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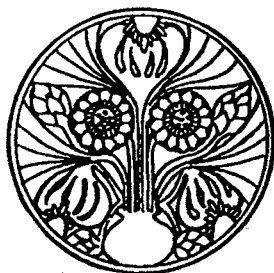
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The Transformations of Mīmāṃsā in the Larger Context of Indian Philosophical Discourse

In Mīmāṃsā, as in most Indian philosophical text traditions, it is often difficult to precisely identify points of historical rupture and transformation. Given the loss of what may have been key works of Mīmāṃsā literature, as well as the typical uncertainties regarding both relative and absolute chronology, it is hard to determine when and how, much less why, significant theoretical and discursive changes took place. Still, some changes are deep and broad enough to be charted and, at least in some measure, explained. The seventh century seems to mark one such turning point. It was in this period that Mīmāṃsā divided into the two sub-schools that would define it throughout its later history, that of Kumārilabhaṭṭa and Prabhākara.

Less frequently noted, but perhaps no less important, it was in this period, and seemingly precisely through the works of these two authors, that the *Mīmāṃsāsūtrabhāṣya* of Śabara became established as the foundation for all later work in the field. Each of these authors' work consists entirely of sub-commentaries on part or all of Śabara's *Bhāṣya* (and this in a field which, so far can be determined, had never yet produced any *sub*-commentarial literature of any sort). Whatever differences they may have had among themselves on other matters (and these differences were of course substantial), Kumārila and Prabhākara are agreed in taking Śabara's commentary to form the basis for all subsequent discussions in the field of Mīmāṃsā, all but displacing the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* itself as the foundational text of the entire discipline.¹

¹ This is not to say, of course, that they are blind followers, or that they never depart from Śabara's positions. Kumārila differs with Śabara openly on many points, and Prabhākara does so more frequently, if also covertly – Prabhākara never openly accuses Śabara of error.

This is a marked change from the state of the field before Kumārila and Prabhākara's time. Śābara himself had worked in a field in which there were many rival interpreters of the *Mīmāṃsā-sūtra*. Several of these – Upavaṣa, Bodhāyana, and at least two unnamed “Vṛttikāras”² – are well-known from named references in the *Bhāṣya* as well as several later texts, but it is clear from many discussions in the work of Śābara and his commentators that there were others whose names are not preserved. And it is clear from references to these fellow interpreters in Śābara's own text that the differences between them were far from minor, extending at times to even to markedly different readings of, and markings of the divisions between, the *sūtras* themselves.³ We know, further, that there were other Mīmāṃsā authors between the time of Śābara (mid/late fifth century?) and that of Kumārila (mid-seventh century) who did not adopt Śābara's views or take his text as the basis for their own works.⁴

Yet all this ends quite abruptly with the commentaries of Kumārila and Prabhākara, after whose time all works in the field of Mīmāṃsā take Śābara's reading and interpretation of the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* as their basis, and virtually all of which clearly align themselves with either Kumārila's or Prabhākara's interpretations of Śābara. So, the transformation of Mīmāṃsā that occurs in the 7th century is marked not only by the bifurcation of the field into two competing subschools, but by a decisive consolidation of its textual foundations and its doctrinal core. It is no accident that, once Śābara's *Bhāṣya* has become established as the standard gloss on the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*, the welter of competing works – both pre- and post-Śābara – quickly vanish and are, with rare exceptions, known to the post-seventh

² The Vṛttikāra mentioned by Dignāga is apparently different from the one whose views are recapitulated by Śābara (see Hattori 1968: 66, 166f. The former should perhaps be identified with one Bhavadāsa, a possible fragment of whose work has been discovered and edited in Franco 2002.

³ As can be seen, most famously, in the “Vṛttikāragrantha,” a long quotation or summary of one such interpreter's views included by Śābara in his own commentary on MS 1.1.5. See Frauwallner 1968: 24ff.

⁴ The best known of these is Bhartṛmītra, referenced in several commentaries on Kumārila's *Śloka-vārttika*, in Jayantabhaṭṭa's *Nyāyamañjarī*, and quoted in Mukula-bhaṭṭa's *Abhidhāvṛttamātrkā*. For full references, see McCrea 2008: 294.

century authors only through stray references or allusions in the works of Śabara, Kumārila, and Prabhākara themselves.⁵

Yet, while Kumārila and Prabhākara seem to cooperate in establishing Śabara's *Bhāṣya* as the primary textual foundation of the system, they are both of course major innovators in their own right. Each writes only commentaries on Śabara, yet each, through these commentaries, radically transforms the doctrines, the modes of argument, and the discursive practices of Mīmāṃsā. The field of Mīmāṃsā as it looked in the late-seventh or early-eighth century is in many ways vastly different from what it had been scarcely a hundred years before.

Why did this transformation take place at all, and why did it happen just in this period? There would seem to be no reason internal to the development of the Mīmāṃsā system that could explain either the consolidation of its textual foundations or its bifurcation into subschools, and I think to make sense of what happens within Mīmāṃsā in this period one must look to external forces. In particular, I think that the challenge posed by Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, and the revolution in both epistemological thinking and philosophical text practices that it spawned, played a major role in bringing about this transformation. The towering importance of Dignāga's work in the overall development of Indian philosophy is well known, and need not be defended at length. But here too, as with the rise of the Bhāṭṭa and Prābhākara schools of Mīmāṃsā, I think there are aspects of the changes wrought by Dignāga that have been largely overlooked, or at any rate have not received anything like the attention they deserve.

Dignāga's radical epistemology, of course, represented a powerful philosophical challenge to established Mīmāṃsā theories on the nature of knowledge, perception, and the like, as they did to the theories of Naiyāyikas, Vaiśeṣikas, Sāṃkhyas, and others, and they forced defenders of these schools to develop new arguments and, not

⁵ Jinendrabuddhi (early 8th century), commenting on Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, expands somewhat on Dignāga's own discussion of the Vṛttikāra's views, and may have still had access to his text. Bhartṛmītra was apparently still known somewhat later: his text is quoted once in Mukulabhaṭṭa's (late 9th century) *Abhidhāvṛttamātrkā*, and again in Cakradhara's (late 10th century?) commentary on Jayantabhaṭṭa's *Nyāyamañjarī* (see McCrea 2008: 294).

infrequently, to significantly modify their existing positions on key issues in order to mount a more effective defense against the attacks of Dignāga and his followers. But, alongside the dramatic doctrinal changes in both Buddhist and anti-Buddhist philosophical text traditions set in motion by Dignāga's work, the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* also initiated a sudden, widespread, and radical transformation in the reading, citational, and discursive practices of Sanskrit philosophers, a transformation perhaps even more dramatic in its effects than Dignāga's specifically philosophical contributions.

Up until Dignāga's time, philosophical debate between rival traditions was conducted with fairly minimal direct textual interface. Direct quotations of works from rival text traditions were extremely rare, and responses were usually made to vaguely characterized "enemy" positions, rather than to specific textual formulations of these positions. It is often unclear how familiar authors in this period actually were with the theories they were criticizing, and it is difficult to determine in many cases which version or versions of their opponents' arguments authors are responding to.

Toward the end of the 6th century, this state of affairs changes dramatically and suddenly, and it is precisely Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya* that marks the turning point. Dignāga does not simply show specific awareness of his opponents' texts, inserting a stray quotation or a named reference here and there. He makes the systematic investigation of and response to the texts of rival philosophical traditions a basic organizing principle of his own work. This is most clearly evident in the first, "perception" chapter of his magnum opus. Dignāga begins with a quite succinct explanation of his own views on the nature of perception, after which he devotes the bulk of his chapter to examining and criticizing, in turn, the definitions of perception given in the *Vādaśāstra*, the *Nyāyasūtra*, the *Vaiśeṣikasūtra*, the Sāṃkhya text *Śaṣṭitantra*,⁶ and the *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*. In the course of these critiques he considers the positions of different commentators within these rival traditions on the definitions in question, possible variant readings,⁷ and even questions of

⁶ See Hattori 1968: 148 (see also Frauwallner 1958).

⁷ E.g. his discussion of the divergent views of Śābara and the Vṛttikāra on MS 1.1.4, which the latter reads as "*tatsamprayoge puruṣasyendriyāṇām buddhijanma sat pratyakṣam*" in place of Śābara's reading "*satsamprayoge puruṣasyendriyāṇām bud-*

authorship (in the case of the *Vādaividhi*). Close reading of opponents' texts, on this scale and with this degree of specificity, is simply unprecedented, and marks a major transition in the discursive practice of Sanskrit philosophy. And, Dignāga's text-based critical method is quickly adopted by others, most notably by representatives of the very traditions against whom Dignāga had most forcefully deployed it; his work was very shortly followed by comparably thorough attacks on his own arguments, replete with specific references to and direct quotations of his own text. While not all post-Dignāgan authors are as thorough or as detailed as he was in referencing the works of his opponents and important uncertainties remain about the interlocutors addressed by some key philosophical texts, the citational and critical practices adopted by Dignāga and his early critics quickly become standard across the full range of Sanskrit philosophical literature; quite apart from his theoretical innovations, Dignāga brought about a seemingly permanent revolution in the way Indian philosophical texts were written.

It is not clear how we should explain this transformation in discursive practices: whether it can be ascribed simply to the overwhelming cultural influence of Dignāga's successful model, or is rooted in technological or institutional changes (which may have led to more widespread circulation of written texts and greater availability of libraries, for instance). But, in any case, the field of play in the world of Sanskrit philosophy was very different in Kumārila and Prabhākara's time from what it had been in Śābara's, and this seems to play an important role in the internal changes in Mīmāṃsā that begin with their works. Indeed it is quite tempting to tie both of the major changes Mīmāṃsā undergoes in this period to the discursive transformation initiated by Dignāga – the consolidation of Śābara's work as the textual basis of the field, and the split into rival schools (fundamentally based, of course, on rival interpretations of that textual basis). Precisely because Dignāga is attacking a specific text, rather than generic and more or less ill-defined doctrines or positions, his attack pushes defenders of Mīmāṃsā (and other rival traditions as well, of course) in the direction of apologetics. To resist Dignāga's attacks is not only to defend a

general set of somewhat vaguely defined positions, but to defend a specific text – a text, in this case, far more detailed in its arguments and therefore less easily manipulated than the terse and often cryptic *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*.

The very textual consolidation of around Śabara's *Bhāṣya* as the foundation of the field sharpens and draws attention to differences between rival interpreters of that text, making them harder to ignore. Hence the shift to a more closely text-based, exegetical, and scholastic mode of argumentation serves precisely to promote the division of the field into rival camps, based on their divergent approaches to interpreting what has now become the foundational text of their discipline. In a way, it is a mistake to see the movement of *Mīmāṃsā* in this period as a bifurcation of a formerly unitary field into two subschools. Rather, it represents a change from a situation in which, insofar as we can judge from the surviving evidence, virtually every author in the field in effect constituted his own sub-school of *Mīmāṃsā*, to one in which there are two and only two such schools. And the divergences in their interpretations of Śabara's text which prompt the split between the Bhāṭṭa and Prābhākara schools are very much bound up with the different ways they choose to respond to Dignāga's attacks.

As I hope to show, this response is not simply an outer line of defense, protecting the basic presuppositions of the system from attack by outsiders while leaving the core of the discipline basically unchanged. The different approaches Kumārila and Prabhākara take to defending their tradition and, more specifically, Śabara's text, from the attacks advanced by Dignāga shape and alter their own understanding of some of the key concepts and doctrines of the *Mīmāṃsā*, and are at the root of many of the key points of contention between the two emergent sub-schools. They change what it is they are defending by defending it.

While Dignāga's theory of perception represented a serious challenge to virtually all non-Buddhist philosophers (and some Buddhist ones as well, of course), it stood as a particular affront to the *Mīmāṃsakas*, given the uniquely pivotal role they assign to linguistic (and therefore necessarily conceptual) awareness as a source of knowledge for successful dharmic practice. Dignāga's epistemology draws a sharp distinction between perceptual awareness

– taken to be not only generally valid but indubitable and absolutely unfalsifiable – and conceptual awareness – which deals only with fictitious, mentally constructed universals, and can have, at best, a conditional validity insofar as it enables successful engagement with the unique particulars which are the only ultimately real objects of knowledge. When we first see an object, we do not see it *as* anything: as a member of a class, or as the bearer of a name, for instance; we see only the bare, uncharacterized, particular. Our awarenesses of class-assignment, name, and the like come only in subsequent moments of awareness and, for this very reason, Dignāga and his followers insist that they do not reflect the real nature of the object – which already appeared to us in the initial, non-conceptual, awareness – but are instead simply fictitious products of our own mental construction. Dignāga essentially sets up a two-tiered hierarchy of awareness types. One type, the immediately perceptual, having only unique particulars as its objects, is presented as necessarily valid and beyond possibility of falsification; the other type, conceptual awareness, traffics only in fictitious constructed objects, and can be accepted as “valid” only if it meets certain specific tests that qualify the awareness in question as “inferential.”

This obviously presented a serious challenge to the Mīmāṃsā effort to enshrine Vedic language as an infallible source of knowledge regarding matters wholly unamenable to sense perception. Both Kumārila and Prabhākara attack Dignāga’s two-tiered system of cognitions; each insists on a system in which all cognitions – whether perceptual or conceptual – are placed on a par and must be treated and, where relevant, judged, by the same rules. But they achieve this result in radically different ways, and this difference marks the most salient divergence between their respective epistemologies.

Kumārila famously grounds his epistemology on the theory of the intrinsic validity (*svataḥ prāmāṇya*) of *all* cognitions.⁸ This theory holds that if any cognitions of any sort are held to be valid, then all cognitions – perceptual, conceptual, linguistic, or otherwise – must be accorded *prima facie* validity, and can be dismissed as invalid only if and when grounds for their falsification appear. It is unnecessary, and ultimately impossible, to prove the validity of any

⁸ ŚV, *Codanāsūtra* 47ff. For more on the theory of intrinsic validity, see Taber 1992 and Arnold 2005, Chapters 3 and 4.

given cognition on positive grounds. The most one can do is seek, and fail to find, grounds for falsifying any given awareness. Any awareness is in principle amenable to falsification, though this in itself cannot be taken as sufficient grounds for regarding it as doubtful. Kumārila holds this to be true even of awareness derived from the Vedic scriptures. He tries to defend the validity of such awareness, not on the ground that it is indubitable or in principle unfalsifiable (like Dignāga's perception), but by showing that it bears on matters beyond the range of any other possible source of knowledge, and that there is thence no such source available, which could falsify the awareness derived from the Veda. So by denying any privileged category of indubitable awareness, and providing a workable theory for how our ordinary knowledge practices can be maintained in the absence of such a privileged category, Kumārila undermines Dignāga's attempt to establish perception as a uniquely doubt-free mode of awareness.

While the theory of *svataḥprāmāṇya* is very forcefully articulated and its implications are set forth with masterful clarity by Kumārila, it cannot quite be said to represent a major innovation on Kumārila's part, simply because the theory is already present in its essentials in the work of the Vṛttikāra, quoted or paraphrased at length by Śabara in his commentary on *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.5.⁹ There are, however, other major elements in Kumārila's philosophy that do represent radical innovations, and that are clearly prompted by the need to respond to Dignāga's attacks. One notable example of this is his argument for the "dual nature" (*dvirūpatā*) of entities. Kumārila attacks the notion that there is an absolute ontological distinction between universals and particulars: he insists that universal and particular together constitute the indivisible two-part nature of any object. This doctrine, unlike the theory of *svataḥprāmāṇya*, appears to have no precedent in earlier Mīmāṃsā discussions of the nature of universals. Kumārila first introduces it in the very beginning of the Siddhānta portion of his discussion of perception, and uses it to directly address Dignāga's argument for the mentally-constructed, non-objective nature of universals (*Ślokavārttika*, *Pratyakṣa* 112ff.):

⁹ See *Mīmāṃsādarśana*, Vol. 1: 30ff.; also Frauwallner 1968: 24ff.

First there is an initial perception (*ālocanā*) – a non-conceptual awareness, similar to the awareness of children, mutes, and the like, and arising purely from the object.

At that time, neither particular nor universal is experienced, but, rather, the individual (*vyakti*), which is the basis (*ādhāra*) of both, is apprehended.¹⁰

He goes on to explain:

Even in non-conceptual awareness, there is apprehension of a thing with a dual nature (*dvyātmaka*): it can be explained via definitions, but it is grasped in its pure form by the knower

– not as something unique, since it does not conceptualize the exclusion of others, nor as “a universal” since it does not conceptualize recurrence across (a range of) individuals.

After that, however, the awareness which determines the thing by way of its properties, such as its class character (*jātyādi*), is likewise regarded as perception.¹¹

By introducing as the content of our initial moment of perceptual awareness the entire object, undifferentiated but comprising both individuality and universality in its “dual nature,” Kumārila aims to defuse Dignāga’s critique of universals as something introduced only in subsequent moments of awareness, and therefore not truly a perception of the object at all. Again, the effect is a kind of levelling (where Dignāga sought to introduce a firm hierarchy): for Kumārila, the “particular” is no more (and no less) present in our initial perceptual awareness than the universal, and it is therefore not possible to draw between them any invidious distinction that would allow one to dismiss universals, but not particulars, as not genuinely part of what we perceive. Both particularity and universality are part of what we initially perceive, though neither is consciously, determinately, recognized in that initial moment. Our determinate awareness of these dual aspects appears to us only subsequently, in moments of

¹⁰ *asti hy ālocanājñānaṃ prathamam nirvikalpakam |
bālamūkādīviññānasadrśaṃ śuddhavastuṃ || 112
na viśeṣo na sāmānyaṃ tadānīm anubhūyate |
tayoṛ ādhārabhūtā tu vyaktir evāvasīyate || 113*

¹¹ *nirvikalpakabodhe 'pi dvyātamakasyāpi vastunaḥ |
grahaṇam lakṣaṇākhyeyaṃ jñātrā śuddham tu gṛhyate || 118
na cāsādhāraṇatvena paravyāvṛtṭyakalpanāt |
viśeṣānugamāklpteḥ sāmānyam iti nāpi tat || 119
tataḥ param punar vastu dharmair jātyādibhir yayā |
buddhyāvasīyate sāpi pratyakṣatvena saṃmatā || 120*

For more on this, see Taber 2005: 94ff.

conceptual awareness, but because these aspects appear to us as if they actually belong to the object before us, we must, in the absence of any grounds for falsifying this impression, take them to really belong to it, and this conceptual awareness is therefore still to be regarded as perceptual.

This theory of the dual nature of perceived objects, while it is raised as a response to Dignāga's attack on the Mīmāṃsā theory of perception, is not simply forgotten after this attack has (in Kumārila's mind at least) been successfully refuted. He articulates the very same position much further on in the *Ślokavārttika*, when he turns to consider the ontology of universals in the *Ākṛtivāda*:

In the case of all objects, our awareness arises containing elements of differentiation and recurrence; and this is not possible without a duality of nature (*dvyātmakatva*).

If one takes the position that there is only the particular (in this awareness), then the awareness of a universal could not arise; if there were awareness of the universal alone, the cognition of the particular would be without any basis.¹²

This idea of the dual-nature of objects appears to have no precedent in earlier Mīmāṃsā discussions of universals, but it has clearly become basic to Kumārila's thinking on the issue. Therefore, one of the basic elements of Mīmāṃsā ontology has been significantly reconceived, and this reconception seems clearly to be driven by a tactical need to respond to Dignāga's attack.

Yet, while this and other key elements of Kumārila's philosophy are clearly shaped in important ways by his tactics in responding to Dignāga, the impact of this response is far more dramatic and widespread in the case of Prabhākara. Prabhākara's attack on Dignāga's two-tiered system of cognitions take an approach exactly opposite to that embodied in Kumārila's *svataḥprāmāṇya* theory. Rather than attempt to drag immediate perceptual awareness down to the same level as conceptual and linguistic awareness – rendering each presumptively valid but potentially falsifiable – Prabhākara elevates conceptual awareness to the same status Dignāga reserves for the purely perceptual. For him, all awareness is, equally, unfalsifi-

¹² *sarvavastuṣu buddhiś ca vyāvṛtṭyanugamātmikā |*
jāyate dvyātmakatvena vinā sā ca na siddhyati || 5
viśeṣamātra iṣṭe ca na sāmānyamatir bhavet |
sāmānyamātrabodhe tu nirnimittā viśeṣadhīḥ || 6

able and indubitable. This epistemological position emerges as Prabhākara develops his unique theory of error, and he links it explicitly to Dignāga's discussion of conceptual awareness. Interpreting the Vṛttikāra's statement that "That (awareness) which does not have a defective cause, and which is not cognized as 'False', is not a false awareness,"¹³ Prabhākara asks:

It is determined that an awareness to which these two conditions do not apply is not a "false awareness". But what is this awareness (to which these two conditions are said not to apply)? That which arises through connection with a name, a universal, etc. (*nāmajātyādiyogena*).¹⁴

Thus Prabhākara takes the Vṛttikāra's statement to refer specifically to conceptual awareness (*kalpanā*), as defined by Dignāga. And he goes on to argue that Dignāga's dismissal of conceptual awareness as more error-prone or doubtful than the purely perceptual is baseless. He characterizes Dignāga's position as follows:

So, our opponents, who say that "This is merely conceptual construction," do not accept that this awareness has any objective basis (*ālambana*) other than that already validly known via the non-conceptual awareness. And it is just this they call "*saṃvṛti*."¹⁵

He goes on to argue, however, that the conceptual awareness, although it does have as its object the same thing already perceived, because it is a reflective awareness also comprehending other things experienced previously (e.g. other things have the same class, qualities, etc.) it has an object which extends partly beyond what was contained in the non-conceptual awareness. And, as neither of the falsification criteria given by the Vṛttikāra apply to this reflective awareness – when we are conceptually aware of a cow as "a cow", this awareness of its class property is neither empirically falsified nor the product of any detectable fault in our perceptual mechanism – we

¹³ *Mīmāṃsādarśana*, vol. 1: 34.

¹⁴ *Brhatī*, vol. 1: 50: *yasyedaṃ dvayaṃ nāsti, nāsau mithyāpratyaṃ ity avadhāryate. kaḥ punar asau? nāmajātyādiyogenotpadyate yaḥ*. Here Prabhākara is deliberately echoing Dignāga's phrasing in his own definition of conceptualization in *Pramāṇa-samuccaya* 1.3: *atha keyam kalpanā nāma? nāmajātyādiyojanā*. See PS: 2, PST, vol. 1: 37.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 50f.: *tathā ca parair nārthāntarālambanateṣyate 'sya, nirvikalpakapramitaviśayataiveṣyate vikalpamātram evedam iti vadadbhiḥ. sa eva ca saṃvṛtir ity uktam*.

have no basis for rejecting the conceptual awareness as invalid and upholding the non-conceptual awareness as valid.

Now it is at this point that the question of error is brought to the fore. The (Dignāgan) opponent tries to use generally acknowledged examples of perceptual error to show that conceptual awareness is, at least in some cases, falsified, and therefore cannot be held to be unfailingly reliable:

For, (he says,) mother-of-pearl appears as if it were silver; and this awareness has mother-of-pearl as its objective basis, not silver. How do we know this? Because it is seen [to arise] when one's eye is connected with mother-of-pearl, and it does not arise in a blind person.¹⁶

It is in response to this line of argument that Prabhākara develops perhaps his most distinctive epistemological position: the "non-appearance" (*a-khyāti*) theory of error. Prabhākara attacks the notion that any object can appear in our awareness as other than it truly is. In response to the objection above he declares: "An objective basis (*ālambana*) which has one form cannot be the cause of an awareness which has a different form."¹⁷ How then does he account for cases of error such as the mother-of-pearl and silver? He goes on to explain:

An awareness which arises in dependence on another, similar object, but which does not apprehend its distinction (from other, similar, things), becomes the cause of a memory-awareness of another, similar object, for a person who does not have the awareness "I am remembering"; and, to this extent, things like the awareness of silver with respect to mother-of-pearl are explicable.¹⁸

When we see a piece of mother-of-pearl and think "This is silver", the physical basis of our awareness "silver" is *not* the mother of pearl before our eyes. On Prabhākara's view, it is simply absurd that an awareness of "silver" could have any other object than silver. So, the object of our awareness "silver," even in such cases, can only be real silver – not silver we are actually seeing at that moment, but a memory of silver seen previously. Our awareness in such cases in

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 58f.: *śūktikā hi rajatavat prakāśate. śūktikā lambamam hi tajjñānam, na rajatā lambanam. katham avagamyate? śūktikā samprayukte cakṣuṣi darśanāt, andha-syān utpādāt.*

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 64f.: *nānyākāram ālambanam anyākārasya jñānasyotpattihetuḥ.*

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 65: *viśayāntaram sadṛśam avalambya āgrhītavivekaṃ yaj jñānam utpannam tat sadṛśaviśayāntare smṛtijñānahetutām pratipadyate, "smarāmi" iti jñānaśūnya-sya. upapannāni tāvat śūktikādiṣu rajatādijñānāni.*

fact has two components: the “this”, which accurately apprehends the mother-of-pearl before our eyes, and the “silver”, which accurately apprehends the silver we have seen previously. Our apprehension of what we call “error” is the result, not of any part of our awareness-content being falsified, displaced, or overturned by another, more accurate awareness, but rather by the additional awareness of some previously uncognized element – e.g. the difference between the perceived “this” and the remembered “silver.”

Through this admittedly rather counterintuitive theory of error, Prabhākara is able to uphold the original claim he made against Dignāga – that the contents of our conceptual awareness are no more amenable to falsification, and no more reasonably subject to doubt, than the contents of our non-conceptual perceptual awareness. And, having devised this theory to defend the reliability of conceptual awareness against Dignāga’s attacks, Prabhākara does not simply move on and forget about it. The need to maintain the position that our awareness-contents are never displaced or falsified, and the implications of his accompanying *akhyāti* theory, are major concerns of his throughout his works, and resurface frequently and at odd times. Some of the most distinctive and innovative stands taken by Prabhākara can I think be shown to proceed directly from this one argumentative move he makes against the Buddhists. In the interests of space, I will briefly mention here only two examples.

Prabhākara’s account of sentence meaning, his famous theory of *anvitābhidhāna*, which holds that words do not convey their meanings individually, but only when and insofar as they are construed into sentence meanings, diverges sharply from the account of sentence-meaning found in both Śabara’s and Kumārila’s works. Both Śabara and Kumārila hold that, when we interpret a sentence, the words first express their individual meanings, and these word meanings (*padārthas*) are then construed with one another so as to arrive at a sentence meaning. They both hold, furthermore, that, as the literal referents of words can only be universals, while sentences are typically used to refer to or describe particulars, in moving from word-meaning to sentence-meaning, the original, literal meanings of the individual words are “blocked” (*bādhita*), displaced by the parti-

culars to which the sentence actually refers.¹⁹ Kumārila actually goes so far as to assert, on this basis, that all sentence meaning is figuratively expressed (*lākṣaṇika*). Prabhākara, however, will have none of this. His discussion of sentence meaning in the *Vākyādhikaraṇa* (MS 1.1.24-26), where the *anvitābhidhāna* theory is first advanced, makes it clear that it is the need to avoid admitting the displacement or blocking of the initial, universally understood word-meanings by the particular referents of the construed sentence that leads him to reject the two-stage process envisioned by Śabara and Kumārila.²⁰ Words, whose expressive bases are universals, do not first express individual word meanings that are then combined to form a sentence meaning; rather, they are first construed (*anvita*) with one another, and collectively, by a unitary process, denote the already-particularized sentence meaning. Hence Prabhākara is able to give an account of sentence meaning which does not compromise his own epistemic principles, but doing so forces him to break decisively with previous Mīmāṃsā thinking on the sentence-meaning issue.

The effects of Prabhākara's belief in the unfalsifiability of conceptual contents sometimes come to the surface even in extremely recondite discussions of ritual theory which seem very far removed indeed from the Mīmāṃsā/Buddhist debate. To cite only one example: In commenting on Śabara's *Bhāṣya* on *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* 3.3.14, Prabhākara deals with the question of *bādha*, the blocking of one interpretive means of knowledge by another, or of one ritual element by another (a phenomenon which sometimes occurs when performative details are transferred from one ritual context to another). Prabhākara, given his views on the unfalsifiability of awareness-contents as discussed above, is of course deeply uncomfortable with the notion that any awareness we have arrived at through hearing a Vedic text can be "blocked", set aside, or discarded, even on the basis of what we hear elsewhere in the Veda. Driven to explain how this so-called "blocking" can nevertheless occur, Prabhākara turns once more to his *akhyāti* theory, and to the familiar example of the silver and the mother-of-pearl:

¹⁹ See Śabara's *Bhāṣya* ad MS 1.1.25 (*Mīmāṃsādarśana*, Vol. 1, p. 116), and Śabara's *Bhāṣya* along with Kumārila's *Tantravārttika* ad 3.1.12 (*Mīmāṃsādarśana*, vol. 4: 53 – adopting the variant reading "bādhite" as a correction to the printed "bodhite"); also McCrea 2000: 439f.

²⁰ See *Bṛhatī* ad MS 1.1.24-26 (pp. 348-401, especially pp. 396-397).

Now, on this point, those who understand the blocking of commands say: People, thinking, on the basis of similarity (with prior cases), that (the conclusion of the weaker means of knowledge) has been arrived at, and not seeing any difference, conditioned by an occlusion of memory, speak of a “knowledge of the thing having been arrived at”, just as they speak of a “knowledge of silver” in the case of mother-of-pearl.²¹

The impression that the Veda has told us something which is later displaced in view of a more powerful interpretive *pramāṇa*, like the impression that we have seen silver when only mother-of-pearl is before our eyes, is the result of our failure to grasp the distinction between previously observed cases and the present one. Prabhākara’s theory of *bādha* sets him at odds in important ways with both Śabara and Kumārila and, again, we can clearly see that it is his desire to consistently follow out the implications of the theory of conceptual awareness he developed in response to Dignāga that drives him to part company with his predecessors on this issue.

CONCLUSION

I think it should be clear even from the brief discussion here that the internal chronology and periodization of the Mīmāṃsā text tradition cannot be dealt with in isolation from other developments in the wider stream of Indian philosophical discourse, and that the impetus provided by Dignāga’s work in particular had a powerful impact on the field of Mīmāṃsā in one of the most important periods in its history – one which dramatically effected not only its philosophical doctrines but also its reading, writing, and commentarial practices. Furthermore, it should be clear that it is not possible in the study of Mīmāṃsā to treat in isolation from one another what Ganganatha Jha used to call “philosophical issues” and “Mīmāṃsā issues proper” – that is to say, the specifically ritual and Vedic interpretive problems. These issues are inextricably bound up together in manifold and complex ways, and any attempt to write the history of the discipline must strive to take account of the full range

²¹ Ibid., p. 796: *atredānīm upadeśabādhavido 'bhidadhati | sāmānyataḥ prāptiṃ manvānā viśeṣam apaśyantaḥ smṛtipramoṣanimittam prāptijñānam vyapadiśanti śukti-kāyām iva rajatajñānam* | (Following the interpretation of Prabhākara’s commentator Śālikanāthamiśra, I take *smṛtipramoṣanimittam* adverbially with *vyapadiśanti*, rather than adjectivally with *prāptijñānam*.)

of internal and external factors that shape and constrain changes in the field.

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