to set forth a univocal account of what the opposition's thesis is to collect the best arguments for that thesis, to refute those arguments, and then to offer arguments in favor of the opposite thesis his own. Gaṅgeśa appears to believe that he and his opponents are debating a thesis whose formulation is in terms of concepts they both understand and share. Before we settle for the incommensurability solution proposed by Mohanty, I suggest we should examine the notion of *prāmāṇya* to see if we cannot, using Gaṅgeśa's suggestions as a guide, find a meaning for the term which will make the debate a real rather than a sham confrontation.

First, some formal features of a *pramā*. As we have seen, a *pramā* is an awareness. Thus, it is an occurrent, not a disposition. So, if we do choose to translate "pramā" as "knowledge" we must immediately recognize that it

is not knowledge in the sense of justified true belief, where "belief" means the disposition to respond in appropriate ways when stimulated.

Nevertheless, if we consider the notion of an occurrent believing I think there is reason to think that a *pramā* can be considered to be such. There is Sanskrit terminology to the point. A *pramā* is a type of awareness which has the property of being an ascertaining (*niścaya*), as opposed to another type of awareness, doubting (*saṃśaya*). *Pramā* is not the only such type of awareness: a *viparyaya*, erroneous or false awareness (*mithyājñāna*), is also a *niścaya*. In the case of both *pramā* and *viparyaya* one has an awareness that is not accompanied by a feeling of doubt or puzzlement, one is not vacillating among more than one alternative hypothesis, but "declaring" for one thesis among alternatives, although he may not express it verbally and is not necessarily conscious of his nonvacillation. So perhaps a *pramā* is a belief after all, though in the occurrent rather than the dispositional sense. And if it should turn out that it must be true as well, then it may be thought that *pramā* is not so far removed from justified true belief after all. Unfortunately, as we shall see, it is not at all clear that a *pramā* must be true in the sense that the justified true belief account of knowledge wants it to be.

Every *pramā* is intentional. It has a content (*viṣaya*), as every awareness has. To decide whether truth is a necessary condition for an awareness to be a *pramā* one must carefully assess the relation which a *pramā* must bear to its content. We want a relation, R, which holds between any *pramā* and its content, a relation which can be admitted by every Indian philosopher to hold between a *pramā* and its content regardless of the particular theory he or any other Indian philosopher proposes about the nature of or proper analysis of R. That is, we want an account of R, and thus an account of the meaning of "prāmāṇya", which will accommodate what Gaṅgeśa says his opponents propound as well as what he, Gaṅgeśa, propounds. Hopefully, to go a little farther, it will accommodate what all Indian systems which have been involved in the controversy over *svataḥ* vs. *parataḥ prāmāṇya* can agree on as a meaning for "prāmāṇya". Thus the account of R must not beg issues between, e.g., "idealist" systems like Buddhism or (perhaps) Advaita and "realist" ones such as Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā. The incommensurability thesis contends such an account cannot be found. Let us see if we can't find one.

My suggestion about what R is, is this: where "J" stands for a *jñāna*, and "C" stands for its content,

> R$_J$ iff J apprehends (lit. "measures out") C in accordance with
> the purpose that motivated J.

This suggestion arises from a combination of considerations. The verb complex
pra + mā literally means to measure something out, by which I take it is
meant to cognize something in a certain way, a way that involves at least a
minimal structure. Another consideration is that when one seeks to find a
Sanskrit term by which R is glossed one regularly finds "yathārtha". This
compound has regularly been translated as "as the object is" or something to
that effect, a translation that seems to bolster the interpretation of *pramā* as
requiring correspondence of J's structure with the structure of some object
already there independently of the cognizer. But it needn't be understood
that way. The compound can quite as easily mean "as the purpose is", for
"artha" frequently has the sense of "purpose", as in the phrase "puruṣārtha",
meaning human aims or purposes.

My suggestion, then, is that with R, so defined, as the relation between a
pramā and its content, we can make sense of Gaṅgeśa's chaim that the analysis
he proposed provides a univocal meaning for "prāmāṇya", thus providing
a ground for a confrontation between *svataḥprāmāṇya* and *parataḥprāmāṇya*.
Next, I want to examine whether this suggestion can be supported from the
literature.

Gaṅgeśa's analysis runs as follows:

"*Prāmāṇya* is either (a) being an awareness whose chief qualifier, x, is in what possesses
x, or (b) being an awareness of a relatedness of x to what possesses x."[16]

This is to say that a *pramā* is an awareness (a) whose predicate term (as
we might put it) belongs to its subject term, or (b) which attributes some
property, x, to its content which has x. Gaṅgeśa argues, in favor of his analy-
sis, that only when (a) or (b) is satisfied does one undertake action predicated
on the awareness in question. In addition, he argues, this is the most eco-
nomical account of what *prāmāṇya* is.[17]

It is important to emphasize that Gaṅgeśa puts forth this analysis as a
conception which is common to all of the theories about *prāmāṇya*. As
Mohanty explains, Gaṅgeśa's idea is that, however each different *svataḥ*
theorist thinks the *prāmāṇya* of an awareness J$_1$ is made known to us, in
any case *what* is made known is a combination of two things, (1) that the
qualificandum (i.e., the subject term) of J$_1$ possesses a certain property, and

(2) that that property is the chief qualifier (predicate term) of J_1. The claim is that the joint satisfaction of (1) and (2) is a requirement common to all those who hold to *svataḥprāmāṇya*, and that it is likewise a necessary condition (though possibly not a sufficient one) even according to *pratataḥprāmāṇya* that (1) and (2) be satisfied whenever *prāmāṇya* is present.

Among those philosophers who have become caught up in the *svataḥ/ parataḥprāmāṇya* debate we may count some Buddhists, several kinds of Mīmāṃsakas, the Naiyāyikas and not a few Advaita Vedāntins. My discussion will be content with these, though there may be others as well. What I am about to argue, then, is that, for each of half a dozen distinct formulations by Indian philosophers of what "prāmāṇya" means, each of them satisfies (1) and (2) and also provides an instantiation of what I have proposed to be the relation R. If that is correct, it suggests that Gaṅgeśa's thesis about *prāmāṇya* being a univocal notion holds good, at least provided the relation R is understood my way. Then I shall show that, understood the way Mohanty understands R, the *svataḥ* theory indeed becomes trivialized. But, as I see it, that is a reason to prefer my understanding of R, not his.

Let me start with Buddhism (although Mohanty's discussion leaves the Buddhists aside, no doubt because Gaṅgeśa's discussion does not involve them). In Dharmottara's *Nyāyabinduṭīkā* we find the following passage explicating the notion of "right awareness" (*samyagjñāna*, which I take to be his term for *pramā*),

"Right awareness is awareness that is not contrary to what it is right to attribute (to something) (*avisaṃvādaka*). In ordinary usage it is said that what is right to attribute (to something) (*saṃvādaka*) is that which causes us to attain a purpose (or a thing, *artha*) which has been previously identified. . . . 'Attaining the purpose' here means just causing our activity to have to do with the purpose (or thing, *artha*) identified, and nothing else. Now, awareness does not produce the purpose, but it does cause us to attain it. In causing a person to initiate activity toward a purpose, it causes him to attain it. This initiating of activity is merely the identification of a content of activity. . . ."[18]

As I read this passage, Dharmottara's idea is that the function of a right awareness is to direct the attention of the person having it toward the content of that awareness as being relevant to a previously identified purpose or purposive object. That sort of awareness which does this regularly deserves to be called a *pramāṇa*. What sort of awareness does this regularly? According to Buddhism of Dharmottara's school it is perceptual awareness, defined as direct awareness, i.e., awareness which does not involve conceptual construction

(*kalpanāpoḍha*).[19] What we might call sensation constitutes such perception, since it is a moment of sensory awareness prior to association with language or memory. Sensation is right awareness par excellence for the Buddhist, since its entire function consists in calling its content to our attention as something which is a possible object of successful purposive activity.

For Dharmottara, then, the relation R (between right awareness and its content) requires that the awareness apprehends the content as an objective suitable for successful purposive activity. This is an instance of my relation R. And if (as Gaṅgeśa himself will not admit) sensation can be supposed to ascribe a property x to something, then a right awareness ascribes to its content the property of being an objective of successful activity, which property that content (which Buddhism calls the *svalakṣaṇa*) indeed possesses.

Next let us consider those schools which are treated by Gaṅgeśa himself. First we may consider the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsaka. Mohanty succinctly expresses the Prābhākara notion of *prāmāṇya* when he points out that according to the Prābhākara "there is no cognitive error"; rather, he writes,

"when we say a knowledge" (i.e., an awareness – my interpolation) "is false we really mean – the Prābhākara seems to be saying – that it leads to unsuccessful behaviour."[20]

A few lines later, Mohanty indicates that a rather late Prābhākara, Rāmānu-jācārya, distinguishes between three relations, viz., *yāthārthya*, *prāmāṇya* and *samyaktva*.

"*Yāthārthya* belongs to all awareness (including memory and what ordinarily passes for erroneous apprehension), *prāmāṇya* to all awareness excepting memory (but including even the so-called erroneous apprehension) and *samyaktva* only to such knowledge other than memory which leads to successful practice."[21]

"Samyak" is the same term we translated as "right" in the Buddhist context of "right awareness". The Prābhākara view thus approximates to that of the Buddhist, with some added distinctions which do not affect my point. That point is, once again, that both my analysis of R and Gaṅgeśa's characterisation of *prāmāṇya* are satisfied on the Prābhākara account. As in Buddhism, the function of a *pramā* is to present to us a content which may be an objective of successful activity – the Prābhākara adds that it must do so for the first time, that it not be a remembrance, but that does not materially affect the point being argued.

Turning next to the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsakas, followers of Kumārila, and once again considering Mohanty's excellent review of their views,[22] we find a

divergence of explanations but essential agreement that either *prāmāṇya* in-
volves the relation that we have seen Buddhists and Prābhākaras to emphasize,
viz., the picking out of a content as an objective of successful activity,
or else (for some Bhāṭṭas) it involves a relation they term "viṣayatathātva",
which might be rendred as "(J's) being as its content is". I submit that this
relation can well be taken as equivalent to my R, e.g. as a pragmatic verifica-
tion relation, and that it also nicely satisfies Gaṅgeśa's analysis of *prāmāṇya*.

A third type of Mīmāṃsā is that known as the Miśra school, a system
whose literature is largely lost to us but which appears in an important role
in Gaṅgeśa's discussions. The Miśra account of *prāmāṇya* is rather more
complex than those of the other Mīmāṃsakas. The Miśra analysis is that
prāmāṇya is "tadvadviśeṣyakatve sati tatprakārakatva",[23] that is to say, a
pramā must satisfy two tests, (1) that the J in question must present a
qualificand, C, which has a chief qualifier, Q, and (2) that it must present C
as qualified by Q. When we compare this with Gaṅgesa's analysis we find
that (1) and (2) are precisely (1) and (2) of Gaṅgesa's analysis. And since the
pramā J apprehends C as qualified by Q in accordance with the purpose
which informs J (whatever purpose that may be) the Miśra analysis also fits
the requirements of my R.

Next, consider the Vivaraṇa Advaita Vedānta school's analysis of *prāmāṇya*
as "arthaparicchedasāmarthya",[24] i.e., as the property of being an awareness
which is capable of picking out (that content which accords with) its pur-
pose.[25] It should be clear that this conception once again satisfies both my
account of R and Gaṅgeśa's analysis of *prāmāṇya*.

Finally, we must consider the Nyāya analysis itself, which is just that
which Gaṅgeśa himself proposed, viz., the simultaneous satisfaction of (1)
and (2), "tadvati tatprakārakatva".[26] *A fortiori*, this satisfies (since it is
identical with) Gaṅgeśa's analysis of *prāmāṇya*. Does it fit my analysis of R?
Yes, certainly if the purpose motivating the awareness is to apprehend its
content in such a way as to correspond with some assumed external object
with a fixed, independent structure, which is what scholars have usually
supposed Nyāya thinks the purpose of *pramā* to be.

Mohanty is puzzled by the fact that Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, a famous
Advaita Vedāntin, also adopts the very same terminology in his analysis of
prāmāṇya as does Gaṅgeśa.[27] The reason he is puzzled is that Nyāya and
Advaita differs so widely in epistemology, the former carefully distinguishing
what is externally and independently real from what is internal, mental and

perhaps unreal, the latter blithely uninterested in such a contrast. Mad-
husūdana views *tadvati tatprakārakatva* as "belonging to all apprehensions,
not excluding error,"[28] writes Mohanty, whereas Nyāya thinks it picks true
apprehensions out from false ones. But all of this underlines what I am
driving at, which is that "prāmāṇya" does not translate as "truth" (i.e.,
correspondence with reality), despite standard translation practice, but rather
connotes a more pragmatic criterion of being capable of producing or helping
to produce satisfaction in action.

So, *prāmāṇya* is not belief (at least as disposition), and for Indian phi-
losophy in general it isn't truth (as correspondence with a fixed antecedent
nature of an independently real object). But the justified true belief account
of knowledge assumes that knowledge is just belief which corresponds to
reality. For that reason, if "knowledge" suggests, as I think it tends to,
justified true belief to English readers it should be eschewed as a translation
of "prama".

To put it another way, on the analysis which Gaṅgeśa offers of *prāmāṇya*,
understood in the terms suggested by my analysis of relation R, a *pramā* may
not correspond with the nature of things (it is "compatible with error", as
Mohanty expresses it). Whether or not *prāmāṇya* is confined in its application
to awarenesses which attribute to their content properties which an object
corresponding to that content actually has is not a matter of the definition
of "prāmāṇya" (as it *is* taken to be a matter of the definition of "truth" in
Western contemporary thought), but constitutes rather further theory about
which awarenesses satisfy the purposes motivating them. Naiyāyikas think
that further theory which requires correspondence is the correct one; other
systems, such as Buddhism and Advaita, do not.

Mohanty finds that the *svataḥ* and *parataḥ* theorists do not confront each
other because they have different meanings of *prāmāṇya* in mind. The issue
between the two views is presented in the literature to be as follows, according
to Mohanty. The *svataḥ* theorist holds that whatever awareness first makes
us aware of some awareness J_1 (whether that be J_1 itself, some inference,
or a subsequent "aftercognition"), that awareness makes us aware that J_1 has
prāmāṇya. The *parataḥ* theory denies this claim. Now Mohanty, interpreting
"prāmāṇya" as "truth" and "jñāna" as "knowledge", argues that "the (*svataḥ*)
theory becomes an analytic consequence of its conception of knowledge".[29]
Since the *svataḥ* theory is therefore true (necessarily, though trivially, so)
Mohanty reasonably enough concludes that the *parataḥ* denial of it can

only be saved from absurdity if we suppose that the *parataḥ* theorists mean something else by "jñāna".

But, as we have seen, "jñāna" doesn't mean "knowledge" at all, but awareness. So one might conclude that Mohanty has been led astray by a mistranslation. However, it's not that simple. For even when we agree to translate "jñāna" as "awareness", while retaining "truth" for "prāmānya", the *svataḥ* theory still appears to be either trivial or else so absurd that we must conclude that we haven't understood it at all. For consider: the *svataḥ* theory is the theory that, for any awareness J_1, whatever awareness first makes us aware of J_1 makes us aware that J_1 is true. But if "truth" means correspondence with reality then either all awarenesses are true (and there can be no error at all) or else we aren't talking about becoming aware that J_1 *is* true, but merely about coming to *think* that J_1 is true. But that is absurd — if I entertain a false awareness J_1 and (then) come to an awareness of J_1, then on that reading of the *svataḥ* position I could not thereby think that J_1 is false; indeed, I could not at that time even doubt whether J_1 might be false. But we do have such doubts. So either the *svataḥ* theory is a trivial one (since all awarenesses are ipso facto true), or it is so absurd as to constitute its own refutation. Seeing this, one can understand why Mohanty finds an equivocation on "truth" to be the only way to explain how an issue of any consequence was imagined by anyone to have been raised.

Now I am arguing there is a nontrivialized and far from absurd issue which the *svataḥ/parataḥ* debate is about. What is that issue? I take it it is this. The *svataḥ* theorist holds that, whatever causes us to be aware of J_1 causes us to be aware that J_1 can satisfy its purpose, i.e., can lead to successful activity of the relevant sort. The *parataḥ* theorist denies this, holding that in order to become aware that J_1 can satisfy its purpose we need a further awareness, presumably inferential, which is over and beyond the awareness which causes us to be aware of J_1 itself. The point comes out most dramatically when we contrast the Miśra theory with the Naiyāyika's. On both theories we first have an awareness, J_1, which is not self-aware but for the awareness of which we require an "aftercognition" J_2. The Miśra theory holds that J_2 not only makes us aware of J_1 but also of J_1's *prāmānya*, i.e., J_1's capacity to evoke successful activity. The Nyāya theory denies that J_2 makes us aware of J_1's *prāmānya*. It holds that only an inference, e.g., one based on successful action or reasons to think that such activity would be successful, can attest to J_1's *prāmānya*.[30]

Notice that it doesn't matter to the *prāmāṇya* debate so posed whether J_1 is true or false, or thought to be true or false. Whether a theorist holds that all awarenesses are true, or all are false, or that some are and some not, the *prāmāṇya* issue remains a real one. Nor does it matter whether a theorist thinks that only true awarenesses can lead to successful activity or, alternatively, thinks that some awarenesses capable of leading to successful activity can be false. The issue concerns whether, when one becomes aware that J_1 is a potential purpose-satisfier, he does so through the same awareness by which he became aware of J_1's occurrence, or through some *other* awareness.

Gaṅgeśa's main argument against the *svataḥ* theorist is that if the *svataḥ* theory were correct it would make it impossible for one to doubt J_1's *prāmāṇya* immediately after J_1's occurrence. That is, since the *svataḥ* theory says that the awareness by which we first become aware that J_1 occurred always involves an awareness that J_1 can satisfy its purpose, has *prāmāṇya*, this blocks our doubting at that moment that it has *prāmāṇya* – but we *do* in fact sometimes doubt the worth of a J as soon as we become aware that it has occurred. Now Gaṅgeśa, no doubt, as a Naiyāyika believes that only true Js can satisfy their purposes, so *his* point can be stated as Mohanty renders it, in terms of 'truth" instead of satisfaction of purpose. But the argument is supposed to tell against an opponent who does not share Gaṅgeśa's belief on that score; the argument's force is a general one not dependent on any particular account of the circumstances that make J a *pramā*.

How then can we translated "pramāṇya", given that "truth" is misleading as such a translation? We are by now reminded of the writings of the pragmatists, notably William James in his jousts with the notion of truth, which I suspect led him to a position closely resembling that of Indian epistemology. James conceived of truth as "what works", though he was sometimes (not always) cagy about what "working" amounted to and failed to appreciate the difference between his account of truth and the correspondence account with which his view was at odds. We might borrow his term and translate "prāmāṇya" as "workability". A workable awareness (*pramā*), then, is one that is related to its content by R, i.e., apprehends its content in a manner leading to the satisfaction of the purpose motivating it.[31] Then, the argument to this point might be summed up in the following way: all the parties in the *svataḥ/parataḥ* debate agree that the debate is about workable awarenesses.

It is irrelevant to this debate whether an awareness is held to be workable

if and only if it is true. Some (the Nyāya) say so, others (Advaitins, Buddhists) deny it. The opposite of "workable" is not "false" but "not workable" (*apramā*), which term is intended to characterize all kinds of awarenesses which cannot lead to the satisfaction of a motivating purpose. The term *apramā* ranges, as we saw, over doubtings, errors and reductio ad absurdum arguments. When one is in doubt, he is not satisfying a purpose (doubting is not a purpose). Errors (i.e., perceptual errors, like the mirage) frustrate our purposes by misleading us. Finally, in a reductio argument the purpose is to prove one's own position (so we're told) but what the reductio (*tarka*) does is merely to convict the opponent of a fault, which does not (at least by itself) effect any proof (unlike a proper inference, where the conclusion does indeed prove just what was intended to be proved).

It is suggestive, furthermore, that proving what is already accepted (*siddha-sādhanatā*) is counted as a fallacy (and so as *apramā*, nonworkable) even though what it says is true.

The standard Western reply to the kind of position that emerges from this analysis of Indian epistemology will surely echo the usual response to a reading of James on truth: that the pragmatist or "workability" conception conflates truth with what has value. Recent philosophical analysis has adopted, with a severity bordering on the obsessive, noncognitivism or nonnaturalism in value theory. What used to be known as the "fact-value gap" is nowadays such a chasm that it is hard to convince anyone that there is one. It should be no surprise that classical Indian thought takes the naturalistic position on values; after all. so did Western thought in classical times and until a couple of centuries ago. Justified true belief, as an analysis of knowledge, is understood strictly along noncognitivist lines. A belief, in the sense understood there, must be something capable of being evidenced, and the evidence must be empirical, perhaps mathematical, but clearly not ethically or aesthetically normative. (Of course, one can have justified true belief *about* what norms are in force; for that one can produce nonnormative evidence. What one can't have is a justified true belief that *x* should be done, thought, etc.) The "true" in "justified true belief" is descriptive truth, possibly fudged to encompass "descriptions" of mathematical or logical "facts" (though these are actually linguistic facts, if facts at all, and normative otherwise).

I cannot undertake at this point in this paper to investigate the sources of the noncognitivist obsession. But insofar as the motivation for maintaining it

may be supposed to mutually support any attractiveness which the justified
true belief account of knowledge might be supposed to have, I shall conclude
with some observations which seem to me to suggest that all is not well with
the JTB account (as I shall call it henceforward).

It is sometimes suggested that the JTB account is embedded in ordinary
language (ordinary English, that is). "There is a certain absurdity", writes
Mohanty,

"in saying both 'I know that S is p' and 'S is p is false'. One cannot know and yet be
in error with regard to what he knows. If something is known, it follows necessarily that
it is true."[32]

But, as Austin has argued, that may be because of what it is to *say* "I know",
involving conversational implicatures or performatives. We should not draw
a conclusion about the nature of something from the circumstances involved
in certain special kinds of locutions involving terms for it. And furthermore,
Austin argues,

"We are often right to say we *know* even in cases where we turn out subsequently to
have been mistaken — and indeed we seem always, or practically always, liable to be
mistaken."[33]

The JTB account is far more rigorous than the subtle possibilities of ordinary
language can support.

Again, a growing number of contemporary philosophers have seriously
questioned whether in ordinary usage knowledge entails belief, as the JTB
theory entails it must. Zeno Vendler has argued that "I believe that p", far
from being required by "I know that p", is incompatible with it, since in the
relevant contexts to say that one believes is precisely to indicate that one
doesn't know.[34]

These worries address the question of whether "knowledge" actually does
in ordinary parlance answer to the JTB account. I suspect many contemporary
analytic philosophers cling to the JTB account, unmoved by ordinary language
reasons of the sort cited, and that their allegiance to JTB will withstand
practically all evidence of the sort derived from usage. They would appear
to believe that the question of the proper analysis of the meaning of a phi-
losophical term is not to be decided, or at any rate not merely to be decided,
on the basis of common usage. By what is it then to be decided? The question
is an interesting one, since having passed over the evidence of usage one
wonders what other evidence could be relevant, unless it were "evidence"

of a normative nature to the effect that purposes of some sort are served better by say, the JTB account, than any other. Then the question what knowledge is becomes a normative one ("what *should* we mean by 'knowledge'?") and the result is that the JTB theorist cannot, on JTB assumptions, know that "knowledge" means JTB!

If we allow ourselves to ask "what should 'knowledge' mean?", admitting the question's normative character whatever that may imply, we raise the question of what purposes the JTB theory is supposed to help satisfy, and whether or not it does so successfully. I have darkly suggested once or twice that all is not well with the JTB account. The term "foundationism" has been proposed for those epistemologies which are committed to the tenet that empirical knowledge has, and must have, a "foundation",

"the claim that certain empirical beliefs possess a degree of epistemic justification or warrant which does not depend, inferentially or otherwise, on the justification of other empirical beliefs, but is instead somehow immediate or intrinsic."[35]

If, as seems likely on the basis of recent discussion,[36] foundationist theories generically must fail, and if (for ultimately similar reasons) coherence theories also must prove unsatisfactory, what is left? James' own version of "the pragmatist theory of truth" is hardly satisfactory either, for James reads out the theory in detail as a foundationist view couched in even more mysterious terms than current analytic accounts.

The general problem that foundationist theories face is that of answering the challenge laid down, e.g., by C. I. Lewis when he points out that "if anything is to be probable, something must be certain."[37] Basic beliefs fail as epistemic warrants taken singly for the simple reason that *any* belief by itself requires justification if it is to have any claim to providing a warrant for other beliefs. But pure sense-reports, though possibly incorrigible, are so only if they are construed in such a way as to provide no warrant for anything. "I seem to see green", by itself, provides no evidence that what I see *is* green, nor would one hundred people saying "I seem to see green" do so either, unless we are already supposed to be in possession of some knowledge making it likely that in this case or cases seeming to see green, or saying "I seem to see green", makes "it is green" more probable. But what could be the basis for *that* knowledge? Lewis suggests it might be a "pragmatic *a priori*" born of common human concerns and encoded in meanings, "criteria in mind", with which we face and make sense of the battery of sense-stimuli. While it

seems to me Lewis was looking in the right direction when he looks to common human concerns, his own efforts to explore value theory (in *The Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation*) suffer because he is unable to find a way of formulating those human concerns in a way which keeps in touch with actual valuings and still retains the *a priori* character which they must have in order for his account to work. Whatever the merits of Lewis' attempts, and it seems to me they have a good deal of merit, they have not found fashion among epistemologists in recent years.

What is the trend nowadays? Once one has decided to abandon empiricism with a foundationist or coherence base, one direction to go is with Nelson Goodman to a kind of high-level relativism. Since "truth . . . pertains solely to what is said",[38] and what is said determines versions or worlds but not The World, Goodman's conclusion is that worlds are made as much as found, and that there may not be any such thing as The World — or if there is, The World turns out to be self-inconsistent when any attempt to characterize it is made. In either case, his conclusion seems to be that if there is such a thing as The World, Reality, we are unable to speak of it.

Goodman's remarkable review of the current epistemological situation contains the following passage, which is pertinent to the state to which the discussion of this paper has brought us. He writes:

"The thesis that true statements are those that enable us to predict or manage or defeat nature has no little appeal; but some conspicuous discrepancies between utility and truth have to be explained away. That utility unlike truth is a matter of degree can perhaps be dealt with by taking utility as measuring nearness to truth rather than as a critarion of truth itself. That utility unlike truth is relative to purpose might seem less serious when truth is recognized, as in the preceding pages, to be relative rather than absolute. But relativity to purpose does not align in any obvious way with relativity to world or version; for among alternative true versions or statements, some may be highly useful for many purposes, others for almost none and indeed much less useful than some falsehoods . . ."[39]

The suggestion in this paper is that Indian thought adopts a utility reading of "truth" and thus what "knowledge" consists in features this very relativity to purpose. What, then, distinguishes the resulting view from skepticism or a relativism with the "discrepancies" that Goodman points to?

Goodman's discussion, like Mohanty's, operates under the presupposition that "knowledge" is true belief and that "truth" has a fixed antecedent sense which allows us, e.g., to ask with Goodman whether truth need serve any purposes. That last question, notice, makes sense only if we suppose that

"truth" means something to us other than "serving some purpose". But if, as I have just attempted to suggest, truth in Indian philosophy *is* the serving of purposes Goodman's discrepancies cannot be expressed there.

There is a hidden reason why Goodman's relativism will, as the jacket to *Ways of Worldmaking* suggests, "incur the wrath of the rationalist, the enmity of the empiricist, and the malice of the modalist, as well as the antipathy of the absolutist". That hidden reason is that in the Western versions of all four of those views — rationalism, empiricism, modalism and absolutism — there is a shared admission, which is that any hierarchy of values is even more questionable than the realistic hypothesis of a single reality, The World. To trade in faith in the given, or consistency, or relativity, or an absolute synthesis of theses and antitheses in favor of a fixed hierarchy of values is beyond the bounds of reason for modern Western philosophy. Why? Because all these lines of thinking tacitly agree on what I have called "noncognitivism" in value-theory. And it is an unavoidable consequence of noncognitivism in value-theory that no fixed relations of supremacy or subordination between values can be demonstrated, for the simple reason that according to non-cognitivism no conclusions about values can be demonstrated at all.

But the situation in Indian philosophy is entirely different. Though disagreements among views about whether there is One World, many worlds or no worlds abound there, what is agreed on among all the systems is that the supreme human purpose is liberation, and that there is a fixed, though context-sensitive, value system which coheres with that highest purpose. There is little or no disagreement among Jains, Buddhists and the various Hindu philosophical *darśanas* about values. What is a virtue for one is so for another. The evaluation of stages of progress toward liberation, it is agreed by all, involves overcoming ignorance and attachment. No doubt different philosophers develop their special terminology and emphases, but, as Western students puzzled over what is at issue between, say, the path-philosophies of Advaita, Buddhism and Yoga well know, the agreements far outweigh the differences as long as we confine ourselves to the evaluation of activities designed to lead to ultimate value. Where differences in value theory appear to arise it is customary for the Indians themselves to explain that this ap-pearance only reflects the context-dependent differences in advice which a sensitive guru will give to pupils at different stages along the way.

By contrast, in Western contemporary thought not only is there lack of agreement as to ultimate purpose and the subsidiary goals leading to it, there

is even general admission that we can't even address the question rationally, it being a matter of taste and "de gustibus non est disputandum". This is a radical divergence between the contemporary Western situation in philosophy and classical Indian thought; for that matter, there is the same divergence between modern and classical Western philosophy. The JTB account of knowledge is perhaps doomed as a futile attempt to provide a foundation in the absence of normative convictions which would constitute the proper, but now abandoned, core meaning of "knowing". Modern epistemology, getting the wrong message from Plato, perhaps, hoped that that core normativeness could be found in the necessities of formal (mathematical, logical) "truth", that is in consistency or coherence. We are now discovering that that is a forlorn hope, that inquiry is adrift without a recognition at least of the worth of what the inquiry is *for*.

The lost, core meaning of "I know" relates to my awareness that my actions are proceeding satisfactorily or unsatisfactorily toward an intended outcome. "I know what I am trying to do", "I know what I want" are expressions which provide examples of this core meaning. Notice that *what* I know, in these locutions, is an action or volition. As soon as we try to *describe* what it is that I want or am trying to do, doubts may set in. "Are you really trying to do *that*?" is a fair question, suggestion one may not be clear about what his purposes are or ought to be. Knowing that *p* is likewise subject to doubt in the same way, and so no knowledge — *that* can possibly provide the certainty which will ground probability and answer Lewis' challenge. My knowing *what* I am trying to do, on the other hand, is like knowing some thing "by acquaintance" — I have a certainty about what I want which is unlike my certainty that $2 + 2 = 4$ but is akin to the alleged certainty about sense-data postulated by phenomenalists. The difference between sense-datum reports and reports of wants and actions is that, whereas sense-datum reports, though perhaps indubitable, cannot ultimately provide the certainty to ground empirical claims, since they are themselves not claims, reports about what one intends or wants are both claims (*pace* the noncognitivist) and indubitable. One might grant this and still find such value-reports irrelevant to the problem of justifying what are allegedly value-free claims of scientific knowledge. This is noncognitivism resurfacing at a deeper level. I cannot here hope to set the noncognitivist challenge to rest, nor is it the purpose of this paper to do so. What this paper is arguing is that Indian philosophy, not being wedded to a noncognitivist approach, thinks it

can talk of knowledge (or rather, of *pramā*), but in a sense of "knowledge"
different from the current notions predicated on noncognitivism.

The incommensurability thesis is incorrect, then, as an interpretation of
Indian theories of knowledge, because there is agreement there about ultimate
values, so that construing "prāmāṇya" as workableness does not produce a
stultifying relativism or skepticism. To the extent that such agreement is
absent from Western philosophical thinking, to turn the coin over, it is
to that extent inevitable that there can be no meeting of minds between
East and West. One lesson to be learned is that, in analyzing the views of
other cultures one must be careful not to import theses held by one's own
culture but not by theirs. A deeper message is this: that there may be no
middle ground between commitment to absolute values on the one hand
and epistemological skepticism on the other. Mathematics does not provide
that middle ground. Can holistic conceptions, unguided by fixed normative
concerns arising from human purposes to be served hope to justify knowledge
claims?

Contemporary Western thought is going through a phase of practicality;
there is a call for relevance. Relevance to what? Surely, to concerns viewed as
so widespread and pressing as to far outweigh the doubts of the epistemolog-
ical skeptic. These concerns, and the widespread recognition of them, suggest
that there is more thoughtful agreement on a hierarchy of values than the
noncognitive assumptions of positivist value theory can make sense of. If so,
and if the ultimate concerns of human beings do indeed, when carefully
studied and compared, transcend the apparent idiosyncracies of cultures, then
the incommensurability of thinking between East and West may turn out to be
a goblin of our own making, the shortcoming of a phase in Western thought
which, whatever its positive contribution has been, is proving too rigorous for
our good in its conceptions of knowledge, truth, and what makes life worth
living, or dying, or ultimately leaving for good.

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NOTES

[1] Jitendranath Mohanty, *Gaṅgeśa's Theory of Truth* (Visvabharati, Santiniketan: Centre of Advance Study in Philosophy, 1966), hereafter GTT.

[2] GTT, p. 78.

[3] GTT, p. 76.

[4] GTT, p. 78.

[5] GTT, p. 75.

[6] GTT, p. 79.

[7] Karl H. Potter, 'Toward a Conceptual Scheme for Indian Epistemologies', in J. N. Mohanty and S. P. Banerjee (ed.), *Self, Knowledge and Freedom, Essays for Kalidas Bhattacharyya* (Calcutta: World Press, 1978), pp. 17–30.

[8] GTT, p. 79.

[9] GTT, p. 21.

[10] GTT, p. 27.

[11] GTT, p. 28.

[12] GTT, p. 27.

[13] Sometimes "jñāna" is used to mean "(pure) consciousness". This is a different use of the term from the one studied here.

[14] Mohanty (GTT, p. 25) argues that a "jñāna is not an activity, but a product" (citing Jayanta Bhaṭṭa) "to call it an activity would, firstly, amount to an unusual extension of the ordinary notion of act, involving the notion of movement (*spandana*); but secondly, it is not admitted by the definitions underlying the Nyāya ontology". But when I call a *jñāna* an act I do not mean that it is a motion, nor I suppose do (e.g.) all those Indian philosophers who classify acts (*karman, kriyā*) into three kinds of which one is "mental act" think that the mind moves. And while Jayanta is correct that a *jñāna* is not a member of the third Vaiśeṣika category (of *kriyā*) and is a result (*phala*), I don't see that this makes calling a *jñāna* an act an unusual extension of the English term "act" or "activity", since surely we do speak of, say, calculation as a kind of mental activity.

[15] GTT, p. 77.

[16] My translation of the passage appearing on p. 111 of GTT: "Tathāpi tadvati tat-prakārakajñānatvaṃ tadvati tadvaiśiṣṭyajñānatvaṃ vā prāmāṇyam".

[17] Continuation of the preceding passage: "tanniścayād eva niṣkampavyavahārāt lāghavāt". Ibid.

[18] "Avisaṃvādakaṃ jñānaṃ samyagjñānam. Loke ca pūrvam upadarśitam artham prāpayan saṃvādaka ucyate. . . . Pradarśite cārthe pravartakatvameva prāpakatvam. Nānyāt. Tathā hi na jñānaṃ janayadartham prāpayati. Api tvarthe puruṣaṃ pravārtayat prāpayatyartham. Pravartakatvamapi pravṛttiviṣayapradarśakatvameva." *The Nyāy-abindutīkā of Dharmottara Achārya to which is added the Nyāyabindu* (ed. P. Peterson) (Re-issue, Calcutta 1929), p. 3. My translation.

[19] E.g., Dignāga and Dharmakīrti use this term in defining perception. See ibid., p. 103, third sentence of the text.

[20] GTT, p. 6.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] GTT, pp. 8–11, where the specific opinions of several individual Bhaṭṭa writers are discriminated.

[23] GTT, p. 12.

[24] GTT, p. 14, note 34.

[25] Mohanty renders the expression "arthaparicchedasāmarthya" differently than I do, taking "artha" as meaning "object" here and elsewhere.

[26] GTT, p. 42 et passim.

[27] GTT, p. 15.

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] GTT, p. 76.

[30] In the Prābhākara and Bhāṭṭa versions of the *svataḥ* theory we do not become aware of the *prāmāṇya* of J_1 through an aftercognition, but rather, in the case of Prābhākara, J_1 itself vouchsafes its own *prāmāṇya*, and for the Bhāṭṭa, we draw an inference from the knownness (*jñātatā*) which characterizes the content as a result of our cognizing it.

[31] I choose "workable" rather than, say, "working" for reasons familiar both from James' writings and from Dharmakīrti's recognition that so as not to exclude nonspeakers from cognition conceptual construction must be defined in terms of "capability of coalescing with a verbal designation" (*abhilāpasaṃsārgayogyapratibhāsāpratītiḥ kalpanā* . . .), Peterson edition of Dharmakīrti, op. cit., p. 103, fourth sentence of text, and Th. Stcherbatsky's translation of it in *Buddhist* Logic, Vol. II (Dover: New York, 1962), p. 19.

[32] GTT, p. 21.

[33] J. L. Austin, "Other minds" in *Philosophical Papers* (2d edition: Oxford University Press; Oxford, 1970), p. 98.

[34] Zeno Vendler, *Res Cogitans* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca, N.Y., 1972).

[35] See Laurence Bonjour, "Can empirical knowledge have a foundation?", American Philosophical Quarterly 15, 1978, 1–13.

[36] See, e.g., Bonjour's paper, ibid.

[37] C. I. Lewis, *An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation* (Open Court: Lasalle, Ill, 1946), p. 186.

[38] Cf. Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Hackett: Indianapolis, 1978), p. 18.

[39] Bidi., p. 123.