

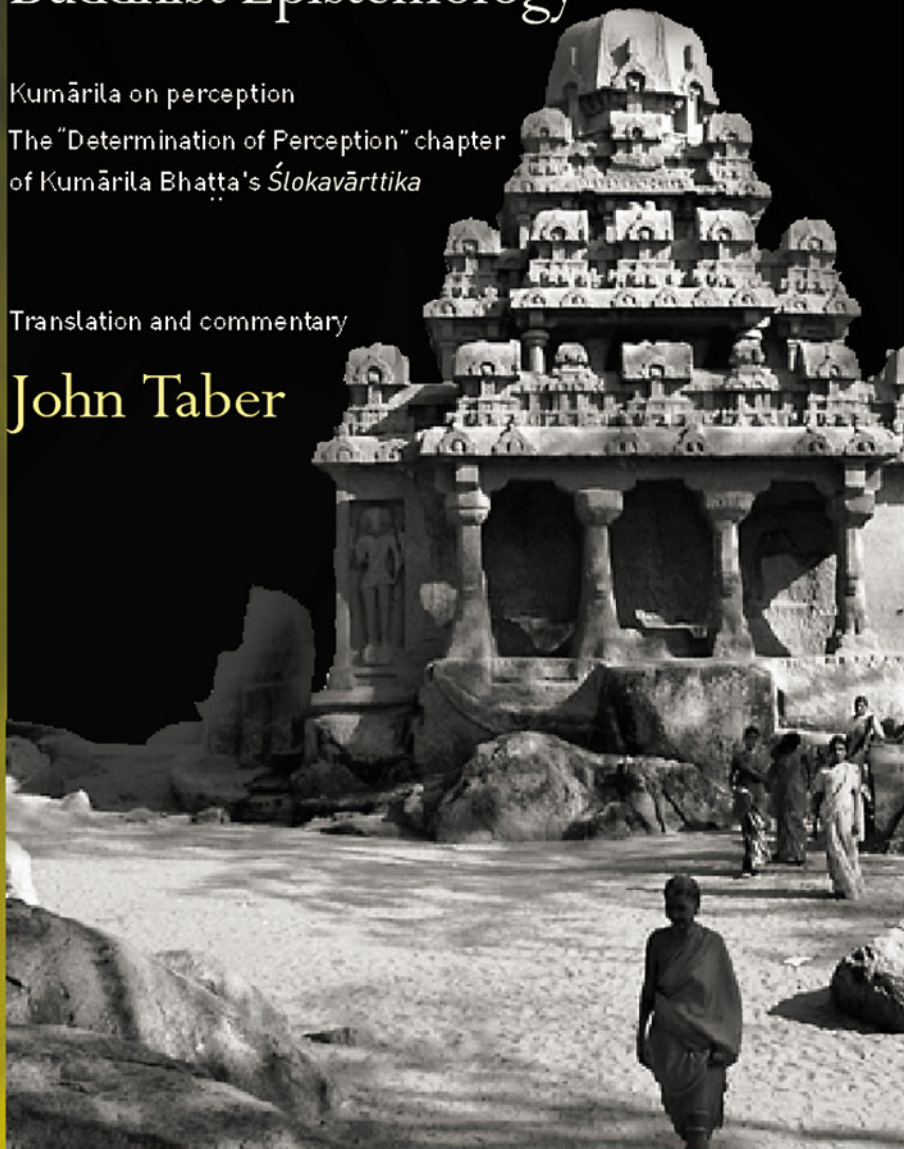
A Hindu Critique of Buddhist Epistemology

Kumārila on perception

The "Determination of Perception" chapter
of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa's *Ślokavārttika*

Translation and commentary

John Taber



**Also available as a printed book
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A HINDU CRITIQUE OF BUDDHIST EPISTEMOLOGY

This is a translation of the chapter on perception (*Pratyakṣapariccheda*) from Kumāṛila Bhaṭṭa's magnum opus, the *Ślokavārttika*, which is one of the central texts of the Hindu response to the logico-epistemological school of Buddhist thought. It is crucial for understanding the debates between Hindus and Buddhists about metaphysical, epistemological, and linguistic questions during the classical period.

In an extensive commentary, the author explicates the argument of the *Pratyakṣapariccheda* verse by verse while also showing how it relates to ideas and theories of other Indian philosophers and schools. Notes to the translation and commentary go further into the historical and philosophical background of Kumāṛila's ideas.

The book includes an introduction containing a summary of the history of Indian epistemology, an overview of Kumāṛila's philosophy, and a separate synopsis and analysis of Kumāṛila's text. It is a valuable contribution to the field of Indian philosophical studies.

John Taber is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of New Mexico, where he teaches courses in Asian thought and continental philosophy. His research has focused on the history of Indian philosophy, especially logic, epistemology, and metaphysics during the classical period, 500–1200 CE. He is also the author of *Transformative Philosophy: A Study of Śaṅkara, Fichte, and Heidegger*.

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Doctrine in Madhva Vedanta

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CONTENTS

<i>Series foreword</i>	ix
<i>Preface</i>	xi
Introduction	1
<i>The Pratyakṣapariccheda in context</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>The argument of the Pratyakṣapariccheda</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Kumārila versus Dharmakīrti on conceptualized perception</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>The Pratyakṣapariccheda and modern philosophy:</i> <i>Kumārila's critique of the Superimposition Theory</i>	<i>38</i>
1 “The Determination of Perception” (Pratyakṣapariccheda): text and commentary, part 1	44
<i>1.1 Critique of the interpretation of Mīmāṃsāsūtra 1.1.4 as a definition of perception</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>1.2 The correct interpretation of the sūtra as a rejection of yogic perception; the construal of the word ‘existing’ (sat)</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>1.3 Discussion of the term ‘connection’; the problem of perception at a distance</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>1.4 Discussion of the expression ‘of a person’</i>	<i>64</i>
<i>1.5 Discussion of the expression ‘the arising of a cognition’</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>1.6 The identification of the pramāṇa</i>	<i>70</i>
<i>1.7 Refutation of the Buddhist identification of pramāṇa and phala</i>	<i>78</i>
<i>1.8 Summary</i>	<i>83</i>
<i>1.9 The relation of perception to the other pramāṇas</i>	<i>84</i>

2	“The Determination of Perception” (<i>Pratyakṣapariccheda</i>): text and commentary, part 2	93
2.1	<i>The defense of conceptualized perception: introduction</i>	93
2.2	<i>Critique of the Advaita Vedānta position that nonconceptualized perception apprehends the highest universal</i>	94
2.3	<i>Defense of conceptualized perception against initial Buddhist objections</i>	96
2.4	<i>The role of the mind in conceptualized perception</i>	101
2.5	<i>Conceptualized perceptions are not erroneous cognitions</i>	106
2.5.1	<i>The relation of property and property-bearer</i>	106
2.5.2	<i>The unity of the object of different senses</i>	112
2.5.3	<i>Conceptualized cognitions do not involve the false superimposition of a word upon its meaning</i>	118
2.5.3.1	<i>We have independent, nonlinguistic cognitions of objects</i>	118
2.5.3.2	<i>Absurd consequences of the superimposition doctrine</i>	126
2.5.3.3	<i>An independent awareness of meaning is essential for learning language</i>	131
2.5.3.4	<i>It is impossible to confuse word and meaning</i>	133
2.5.3.5	<i>Further arguments against the Superimposition Theory</i>	135
2.5.4	<i>Even if conceptualized cognitions involved superimposition they would not necessarily be false</i>	136
2.6	<i>Conceptualized perceptions are not memories</i>	140
2.7	<i>A conceptualized perception does not attribute something to the object that does not belong to it</i>	143
2.8	<i>Conclusion: the other pramāṇas are based on perception</i>	145
	<i>Appendix: the Sanskrit text of the Pratyakṣapariccheda</i>	149
	<i>Notes</i>	163
	<i>Bibliography</i>	239
	<i>Index</i>	251

SERIES FOREWORD

The RoutledgeCurzon Hindu Studies Series, published in collaboration with the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, intends primarily the publication of constructive Hindu theological, philosophical, and ethical projects. The focus is on issues and concerns of relevance to readers interested in Hindu traditions and a wider range of related religious concerns that matter in today's world. The Series seeks to promote excellent scholarship and, in relation to it, an open and critical conversation among scholars and the wider audience of interested readers. Though contemporary in its purpose, the Series also recognizes the importance of a contemporary retrieval of the classic texts and ideas, beliefs and practices, of Hindu traditions. One of its goals then is the promotion of fresh conversations about what has mattered traditionally.

It is therefore most fitting that John Taber's *A Hindu Critique of Buddhist Epistemology: Kumārila on Perception* should be one of the first volumes in the Series. Mīmāṃsā ritual thinking and exegesis, traditionally listed as one of the six major systems of Hindu theology and philosophy (darśana), is a superlative and uniquely Indian mode of thought. As Taber explains in his own Preface and his Introduction, Kumārila Bhaṭṭa is not only a leading Mīmāṃsā thinker, but also one of the leading intellectuals of the Indian tradition, a formidable exemplar of the intellectual rigor, analysis, and argumentation for which India is rightly famous. Although Kumārila's *Slokavārttika* – of which a major chapter is translated and interpreted here – has been available in English for nearly a century, so great a classic deserves the benefit of multiple renderings in English, and indeed has long been in need of a thoroughly accurate translation and elaboration. Taber's painstaking yet lucid translation, accompanied by valuable notes, brings Kumārila's arguments to life, in a way that is accessible even for someone who is not a master of Sanskrit, while still satisfying trained Sanskritists.

As readers unfamiliar with Kumārila Bhaṭṭa gradually find their way into this demanding but richly rewarding treatise on perception, they may at first wonder whether and how this technical argumentation enhances our knowledge of Hindu religious traditions, even the ritual traditions connected with Mīmāṃsā. Yet *A Hindu Critique of Buddhist Epistemology* clearly illumines an important dimension of the Hindu traditions – in part simply by showing us a leading Brahmanical

thinker at work, exemplifying how he thought through and deciphered the meaning of reality and our ways of knowing it, and how very elegant Indian religious thinking can be.

A Hindu Critique of Buddhist Epistemology also shows Kumāṛila in determined disputation with Buddhist opponents, arguing the fine points of epistemology; clearly, he is determined to concede nothing to his intellectual adversaries. As Taber points out – and highlights by the book’s title – Kumāṛila’s critique of Buddhist epistemology is a single extended argument (a treatise in itself, though actually only a part of the full argument that is the *Ślokavārttika*), a stellar example of how a committed intellectual makes his case, stands by his insights and proposals, and probes his adversaries’ positions for what can be learned from them and what in his view is mistaken or needs to be corrected. Modern concerns and values have largely moderated our modes of interreligious conversation today, and few of us are likely to proceed so unrelentingly and fiercely as did Kumāṛila. Nevertheless, his intellectual rigor and uncompromising commitment to clear understanding are values *A Hindu Critique of Buddhist Epistemology* fittingly highlights early on in this Series. Even in a crosscultural and interreligious environment, we need to remember how to argue well with one another.

Francis X. Clooney, SJ

Series editor

Academic Director

Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies

PREFACE

For a period of over eight-hundred years, from approximately the fifth century, the time of the composition of the oldest preserved commentaries on the *Nyāyasūtra* and *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*, to the thirteenth century, the final demise of Buddhism in India, Indian philosophy experienced its Golden Age. What can be seen as a single, vigorous, and more or less continuous debate took place among the various schools of the three great religious–philosophical traditions, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, concerning the nature of reality and the means of salvation. Many of the problems of metaphysics, epistemology, logic, and philosophy of language with which we are familiar in Western philosophy were discussed at length, with great acumen and insight, by Indian thinkers during this period. Unique solutions to some of these problems, determined by the peculiarities of the historical development of the Indian debate and its broader cultural context, were achieved. Philosophers whose names are still mostly unknown to us in Europe and America – Vātsyāyana, Vasubandhu, Bhartr̥hari, Mallavādin, Diñnāga, Bhāvaviveka, Dharmakīrti, Kumārila, Akalaṅka, Maṇḍanamiśra, Śaṅkara, Śāntarakṣita, Vācaspatimiśra, Udayana, Śrī Harṣa, Rāmānuja, and Abhinavagupta – composed works worthy of being compared with the greatest masterpieces of Western philosophy.

Although our knowledge of this splendid period in the history of human thought has advanced much in the past fifty years, thanks primarily to the pioneering historical and philological work of Erich Frauwallner and his students, and to the interpretive work and philosophical explorations of B. K. Matilal, access to original sources has remained limited. The task of translating the texts of this era has just begun. We do not, for example, have full translations of either Diñnāga's *magnum opus*, the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, nor of Dharmakīrti's, the *Pramāṇavārttika* (into a modern European language, that is; both were translated into Tibetan in medieval times), which marked important advances in logic and epistemology and which were the focus of many of the controversies of the classical period. The same goes for the major works of Mallavādin, Bhāvaviveka, Akalaṅka, Maṇḍanamiśra, Vācaspatimiśra, Abhinavagupta, and Udayana. In fact, critical editions of many of these texts, which should ideally serve as the basis of translations, are not even available. Moreover, those translations that we do have are in many instances rough first attempts. The few high-quality, accurate translations that exist, on

the other hand, have in most instances been produced by Indologists for other Indologists and are not easily used by the nonspecialist philosopher, let alone the general reader. (At the same time it must be acknowledged that it has been primarily through the production of philologically rigorous, annotated translations that our knowledge of classical Indian philosophy has advanced.) It would not be an exaggeration to say that our present state of knowledge of classical Indian philosophy is comparable to that of ancient Greek philosophy at the beginning of the Renaissance, when the first Latin translations of Plato's writings were starting to appear.

The present work is an attempt to provide a translation of a central chapter of one of the most influential systems of the classical period that both meets the criteria of an accurate, philologically correct translation and makes the text accessible to the nonspecialist. The text in question is the *Pratyakṣapariccheda* or "Determination of Perception," the fourth chapter of Kumāṛila Bhaṭṭa's *magnum opus*, the *Ślokavārttika*, perhaps the greatest attack launched by a Brahmanical thinker against the metaphysical and epistemological theories of the Buddhists. One might doubt whether both of these purposes can be achieved in a single translation; indeed the translator acknowledges a certain hubris in his undertaking. I am well aware that it is an experiment that could easily fail. Nevertheless, I believe that one must make the attempt. Otherwise, if one does not try to make the text accessible outside a small circle of highly trained Indologists, modern philosophers will forever be denied firsthand appreciation of the rich reflection on issues of enduring philosophical interest that it contains. If one, alternatively, does not attempt a rigorously faithful translation, the reader will have been given access to ideas and theories that are not really Kumāṛila's but only the translator's, and therefore undoubtedly of an inferior sort.

The problem of achieving these two purposes in a single translation has, it is hoped, been solved by assigning them to distinct parts of the work. The *Pratyakṣapariccheda* consists of 254 verses, called *ślokas*. I have translated the verses more or less literally, based on a semi-critical edition of my own. That is to say, I have produced a new, emended edition based on five existing printed editions and the variants they cite; however, I have not made use of any manuscripts. This version of the Sanskrit text is presented in an Appendix. I have tried to keep the English wording of the verses as close to the original Sanskrit as possible – without, however, using square brackets to set off words and phrases I have had to add myself to complete the syntax or clarify the references of pronouns. I have only in a few cases used square brackets to introduce explanatory phrases that I believe are necessary to make sense of the verses. Then, in a commentary of my own, I have expounded the meaning of the text verse by verse, focusing on the philosophical argument it develops; it is by this means that I have tried to make the text as comprehensible as possible for the more general reader. With the benefit of the commentary the reader should be able to decipher the verses, which by themselves, without the commentary, will be obscure. In the end it is hoped that the reader, combining translated text and commentary, will be able to see clearly

the meaning of the text in the verses, while also coming to appreciate to some extent the remarkable precision and terseness of the language in which they are composed.

When learning a Sanskrit philosophical text it is customary in India, even today, not just to pick it up and read it but to study it with a teacher who will provide an oral commentary. In fact, most Indian philosophical texts are too difficult to comprehend without some kind of assistance. The wording of the texts is often elliptical, the arguments subtle, and a great deal of background knowledge – of the meanings of specific technical terms, of the theories of the other schools being attacked, etc. – is assumed. *Perhaps the greatest obstacle to Westerners gaining a picture of what Indian philosophy is about is that it is presupposed that its texts will be studied in this way.* It is, in any case, surely too much to expect a Western philosopher approaching this literature for the first time to be able to understand it without any of the advantages that Indian students have traditionally had. Therefore, the provision of a commentary along with the translation of an Indian philosophical text seems essential. However, it would defeat the purpose of a commentary if one were simply to translate along with the primary text one of the classical commentaries that has been handed down. That would just multiply the amount of (awkwardly) translated Sanskrit one must slog through. (For an *accurate* translation of philosophical Sanskrit is, I believe, almost of necessity somewhat awkward – though I am forced to acknowledge certain exceptions to this rule.) It seems better, rather, for the translator to provide his or her own commentary, after thoroughly studying and digesting the available classical ones, and attempt really to *translate* the traditional understanding of the text into a modern idiom.

Among modern translators of Indian philosophical texts, it was Erich Frauwallner who pioneered this approach, by prefacing his superbly accurate and readable translations with summaries of the main argument of the text. (See especially his *Die Philosophie des Buddhismus* [Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1958] and *Philosophische Texte des Hinduismus, Nachgelassene Werke II*, ed. Gerhard Oberhammer and Chlodwig H. Werba [Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992].) Nevertheless, that great scholar chose not to try to explain every unfamiliar concept and theory mentioned or alluded to – no doubt, so as not to place too many demands on the reader, in the hope of making the text accessible to as wide an audience as possible. As a result, however, he invariably, and intentionally, left certain aspects of the arguments of the texts he translated unexplained. Since, for the philosopher, who is above all interested in the validity of the theories she studies, the details of the text, especially the subtler twists and turns of its argument, are crucial, I have, in attempting to make the text at hand accessible to *philosophers* – for, after all, it is a philosophical text – gone a step farther than Frauwallner and attempted to provide a commentary that leaves very few, if any, stones unturned. That is to say, I have followed out its argument in every detail, ignoring no feature that could affect its cogency or soundness, and explaining to the best of my ability every concept and theory mentioned or alluded to that is relevant to understanding the context and import of the argument.

PREFACE

In this endeavor I have been fortunate to have had access to two other invaluable sources of information besides the classical commentaries, namely, two scholars with whom I read and discussed the *Pratyakṣapariccheda* in Chennai (Madras) in the summer of 1997: Prof. J. Veṅkaṭarāma Śāstrī of Madras Sanskrit College and Prof. K. Śrinivasan of Vivekananda College. The former, a noted Mīmāṃsaka (specialist in Kumārila's school, the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā), gave a superbly lucid, rigorous oral commentary on verses 52–86 and 111–185 of the text, in sessions attended by both Dr Śrinivasan and me. Afterwards, in separate sessions, Dr Śrinivasan and I reviewed the verses covered by Professor Veṅkaṭarāma Śāstrī and discussed further verses. (The young Japanese scholar Kei Kataoka was also present at some of these sessions and made helpful suggestions.) However, with only a few exceptions, I have not attempted in my commentary to distinguish the contributions of Professors Veṅkaṭarāma Śāstrī and Śrinivasan from those of the classical commentaries of Umbeka, Pārthasārathimīśra, and Sucaritamīśra, which I have also studied in detail; nor, for that matter, have I gone into the, for the most part, subtle differences between the classical commentaries. Rather, I have tried to synthesize all that I have read and heard into one smooth-flowing discourse. Nevertheless, certainly much of whatever understanding I have achieved of the *Pratyakṣapariccheda* is due to the help of these two superb scholars.

In addition to a commentary on the translated verses I have provided some notes in which I attempt to illuminate the historical and philosophical background of the text. I have tried to keep these to a minimum, mentioning what I feel to be only the most essential points and avoiding digressions into disputed questions, so as not to encumber the work with too much scholarly apparatus. Nevertheless, even as they are, I fear that philosophers will find them too detailed and Indianists will find them incomplete. The latter may be particularly disappointed that I have not included detailed justifications of my choices of variant readings and translations of difficult terms and phrases, but I believe that, for the most part, my readings and translations will be justified implicitly by whatever sense I have been able to make of the text in my commentary.

I have also, in the introduction to the translation, attempted to give an overview of the philosophical and historical background of some of the issues discussed in the *Pratyakṣapariccheda*, in particular, the problem of whether perception can be “conceptualized.” Essentially, this is the problem of whether perceptual judgements, in which we identify objects as belonging to certain types or as possessed of certain properties – for example, “That is a cow,” “The cat is on the mat,” “The book is red” – are truly perceptual in nature, or whether only the bare, non-conceptualized given is the proper object of perception, perceptual judgements involving a rather substantial contribution by the mind (as opposed to just the senses). I also draw what I take to be some rather obvious connections to developments in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy pertaining to this issue. Here, again, Indologists might be inclined to feel that I have been too ambitious in trying to synthesize developments in Indian thought that extend over centuries, and in offering summary interpretations of theories that, in their details and evolution,

are not completely understood – primarily because most of the texts in which such theories are expounded still await proper editing, analysis, and translation. Here, however, I must say that, having perused the extant secondary literature on the problem of conceptualized versus nonconceptualized perception in Indian philosophy – what there is of it – I have found that much of it seems lost in the details; except for the work of Matilal, it generally conveys little sense of what the debate is really about. Surely we should not have to wait until every Indian epistemological text has been philologically processed before we are permitted to make generalizations about Indian epistemology. I see nothing wrong in working from the top down as we work from the bottom up, that is to say, trying to sketch maps of extended areas of Indian philosophical thought as we continue to explore the terrain. Certainly, the maps – our broader interpretations and theories – will have to be revised continually as we proceed, but that is the nature of any scientific enterprise.

The *Ślokavārttika*, including the *Pratyakṣapariccheda* chapter, was first translated nearly a hundred years ago by the great polymath Ganganatha Jha (Calcutta: Biblioteca Indica, 1900–1909; rpt. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1983). That translation represents an important scholarly achievement in that it is a *complete* translation of the *Ślokavārttika* and thus attempts to give the modern reader a glimpse of Kumārila’s entire system. Although it contains, verse by verse, numerous mistakes, it also construes, sometimes quite felicitously, many difficult passages; overall it reflects a vast knowledge of Mīmāṃsā philosophy. Its main defect, however, is that, supplied with only occasional footnotes based on the classical commentaries, not a sustained commentary of its own, it does not convey a coherent sense of Kumārila’s argument by itself. One must, in fact, read it together with the original Sanskrit text in order to benefit from it. (Alas, this can be said of most of the philologically correct translations of Indian philosophical texts we have today!) Thus, although Jha’s translation serves as an invaluable aid for Indologists (and has indeed served as such for this translator), a new translation, if only of a fraction of the material Jha ambitiously took on, is clearly in order.

In the end, of course, a translation, or at least one that is more or less faithful to the original, cannot presume to remove every vestige of foreignness from a text. Nor, perhaps, should it. It would, in the first place, be highly misleading to give the impression that Indian philosophical theories can be completely separated from the forms of expression in which they are couched. A text in verse, at least, even if composed in a simple sing-song meter like the *anuṣṭubh* (the meter of the *śloka*), and even if it presents arguments like any proper philosophical text, will still amount to a quite different kind of discourse from a Western treatise in prose. In particular, it will have more the air of an authoritative “saying”; the author may rely as much on the art and power of his language to impress and persuade as on the force of his argument. (Surely what is stated so elegantly must be true!) More importantly, although many Indian concepts may be translated directly into Western ones, many others need to be explained in terms of indigenous concepts, which are in turn to be explained by other indigenous concepts, and so on. The

scholar who studies a foreign philosophical text like the *Ślokavārttika* will in the end find herself, of necessity, learning to navigate in new waters. Enlightened by what she sees there, she returns home, somehow changed, somehow looking upon old things in a new way; however, she cannot bring what she has seen back with her. A successful translation of a text like the *Ślokavārttika* is perhaps one that will just assist the reader in feeling more comfortable in foreign surroundings.

The subtitle of this work alludes to the seminal study of the first chapter of Diñnāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya* by Masaaki Hattori, published in the *Harvard Oriental Series* in 1965: *Dignāga, On Perception*. By making such an allusion I do not pretend that the present work is comparable in scholarship to Hattori's. In fact, I am greatly indebted to Professor Hattori for much of my knowledge of the logico-epistemological school of Buddhist philosophy; without knowledge of Tibetan myself, I have obviously relied heavily on his translation of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* from the Tibetan translations in which it has been preserved. Nor, obviously, have I used Hattori's work as a model. The arrangement of that study, with its deeply learned, but rather dense historical and philological notes in the back (comprising twice as many pages as the translation and chock full of Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese), and without a commentary that continuously traces the thread of the argument, makes it difficult for the nonspecialist to use. The significance of the allusion, rather, is as if to say: having allowed Diñnāga to present the Buddhist point of view on various epistemological and metaphysical issues, as well as trenchant criticisms of Brahmanical – that is, essentially, Hindu – theories of perception, it is now Kumāṛila's turn to respond on behalf of his and the other Brahmanical schools. After more than thirty-five years of silence, it is now time for an orthodox thinker to be heard speaking in defense of his tradition. Then we shall see, as I believe – and it is hoped that the reader will excuse this hint of partisanship on my part – that the Buddhist arguments are not nearly as clever as they first appear!

A translation of a text on epistemology might seem an odd choice for a series dedicated to fostering cross-cultural conversation between India and the West. Yet the study of problems of knowledge, in both India and the West, has always been related to deeper issues. In European philosophy, the investigation of the faculties of human knowledge and their limits, which began with the British Empiricists and culminated with Kant, ultimately had to do with the critical evaluation of “the pretense of reason,” that is, the claim that the human mind is able to reach beyond experience and ascertain such things as the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and the freedom of the will. So in Indian philosophy, questions about “the means of knowledge” (*pramāṇas*), even about so specific a faculty as perception, were to a great extent concerned with whether it is possible for humans to know, independently of scripture, the means of achieving happiness in this life and salvation in the next, that is, Dharma or righteousness – a matter which, Indians believe, also lies beyond the experience of ordinary humans. We shall see that this was the explicit context for Kumāṛila's inquiry into the nature of perception. In India, more

particularly, epistemology was the field upon which the debate over the authority of scripture was played out. The Brahmanical schools used epistemological arguments to defend the Veda, believed by them to be either an eternal, authorless document or the teachings of God, and challenged the scriptures of the heterodox traditions of Buddhism and Jainism, which were delivered by human teachers; the Jainas and Buddhists did the opposite. We also find epistemological questions – for example, the question concerning the relative strength of perception and scripture – at the heart of controversies between the different Vedānta traditions, Advaita, Dvaita, and Viśiṣṭa Advaita.

The study of Indian epistemology, then, in the final analysis is the study of traditions in conflict over fundamental presuppositions. It is a study in cross-traditional, if not cross-cultural, debate. A debate, of course, is not the same thing as a conversation. A conversation might be considered a friendly give-and-take guided by an interest in achieving truth or understanding, or both. A debate may not be friendly at all, and may not be motivated by a concern to arrive at mutual recognition of the truth or understanding. Rather, it is a way of grappling with the Other in a contest governed by clearly defined rules, that is, a way of coming to terms with the Other in an arena where power is controlled and mediated in specific ways. The mediation of power in the arena of debate is through reason, and it is the visibility of reason as arbiter that distinguishes debate from all other forms of conflict. As a contest that is mediated by reason and presents evidence and logic as the criteria for victory or defeat, debate encourages and supports the growth of rational inquiry and reflection. Although Indian philosophical debates sometimes degenerated into polemics, for the most part they were conducted on a very high level. Participants were stimulated to achieve new insights and more compelling statements of their views. The greatest discoveries of Indian philosophy were achieved in the context of heated, highly charged debate. Debate may never reach resolution. In medieval India debates between the Buddhists and the Brahmins were publicly staged, as a form of entertainment. The losers were compelled to renounce their religion – which after all had been proven false – and convert to the other side. Nevertheless, short of such drastic consequences, debate is often an effective means for opposing camps to engage each other, resist and challenge each other, without coercion or domination. Although understanding, once again, is never guaranteed – however, it can also never be ruled out – mutual destruction is at least usually avoided. And yet, a kind of understanding – at the very least, mutual respect – also often emerges when two parties, offering clear reasons for their views, remain true to their convictions. Understanding between humans should not be thought of just as the convergence of beliefs. In any case, sometimes it is unrealistic to think that we can arrive at understanding in the sense of a perfect seeing eye-to-eye and dispelling of conflict. Yet debate always remains a viable form of dialogue, a sphere in which opposing parties must still listen and respond to each other, and be held accountable for their views. Debate is a way for adversaries to live together in creative tension. Perhaps it is not the best way, but it is one that

PREFACE

humans have employed for centuries. Unfortunately, it is a method we seem to have forgotten how to practice today.

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INTRODUCTION

The *Pratyakṣapariccheda* in context

The *Pratyakṣapariccheda* or “The Determination of Perception” comprises the fourth chapter of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa’s *magnum opus*, the *Ślokavārttika*. The *Ślokavārttika* is the first part of Kumārila’s massive three-part commentary on Śabarasvāmin’s commentary on the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*; the title *Ślokavārttika* itself can be translated, simply, as “Expanded Commentary in Verses.” The *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*, which may be dated around 200 BCE, is the foundational text of the Mīmāṃsā school, one of the six major systems of Brahmanical philosophical thought.¹ (The term ‘Brahmanical’ refers to the ancient tradition of thought and practice focused on the Veda and its auxiliary ritual, legal, and scientific literatures, which is one of the strands of the extremely complex and diverse phenomenon known as Hinduism.) As its name indicates, the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* summarizes the teachings of Mīmāṃsā in short aphorisms or *sūtras*. The doctrines and theories of the Mīmāṃsā school of philosophy were elaborated over the centuries primarily in commentaries and supercommentaries on this text. (Likewise for most of the other great Brahmanical systems – their teachings are presented mainly in series of commentaries and supercommentaries on their respective *sūtra* texts.) The commentary of Śabara on the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*, which is commonly referred to as the *Śābarabhāṣya* and which is the oldest commentary that has been handed down to us, was probably written in the second half of the fifth century CE. Kumārila wrote his supercommentary in the first half of the seventh century.²

Although adherents of Mīmāṃsā – Mīmāṃsakas – were prominent participants in the controversies of the classical period of Indian philosophy, in ancient times Mīmāṃsā was not a philosophical system at all but, strictly, a science of the Vedic ritual. The *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* faithfully preserves this aspect of the tradition; most of the *sūtras* are devoted to matters of ritual practice handed down from centuries of priestly discussion. They consider such questions as which actions are to be performed in a sacrifice and their correct sequence, which mantras (spoken formulae) are to accompany which acts, who is eligible to perform the sacrifice, and what things can be substituted as oblations when preferred materials are not available. They typically resolve these matters by analyzing the scriptural passages

that prescribe the rituals in question; thus, to a great extent the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* has to do with textual exegesis. In that connection it frequently appeals to general principles of textual interpretation that later came to be widely applied throughout Indian commentarial literature.

An explicitly philosophical dimension of *Mīmāṃsā* emerged, however, when it moved beyond the discussion of ritual questions and assumed the task of an apologetics. This purpose, in effect, is declared by the first *sūtra* of the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*, which says that *Mīmāṃsā* is an “inquiry into Dharma” (MS 1.1.1). Dharma means, in the strictest sense, righteousness – what one ought to do and avoid doing. More broadly, it refers to the way of life that leads to happiness on earth and salvation after death. The idea of Dharma is usually associated with the Dharmaśāstras, the Brahmanical treatises on law, ethics, and custom, the most famous and authoritative of which is the *Manusmṛiti* or *Laws of Manu*. These texts spell out in great detail all aspects of pious Aryan existence³ – the duties of the various castes and stations of life, the sacraments and other domestic rituals, dietary restrictions, etiquette, morality, spiritual practices, etc. By declaring itself an investigation into Dharma, *Mīmāṃsā* implicitly takes on the defense of the orthodox Aryan way of life as a whole along with its philosophical presuppositions.

This defense was in response to the emergence of so-called heterodox traditions, most notably Buddhism and Jainism, which developed their own conceptions of piety and righteousness – which they, too, called “Dharma” – and which rejected the authority of the Veda and Dharmaśāstras. These movements, Buddhism in particular, also developed distinctive metaphysical doctrines, such as the momentariness of all entities and the nonexistence of a self, that contradicted fundamental assumptions of Vedic practice. Much of the history of Indian philosophy is defined by the struggle over metaphysical, epistemological, linguistic, and logical theories, the ultimate implications of which are the truth or falsehood of the teachings of the different religious traditions.

The approach of the *Mīmāṃsā* school in combatting the heterodox challenge – other schools of Brahmanical thought, such as Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Sāṃkhya, evolved their own strategies – was to stress the sole authority of the Veda (together, that is, with the auxiliary literature of the Dharmaśāstras and the ritual manuals known as the Śrauta Sūtras, which were seen as merely explicating and elaborating the Veda) in regard to Dharma. The second *sūtra* of the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* declares “Dharma is a purpose (or goal) characterized by an injunction.” That is to say, Dharma is something good or conducive to that which is good – that is, a meritorious act through which one will attain worldly happiness or salvation – which is made known by a Vedic commandment.

The full argument for this claim, as developed, for example, in the *Ślokavārttika*, is elaborate and complex. It rests on two highly interesting, if also highly controversial, ideas: the intrinsic validity of cognition and the eternality of the Veda. The former is the thesis that all cognitions are intrinsically true, that is, bear a sense of their own truth, unless and until they are overturned by other cognitions. The latter is the claim that the Veda has no author human or divine; that is, it was never

composed, but has simply been handed down forever from one generation to the next. The combination of these two theses yields the infallibility of the statements of the Veda in regard to Dharma. The Veda being eternal, no question can arise as to the reliability of its author; and Dharma being supersensible – for it has to do with connections between actions performed now and their future rewards – no cognitions achieved through other means of knowledge can contradict it. Thus, never effectively contradicted or otherwise called into question, the intrinsic validity of the statements of the Veda remains undiminished.

However, is it really the case that the statements of the Veda are never contradicted? What about the teachings of other religious masters, for example, the Buddha or the Jina, in regard to Dharma? The Buddha summarized his teachings in the Four Noble Truths, which have as corollaries the impermanence of all entities and the absence of a self. He laid down his own rule – a moderately ascetic way of life – for those who aspire to Nirvāṇa. He renounced the householder way of life and all the duties and obligations it entails, condemned the Vedic sacrifice – replacing it with the law of nonviolence – and criticized aspects of the caste system. Surely one's confidence in the truth of the statements of the Veda must be eroded by the existence of a completely different account of Dharma such as this.

The fourth *sūtra* of the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*, however, which characterizes perception and declares that it is not a means of knowing Dharma, implies that the teachings about Dharma of religious teachers such as the Buddha pose no challenge to the Veda at all. For if those teachings are not covertly based on the Veda itself (as Kumārila will allege – and in that case their adherents are hypocritical in condemning the Veda) they can only arise from the employment of the human faculties of knowledge – first and foremost, perception, the other recognized means of knowledge, inference, comparison, and so forth, being ultimately based on perception. Yet perception depends on a connection between a sense faculty and its object; therefore, it can only apprehend objects that are actually present, not objects of the past or the future. Hence, perception cannot tell us about Dharma, which has to do with the beneficial or harmful results of previously performed actions, that is, the present results of actions performed in the past or the future results of actions performed in the present. Nor could the teachings of the Buddha and Jina be based on some kind of supernormal, yogic perception, since yogic *perception*, that is, perception which apprehends an object that exists in the past or future, is a contradiction in terms. Thus, the sayings of the Buddha are undermined for us by the realization that there is no possible reliable means of knowledge other than the Veda itself upon which such statements could be based; they do not succeed in contradicting the Veda.

The *Pratyakṣapariccheda* is the portion of the *Ślokavārttika* that pertains to Śabara's commentary on the fourth *sūtra* of the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*. However, while Kumārila's primary concern throughout the treatise is indeed to establish that perception is not a means of knowing Dharma, many other matters having to do with the nature and validity of perception, divorced from any consideration of its role in the ascertainment of religious and moral truth, are discussed. Indeed, the

Pratyakṣapariccheda presents a comprehensive theory of perception that addresses a variety of epistemological issues that were debated by Kumārila's contemporaries. In order to understand the *Pratyakṣapariccheda* and its significance we must also have some acquaintance with these issues.

The question before Kumārila in the *Pratyakṣapariccheda* is, Is perception a means of knowledge in regard to Dharma? Discussion of the means of knowledge or *pramāṇas*, that is, the types of evidence or proof by which statements are established in scientific discourse, goes back to ancient times in India. The *Carakasamhitā*, an early medical text (composed sometime in the first two or three centuries CE), mentions different *pramāṇas* in different contexts. In an investigation of the question of whether there is an afterlife, it employs testimony (*āptopadeśa*), perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), and a kind of causal argumentation that it refers to simply as "reasoning" (*yukti*).⁴ Later, in a discussion of the methodology of debate – dialectic – it lists language (*śabda*), perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), testimony or tradition (*aitihya*), and comparison (*aupamya*) as concepts with which the debater should be conversant.⁵ In the *Nyāyasūtra*, one of the earliest systematic treatises on methods of debate and acceptable and unacceptable forms of reasoning (portions of which may go back to the second century CE)⁶, the *pramāṇas* are fixed at four: perception, inference, testimony (to which it refers as "language," *śabda*), and comparison.⁷ The Sāṃkhya school, which considered the question of the *pramāṇas* in the context of a discussion of the requirements of a proper scientific treatise (*śāstrayukti*), recognized only three: perception, inference, and testimony (*āptavacana*).⁸ The *Yogasūtra* (which achieved its present form perhaps in the fifth century), under the influence of Sāṃkhya, identifies essentially the same three, but now mentions the *pramāṇas* in the context of its treatment of basic states of mind (which may be "wholesome" or "unwholesome"; other states of mind are error, sleep, etc.).⁹ The *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* (portions of which may have existed as early as the first or second century), without offering a formal list of *pramāṇas*, mentions only perception and inference and thus would seem to recognize only two. Although these early texts all list and define various *pramāṇas*, the attempt to define the concept of *pramāṇa* in general was not made until later.¹⁰

Already there was considerable ground for dispute. As one can see, there was from the beginning disagreement about exactly how many genuine *pramāṇas* there are. The earliest enumerations tended to be haphazard and unsystematic, whereas later treatments attempted to identify the most basic *pramāṇas* under which all others were to be subsumed. Thus, Sāṃkhya philosophers rejected comparison and tradition (*aitihya*, which some distinguished from testimony)¹¹ as distinct *pramāṇas* on the grounds that they are both forms of testimony (*āptavacana*). At the same time, they rejected certain varieties of reasoning – supposition (*arthāpatti* – knowing, e.g., that a lion has fought and defeated a boar from the fact that his body shows the wounds of a boar), inclusion (*sambhava* – knowing, e.g., that if you have a bushel of something you also have half a bushel), absence

(*abhāva* – knowing, e.g., that fire is absent from the fact that smoke is absent), and gesture (*ceṣṭā* – knowing, e.g., that someone is hungry from his patting his stomach) – as distinct *pramāṇas* on the grounds that they are to be included under inference (*anumāna*).¹² The Mīmāṃsā school was especially liberal in its acceptance of *pramāṇas*. Although the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* does not specify a certain number, Śabara mentions six: perception, inference, testimony, comparison, supposition, and absence. The Vedānta school eventually came to accept this list,¹³ but philosophers of all other schools were unanimous in rejecting supposition and absence as *pramāṇas*.¹⁴

Other controversies arose over the definitions of the various individual *pramāṇas* – which, again, are already stated in the *Carakasamhitā*. Indeed, the Mīmāṃsā definitions of comparison, supposition, and absence differ considerably from the definitions of Sāṃkhya and the other schools. In general, the development of the theory of perception in Indian philosophy centered around the precise definition of the *pramāṇa* perception, while the development of logic was to a considerable extent taken up with the definition of the *pramāṇa* inference. In the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika tradition perception is defined as a cognition arising from the contact of sense faculty and object; thus, *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.4: “Perception is a cognition that has arisen from the contact of sense faculty and object and is inexpressible, not erroneous, and determinate in nature.”¹⁵ This is similar to a statement of the *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* that has often been taken as a definition of perception (VS 3.1.13): “That [cognition] that comes about from the contact of self, sense faculty, mind, and object is another [means of knowledge besides inference, namely, perception].”¹⁶ The Sāṃkhya school followed a different tradition. The *Sāṃkhyakārikā* (sixth century) states that perception is “an ascertainment [of the *buddhi* or intellect] in regard to a sense faculty,”¹⁷ that is to say – according to the oldest preserved commentary on the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, the *Yuktidīpikā* – a modification of the intellect (*buddhi*, i.e., roughly, the mind) in the form of the ascertainment of an object, brought about by the activity or “function” (*vṛtti*) of a sense faculty. The same idea finds expression in the ancient commentary of Vyāsa on the *Yogasūtra*: “The *pramāṇa* perception is a function of the mind (*citta*) resulting from the influence of an external object through the channel of the senses, having that [object which caused it] as its content . . . and chiefly consisting in the ascertainment of a specific property [of it].”¹⁸ However, another ancient work of Sāṃkhya, the *Śaṣṭitantra* of *Vārṣaganya* (fourth century),¹⁹ defines perception simply as “a function of [one of the senses,] the ear, etc.”²⁰ In the Buddhist tradition one of the oldest preserved definitions is Vasubandhu’s: “Perception is a cognition [that arises] from that object [which is represented therein]”; that is, a valid perception is a cognition arising from the same object it represents.²¹

These definitions stimulated reflection on a variety of philosophical issues. First, since perception is a *means* of knowledge, it should, strictly speaking, function as an *instrument* that yields knowledge as its result. Sanskrit grammar provides an analysis of action in terms of various factors (*kāraṇas*) that serves as the framework

for the epistemological discussion here. In sentences with an active verb, the agent of an action is indicated by a noun with a nominative ending in agreement with the finite ending of the verb;²² the object by a noun with an accusative ending; the instrument by a noun with an instrumental ending; and the action proper by the verbal root.²³ In addition to these elements corresponding to grammatical categories there is also for any action a distinct result, that which is *brought about* by the action. In the case of the act of chopping down a tree these five factors would be the woodsman (agent), the tree (object), the axe (instrument), the chopping (action), and the felling of the tree (result). That knowledge is an action – evidenced by the fact that there is a verb ‘to know’ – implies that the same factors must be involved. The knower is the agent, the thing known the object, that by which one knows the instrument, etc. Now the word *pramāṇa*, which is derived from the verb *pra√mā* ‘to know’ literally means – once again, according to the rules of Sanskrit grammar – ‘a means of knowing’;²⁴ hence, a *pramāṇa*, whether perception or inference or any other *pramāṇa*, should serve as the *instrument* in the act of knowing. However, as can be seen from the definitions of perception cited above, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika tradition generally conceives of perception as a *cognition* arising within the self, the knowing subject, as a result of the operation of the mind and senses in respect to a physical object. Such a cognition, which is presumably a state of knowledge (especially if it is considered “not erroneous”), would more naturally be conceived as the *result* of the process of perception, whereas perception itself, that is, *the instrument*, would be the functioning of the faculties that cause it or else those faculties themselves. If, indeed, the *cognition* arising from the operation of those faculties is considered perception, then the question arises, What other state of knowledge is evoked by this cognition such that it truly serves as a “means of knowledge” (*pramāṇa*)?²⁵ This difficulty is avoided by the Sāṃkhya definition that characterizes perception as an “ascertainment” of the intellect (*buddhi*) brought about by the functioning of the senses. In that case, that same ascertainment “residing in the self,” which in Sāṃkhya stands above the intellect and passively witnesses its modifications, could be considered the result, whereas “residing in the intellect” it may be regarded as the means or instrument.^{26,27}

A second issue that was immediately connected with the attempt to define perception was how best to formulate the definition so that it excluded other, nonperceptual cognitions such as erroneous cognitions, inferential cognitions, memory,²⁸ and doubt. All of these arise, at least indirectly, from the functioning of the senses, so that a statement such as that of the *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* (perception is “[a cognition] that comes about from the contact of self, sense faculty, mind, and object . . .”) would immediately appear to be inadequate. The definition of the *Nyāyasūtra* attempts to exclude error and doubt, at least, with the qualifications ‘not erroneous’ and ‘determinate in nature’, doubt being an awareness which does not tell us definitely what its object is. But how are memory and inference excluded by such a definition? Vasubandhu’s definition, by suggesting that

perception is simply a cognition that represents the same object that causes it, would seem to be more satisfactory than the others in this respect. It would seem to exclude at least perceptual error, which is, for example, *of* silver but caused by mother-of-pearl; inference, which is, for example, *of* fire but caused by smoke; and even memory, which is *of* something in the past but caused by something in the present.²⁹

Another matter of debate concerning the proper definition of perception was whether all perceptual cognitions in fact arise from the *contact* of a sense faculty with its object. What about vision, for example, which is evidently the perception of an object from a distance?

Perhaps the most controversial issue about perception in early Indian epistemology, however, was, Assuming perception to be a kind of cognition,³⁰ is it a cognition that has conceptual content – does it, for example, identify its object as this or that specific type of thing or as having this or that property, or not? I shall refer to this as the debate about whether perception is conceptualized, but the terms ‘determinate’ and ‘indeterminate’ have also been used.³¹ There was an early tendency to hold that perception is nonconceptualized (indeterminate); thus the Sāṃkhya philosopher Vindhyavāsin, proceeding from the definition of Vārṣaganya mentioned earlier, states that perception is “a function of the ear, etc., that is devoid of conceptual awareness.”³² The *Sāṃkhyakārikā* also states that the function of the senses in regard to their objects is “a mere seeing.”³³ Yet in the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* it is the function of the *buddhi* in regard to a sense faculty that is perception in the proper sense; the *buddhi*, moreover, is referred to as an “ascertainment” (*adhyavasāya*; see earlier), which, according to the *Yuktidīpikā*, is an *identification* of the object, such as “This is a cow” or “This is a man.”³⁴ Thus the theory of a two-staged perception emerges: first, as the immediate result of the contact of sense faculty and object there arises a nonconceptualized, “mere grasping” or “mere seeing” of the object; then, as a result of the continued functioning of the sense faculty in contact with the object, together with the mind, there is a conceptual identification or determinate awareness of it. The word ‘inexpressible’ in *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.4 also allows for a definition of perception as devoid of conceptual content.³⁵ However, for the most part, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika tradition took perception to be two-staged: first there arises a nonconceptualized cognition of the object, then a conceptualized one.³⁶

The discussion of the means of knowledge, of perception, inference, and verbal cognition, in particular, reached a new level of sophistication with the sixth-century Yogācāra Buddhist philosopher Dīnāga.³⁷ Dīnāga rigorously criticized the views of his predecessors while proposing ingenious, highly original theories of his own. After Dīnāga, Indian epistemology is mainly taken up with debates over his ideas, whether as proposed by Dīnāga himself or by his followers, the greatest of whom was Dharmakīrti, who was perhaps a younger contemporary of Kumārila’s. Kumārila’s *Śloka-vārttika* was one of the earliest and probably the most influential attempt to refute Dīnāga’s philosophy by a Brahmanical thinker.³⁸

One of Diñnāga's most provocative claims was that the Buddha himself is to be considered a *pramāṇa* in regard to Dharma.³⁹ To be sure, the Buddhists as well as the Jains always believed the founders of their traditions to have possessed supernormal cognitive abilities, even omniscience. However, the explicit claim that the Buddha is a means of knowledge unto himself brought the issue of the authority of scripture squarely within the sphere of formal epistemology. It had the effect of refocusing attention on the concept of a *pramāṇa* in general, leading to Dharmakīrti's attempt to provide a definition of it, and stimulating reflection on what it is that makes us consider a cognition *true*.

Diñnāga reduced the number of genuine *pramāṇas* to two: perception and inference. He argued that verbal testimony (*śabda*) is really only a form of inference – an inference to a state of knowledge of a reliable speaker from what she says. Although he was joined in this opinion by philosophers of the Vaiśeṣika school – the important Vaiśeṣika philosopher Praśastapāda, probably a contemporary of Diñnāga, also taught that testimony is a form of inference – he was unique in regarding the objects of these two means of knowledge as distinct. That is to say, according to Diñnāga, perception and inference do not apprehend the same thing. Perception apprehends concrete particulars, which are real; inference apprehends universals, which are not real but imaginary, that is, mentally constructed. (As Dharmakīrti explained later, inference can still be considered *true* insofar as it is the basis of effective action, that is, insofar as it eventually *leads* one to the particular.)⁴⁰

As for perception, Diñnāga defined it simply as a cognition “devoid of conceptual construction.”⁴¹ Two important ideas are contained in this definition. First, perception is not conceptualized. It is a bare awareness without any identification or conceptual articulation of its object, which Diñnāga understood specifically to be the association of a word with the object. Conceptual awareness is of the mind, not the senses, and in fact is always a falsification of the object because the referents of words – universals (for words refer across many individuals) – are not real features of the world. Second, perception need not arise from the contact of a sense faculty with an object, as is implied by virtually every other classical definition of perception. Diñnāga's definition indicates only a phenomenological feature of perceptual cognition – it is nonconceptualized; it says nothing of its provenance. Thus it was open to Diñnāga, following the idealist tendencies of the Yogācāra school, to suggest that the object that appears in a perceptual cognition may not be an external, physical object but, in fact, merely a form that arises from within consciousness itself. This led, in turn, to the idea that an act of perception is simply the process of a cognition assuming a particular form of which it itself becomes aware; that is, perceptual acts are acts of self-awareness! In that case, one can see that the means of knowledge that is perception – what does the work in the act of perception, so to speak – and the knowing that is its result are essentially identical; they are aspects of the same cognition.

As regards inference, Diñnāga made important strides in clarifying the exact relationship that must exist between the terms of a valid syllogism. Following the

lead of Vasubandhu, he removed the study of inference from the art of debate or dialectic and established it firmly within the domain of *pramāṇavāda*, the scientific investigation of human knowledge, that is, epistemology. So influential were his achievements in this area that he could be considered to occupy a place in the history of Indian logic akin to that of Aristotle in the West.⁴² As already mentioned, he considered the referents of the terms of syllogisms, as indeed of all words, to be mental constructs – universals or, better, pseudo-universals that are only loosely related to the reality of concrete particulars; there are no real universals, according to Diñnāga. Concepts, as they could also be called, are not positive but negative in nature; they serve merely to differentiate certain more or less arbitrary groupings of particulars from others. (Thus, the content of the concept ‘cow’, e.g., is roughly ‘that which is not a non-cow’, i.e., that which is not a horse, a dog, a cat, a fire hydrant, etc.)⁴³

On the whole, Diñnāga’s philosophy is nominalist and idealist in spirit.⁴⁴ Not only does it proclaim the authority of the Buddha in regard to matters of morality and religion and reject the authority of the Veda, it also propounds a metaphysics diametrically opposed to the realist worldview that undergirds Vedic practice. The above-mentioned epistemological doctrines go together with the traditional Buddhist denial of a self, which of course calls into question the existence of a soul that can reap the rewards of previously performed ritual acts, and the affirmation of the impermanence, indeed, momentariness, of everything, which questions the very possibility of action, *a fortiori*, ritual action, in the first place. It is little wonder that Diñnāga evoked strong reactions from within orthodox circles.

Much of Kumāṛila’s *Ślokaṇvṛttika* addresses and attempts to refute doctrines of Diñnāga. The second chapter of the work, the *Codanāsūtra-adhikaraṇa*, refutes the authority of the Buddha in regard to Dharma by developing the theory of intrinsic validity, that is, the idea that all cognitions are valid unless and until they are refuted by other cognitions, mentioned earlier. Thus, only an eternal, authorless scripture such as the Veda will have validity for us in regard to transcendent matters. The intrinsic validity of the statements of a scripture that has a human author, on the other hand, will be annulled, for we know that humans are without faculties for apprehending the supersensible. The *Śūnyavāda-adhikaraṇa* refutes the doctrine central to Yogācāra idealism (which it adapted from another movement within Buddhism known as Sautrāntika) that a cognition merely apprehends an object-form contained within itself, not an external object. The *Śabdapariśeṣa* chapter refutes the view that language is a form of inference, thus defending the thesis that language is a distinct *pramāṇa*. The *Ākṛtīvāda* and *Vanavāda* chapters defend the reality and knowability of universals against Diñnāga’s claim that universals are merely mentally constructed or imagined. The *Apohavāda* chapter attacks Diñnāga’s theory of linguistic meaning, that words refer, not to real universals – that is, objective, common features of objects – but to artificially conceived “exclusions” (*apoha*) of objects from other objects that do not have the same effects.

The *Pratyakṣapariccheda* of the *Ślokavārttika* is in large part a systematic response to the first chapter of Dīnāga's *magnum opus*, the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, also titled *Pratyakṣapariccheda*, in which Dīnāga presents his own theory of perception while exhaustively critiquing the definitions of other schools. Indeed, Kumārila is particularly concerned with the last section of the *Pratyakṣapariccheda*, in which Dīnāga raises objections to *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.4, considered as a definition of perception; yet Kumārila will also address objections Dīnāga brings against the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika definitions of perception (i.e., *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.4 and *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* 3.1.13). The entire last half the Kumārila's *Pratyakṣapariccheda* (beginning with verse 111) is a powerful defense of the validity of conceptualized perception in opposition to Dīnāga's claim that perception is essentially nonconceptualized.

Dīnāga, however, is not Kumārila's only opponent in the *Ślokavārttika* or even the *Pratyakṣapariccheda*. At least two other schools of Indian thought must be briefly discussed in order for us to understand fully the context of the *Pratyakṣapariccheda* – the Grammarian school, especially as represented by the sixth-century thinker Bharṭṛhari, and the Advaita Vedānta school.

According to Bharṭṛhari, the entire universe, the proliferation of “name and form,” is the unfolding of the transcendent word-principle (*śabdatattva*), which he identifies with Brahman, the Absolute of the Upaniṣads.⁴⁵ In reality eternal and changeless, the word-principle appears to transform itself, through its multiple potencies (*śaktis*), into linguistic forms – words and sentences – and their meanings. Like the Mīmāṃsaka, Bharṭṛhari considered both the Veda and language in general to be eternal – that is to say, words, their meanings, and the relations between them are all eternal. Yet he held a number of other linguistic doctrines that were at odds with the Mīmāṃsā view of language, some of which Kumārila felt compelled to refute.

First, Bharṭṛhari believed that individual words and their meanings are ultimately identical; both are simply different aspects of the same underlying word-principle. Indeed, for Bharṭṛhari, *all* words and meanings are ultimately one. The differentiation of words and meanings is an illusory appearance of an essentially unified reality. Kumārila rejected this monistic word-mysticism, holding instead that there is a real plurality of eternal words and meanings, the latter being conceived as universals. The relations of words to their corresponding, but distinct, meanings rest for Kumārila not on the ultimate identity of words and meanings but on the inherent capacities (*śakti*) of words to express certain meanings.

Second, Bharṭṛhari held that, insofar as individual words can be considered real, they are partless, that is to say, without internal divisions such as letters. The true word is a single, indivisible whole, referred to as the *sphoṭa*. Thus, a word is not to be identified with audible sounds. The audible sounds produced by a speaker, which of course are characterized by a certain sequence, merely serve to *manifest* the *sphoṭa*, which is without sequence. Kumārila, too, distinguished the true, eternal word from the audible sounds by which it is cognized, but he