

## Pārthasārathi Contra Sucarita: A Critical Survey of the Recent Causal Interpretations of the *Svataḥ Prāmāṇya* Doctrine

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**Abstract:** The short critical survey, which can be considered an addendum to the author's main study dedicated to the Indian epistemological doctrine *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, is devoted to the consideration of two of its most notable recent interpretations, which can be characterized as causal, along with a recent acausal interpretation thereof. It focuses on the epistemology of a medieval representative of the Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā school, Sucaritamīśra, and its critique by another philosopher of the same school, Pārthasārathimīśra, considering that the views of the former had a significant impact on the modern research papers analyzed in this survey. Its main goal consists in demonstrating the falsity and senselessness of the causal interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. That is shown during the analysis of Lawrence McCrea's article on Sucarita and the works of the Russian orientalist L.G. Roman dedicated to the notion of *prāmāṇya* and the doctrine of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. To provide a contrast, a recent acausal interpretation of this doctrine by Nilanjan Das is considered in conclusion. In the former two cases, the distortions of sense and factual errors made by the researchers in their interpretations of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* are analyzed. In the latter, Das's views are compared with the author's own acausal interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. In this context, it is emphasized that to make the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine consistent and single-option, it is necessary to acknowledge the possibility of the factual correspondence between a mind-external object and a cognition, i.e., the correspondence theory of truth, and it is highlighted that the truth of a practical activity entailed by a cognition, according to the correct understanding of this doctrine, is derivative from the truth of this correspondence, which reduces its "pragmatic" elements to the very same correspondence theory. It is concluded that the causal interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is incapable of refuting the acausal interpretation thereof since the latter contains all the necessary elements while being devoid of the flaws of the former.

**Keywords:** epistemology, Indian philosophy, Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā, *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, Sucarita, Pārthasārathi, truth, knowledge, causality, practice

### Introduction

This short survey can be considered an addendum to our typological study of the Indian epistemological doctrine *svataḥ prāmāṇya*<sup>1</sup> caused by the need to analyze a strong tendency of interpreting the latter in a causal fashion, felt in several recent studies. There, we refrained from

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<sup>1</sup> Bandurin M.A. *Svataḥ Prāmāṇya* and Disjunctivism: A Study in Typology. Vox. Философский журнал, No. 38, 2022, pp. 167-E–198-E.

thoroughly discussing this issue since, as can be grasped from its content, we refused to acknowledge the causally understood *svataḥ prāmāṇya* as *svataḥ prāmāṇya* proper. For us, this doctrine makes sense only if it is treated acausally, as it is done by the Mīmāṃsāka Pārthasārathimīśra, as well as by Śaiva Siddhānta and Kashmir Shaivism — but taking into account the fact that we, nevertheless, acknowledge the epistemologies of Prabhākara and Advaita Vedānta, which smartly deemphasize the significance of the issue of the role of causal factors in belief justification, as the full-fledged *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, even though we consider them irrational. Accordingly, by *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, we implicitly meant the acausally understood *svataḥ prāmāṇya* and did not specially examine the causally understood *svataḥ prāmāṇya* at all. However, the tendency to interpret this doctrine in a causal fashion has proved to be stronger than we thought and made itself felt in some recent studies, and it became necessary to consider this issue in more detail. That has primarily caused by the publications of the Russian orientalist L.G. Roman<sup>2</sup> but also involves referring to an older article by Lawrence McCrea<sup>3</sup>, between which we see a certain internal connection that has to do with the person of the medieval Indian philosopher Sucaritamīśra criticized by Pārthasārathi.

But what is so wrong with the causal interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*? After all, at first glance, it is just one among possible interpretations. The fact is that the causal and acausal interpretations of this doctrine are not equal but virtually speak about different things under the same term. Thus, the former has to do with the causal factors that generate the truth of cognitions, whereas the latter relates exclusively to the way of their justification. But don't the causal factors that generate the truth of cognitions play some role in their justification? Theoretically, one can try to discern this role, but such a way of putting the issue does not fit with the meaningful *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine. That is why consistent adherents of its acausal interpretation explicitly deny this role, and researchers of this topic have long distinguished the question about justifying knowledge from the question about the generation of its truth. However, unfortunately, that is not peculiar to all researchers, many of whom do not take this distinction into account at all, even though it is crucial precisely in the context of studying *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. In this regard, one can notice certain gradations: some are unaware of its existence, some ignore it, some discount it, and some, as Dan Arnold does, try to give an acausal interpretation of the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle but do not fully grasp its scale and virtually offer a causal interpretation thereof. All of them can be *de facto* considered adherents of the causal interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. In contrast, some researchers grasp and implicitly acknowledge this distinction, and some explicitly emphasize it. All of them can be practically counted as advocates of the acausal interpretation, especially given that the following pattern can be observed: those who ignore, discount, or are not aware of the distinction under consideration virtually prefer the causal interpretation, whereas those who at least grasp it, as a rule, do not follow their path. A notable exclusion here is a pupil of the renowned Indologist J.N. Mohanty, Tara Chatterjea, who back in 1968 proposed to distinguish between *svataḥ prāmāṇya* as regards apprehension and *svataḥ prāmāṇya* as regards the origination of truth<sup>4</sup> but, at the same time, does not fit well into these two categories of researchers since she stuck to the interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* peculiar to Advaita Vedānta, which does not explicitly deny the role of causal factors that generate the truth of cognitions in their justification but deemphasizes this role in the case of a cognitive error as the consequence of its illusionism. We do not find the

<sup>2</sup> Roman L.G. *Epistemologicheskaya doktrina svataḥ-praman'ya mimamsy* [The Mimamsa's Epistemological Doctrine of Svataḥ-Pramāṇya]. Society: Philosophy, History, Culture. Vol. 4. 2023, pp. 74–83. (In Russian.); Roman L.G. *K voprosu ob interpretacii praman'i* [Prāmāṇya's Interpretation Question]. Voprosy Filosofii. Vol. 8. 2023, pp. 189–196. (In Russian.)

<sup>3</sup> McCrea L. Justification, Credibility and Truth: Sucaritamīśra on Kumārila's Intrinsic Validity. Vienna Journal of South Asian Studies. Vol. 56–57 (2015–2018), pp. 99–116.

<sup>4</sup> Chatterjea T. A Critical Examination of the Theory of Svataḥ-Prāmāṇya, Ph.D Thesis. Calcutta, 1968.

distinction between these two types of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* correct since we consider *svataḥ prāmāṇya* as regards the origination of truth senseless but will rely on it as a tentative historical and philosophical distinction, as it is helpful in formulating the subject matter of this study. Moreover, Chatterjea herself concludes that even though the Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā school, which is of our primary interest here, touches upon the topic of the generation of the truth of knowledge, it ultimately refuses to consider this generation as purely epistemological, thereby virtually acknowledging the senselessness of the respective type of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*.<sup>5</sup>

As for the recent causal interpretations of the doctrine under consideration, taking into account all that has been said, we will first analyze McCrea's article that tries to defend the teaching of one of the representatives of the Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā school, Sucarita, and then proceed to examine two articles by L.G. Roman devoted, respectively, to the term "*prāmāṇya*" and the interpretation of the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine, which was also influenced by the teaching of this medieval philosopher. However, we will not specially focus on her dissertation since we are primarily interested in epistemology, not in a general reconstruction of early Pūrva Mīmāṃsā. Besides, we cannot overlook a decent acausal interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* by Nilanjan Das that appeared in the same year of 2023<sup>6</sup>, whose comparison with the views under consideration and our own approach will allow us to properly conclude this critical survey.

It remains only to make a few preliminary remarks. First of all, they have to do with the terms used. Everything will revolve around the three basic notions, well-known to Indologists: *prāmāṇya*, *yāthārthya*, and *arthakriyā*. By *prāmāṇya*, we understand justification and/or justifiedness, not truth or even validity. *Yāthārthya* is truth in the sense of correspondence between a cognition and a mind-external object. In turn, depending on the context, *arthakriyā* is either practical activity or causal efficiency — but the second meaning of this notion will hardly be of use to us here. Besides, we will proceed from the following general philosophical assumptions. Firstly, from the premise that the factual truth of an object does not cancel the fact that it remains an appearance. We do not know how to deny this basic truth, except by adhering to rigid Kantianism that admits the existence of a "thing-in-itself" that is both distinct from phenomena and unknowable, which, however, has nothing to do with Indian philosophy. Secondly, we see no way to deny that the appearance of truth of a mind-external object, at least purely phenomenologically, implies the appearance of its correspondence to a cognition. Perhaps there are opponents of the correspondence theory of truth so radical as to disagree even with this assumption — but to corroborate their views, they have to offer purely phenomenological arguments without any ontological implications. Finally, we assume that the cognizable attributes of a mind-external object, including the appearance of its truth, relate to the object itself and, in the case of true direct knowledge, are an integral part of the corresponding cognition. This assumption stems from our disjunctivist and relationalist framework. We are now ready to proceed to the main part of the survey.

### Lawrence McCrea's Attempt to Defend Sucarita's Epistemology

McCrea's article on Sucarita was published earlier than our typological study of the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine, but we did not specially dwell on it there because we considered both Sucarita's views and the attempt to defend them by this Indologist odd. This article pursues two goals: to defend Uṃveka (Umbeka), another representative of Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā who lived in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, from supposedly exaggerated criticism from John Taber and Dan Arnold, who blamed him for virtual advocating of *parataḥ prāmāṇya*, and to justify Sucarita *vis-à-vis* Pārthasārathi who

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<sup>5</sup> Chatterjea T. A Critical Examination... p. 114.

<sup>6</sup> Das N. Knowledge and Independent Checks in Mīmāṃsā. Oxford Studies in Epistemology, Vol. 7 / ed. by: T. Gendler, J. Hawthorne, and J. Chung. Oxford, 2023, pp. 15–47.

allegedly did not fully grasp the essence of his teaching. All these three medieval philosophers were followers and commentators of the founder of the Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā school Kumārila who lived at the turn of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries and was the first systematizer of the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine. In an effort to purge the latter of false interpretations, Pārthasārathi criticized the views of both Uṃveka and Sucarita, but the dates of Pārthasārathi and Sucarita are constantly shifting "rightwards" thanks to the efforts of Indologists, and, most interestingly, Sucarita has managed to leave his critic behind in this regard. Thus, Pārthasārathi has gradually "moved" from the 9<sup>th</sup> century to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and Sucarita from the 10<sup>th</sup> century to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Such a state of affairs gives reason to doubt the latter dating and to admit that Sucarita still had died before the beginning of Pārthasārathi's active phase. If we add Gāgā Bhaṭṭa, who lived much later, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, to these four, we get the five most prominent epistemologists of Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā.

However that may be, no one, including McCrea, doubts that it was Sucarita's views that Pārthasārathi criticized, so we should focus on the differences between them. McCrea himself believes that they are so significant that Pārthasārathi's epistemology should be included in one category with Uṃveka's teaching, different from another category represented by the epistemologies of Sucarita and, for that matter, Kumārila himself. That is a highly nontrivial statement since the doctrine of Pārthasārathi is, on the contrary, usually contrasted with that of Uṃveka. He makes it on the grounds that both advocate the correspondence theory of truth as opposed to Sucarita, who denies the very possibility of the factual correspondence between an object and a cognition. All that is in many respects true, but is everything so simple? As a matter of fact, both Pārthasārathi and Sucarita claim the same thing, namely that the appearance of the correspondence between a mind-external object and a cognition is justified by virtue of the reality of the very cognition, in which it is given, provided it is not invalidated and has formed an introspective determinateness — *nīścaya*. That is the very *svataḥ prāmāṇya* we are talking about, which proceeds from the fact a mere introspective determinateness, i.e., the arising of a cognition, is both a necessary and sufficient condition for justifying the apparent truth of an object given in it. And given that an introspective determinateness also necessarily entails some practical activity of the cognizing subject, it can be said that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* virtually equates the notions of *prāmāṇya*, *nīścaya*, apparent *yāthārthya*, and *arthakriyā*, making them different manifestations of a mere arising of any cognition.

What, then, was the point of disagreement between the two philosophers? There was one such point only: Pārthasārathi emphasized that a *nīścaya* is capable of entailing *prāmāṇya* in the sense of factual *yāthārthya*, i.e., the factual correspondence between an object and a cognition, whereas Sucarita denied that very possibility. In other words, he denied the possibility of factual *yāthārthya* and considered only apparent *yāthārthya* possible and necessary, believing that in epistemology, we can and should be content with it alone. At first glance, there is a kernel of good sense in that: after all, if a cognition is justified simply by virtue of a mere introspective determinateness caused by its arising, where is the guarantee that all that ensures that an object indeed corresponds to it? However, the matter is more complicated than it might seem. In fact, there is another similarity between these two epistemologists, which McCrea somewhat downplayed: they both assumed that absolutely all cognitions without exception, both true and false, must be considered justified. In this respect, they oppose the already mentioned Uṃveka and Gāgā Bhaṭṭa, who believed that only true cognitions deserve to be called justified.<sup>7</sup> Such discord occurred because Kumārila showed some ambiguity in this matter, in one fragment stating that the subject of his investigation concerns the source of justification of any cognition, and in another, that it concerns the source of justification of true cognitions. On closer scrutiny, one finds no blatant

<sup>7</sup> Chatterjea T. A Critical Examination... p. 88.

contradiction here, as a true cognition necessarily falls into the category of any cognition. However, this ambiguity still haunts those researchers who cannot comprehend how a false cognition can be considered justified.

It must be said, though, that McCrea is not among the latter, and his attempt to distance Pārthasārathi and Sucarita from each other is partly due merely to his conviction that the epistemology of the latter fits better with the thesis about the justifiedness of any cognition. From our perspective, that is a mistake, and Pārthasārathi would perhaps agree with us. Let us start with the most general considerations. If we assume that any cognition is justified, to be consistent, we must comprehend it as abstractly as possible, i.e., try to grasp the nature of a cognition as such. That, in particular, implies that we have to acknowledge even sheer nonsense on the part of any cognizing subject as justified. Thus, say, if a clinical lunatic claims to be Napoleon I, we will have to admit that his belief is justified. Sucarita's theory, which admits the impossibility of factual *yāthārthya*, is indeed capable of doing that, but the problem is that we must also explain why the belief of this "Napoleon" is false, and it is here where its inconsistency becomes obvious. The fact is that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* can only understand falsity as invalidatedness, and the latter must be objective or, better to say, ontological. In the example under consideration, the "Napoleon" cannot be aware of it insofar as he is necessarily convinced of the opposite. Who is aware of it, then? Sucarita could clarify in response that it is realized only by those who have undergone the act of the invalidation of the introspective determinateness that implied the appearance that that person is Napoleon I. However, if justifiedness is reduced to an introspective determinateness, and the factual correspondence between an object and a cognition is impossible in principle, it becomes difficult to comprehend what exactly should be considered invalidated, and what for. At best, all that remains here is to claim that the perspective of this sick person can be ignored, but such a solution will be inconsistent, as the introspective determinateness of the "Napoleon" will not dissipate in even the slightest degree, and it is it that is considered responsible for the justification. So we will just get back to where we started. Worse, all that will cast doubt on the justifiedness of the beliefs of those who rightly believe that he is not Napoleon since, in both cases, there are persistent manifestations of introspective determinateness, and the significance of invalidatedness is downplayed.

Sucarita thus finds himself in an odd position: he is capable of explaining why any cognition is justified but is incapable of clarifying the exact meaning in which some of them should be considered false. The most interesting thing here is that he does not try to abandon the very notion of truth at all and does not question the fact that cognitions can be true and false. All that suggests that he is trying to formulate some alternative theory of truth but is incapable of proposing a theory of error that would correspond to it. McCrea, however, is not confused by all that since, from his perspective, the refusal to acknowledge the possibility of factual *yāthārthya* allows us to consider cognitions true or false on the sole ground that they seem so.<sup>8</sup> We do not see how that can solve the issue with the "Napoleon", especially given that, contra McCrea, such a refusal would here mean not bringing us closer to Humean skepticism, the necessary preconditions for which are absent in this case, but, on the contrary, making a very specific judgment about the nature of things-in-themselves.

What is the main reason for such an odd theory? In fact, it is pointed out by Pārthasārathi himself, but McCrea does not attach due importance to his arguments. Everything is quite predictable: Sucarita offers a causal interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. Chatterjea also points that out, and even not without approval.<sup>9</sup> On closer scrutiny, one can find out that Pārthasārathi puts forward roughly the same arguments against Sucarita as he does against Uṃveka, and it is particularly important for him neither that the former denies the possibility of factual *yāthārthya*,

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<sup>8</sup> McCrea L. Justification, Credibility and Truth... p. 112.

<sup>9</sup> Chatterjea T. A Critical Examination... p. 97.

while the latter acknowledges it, nor that Sucarita proceeds from the justifiedness of any cognition, and Uṃveka does not. The main point for him is the thesis of both philosophers that the truth of a cognition allegedly arises intrinsically. In this case, regardless of whether factual *yāthārthya* is acknowledged or not, the result will be the same: at the moment of a possible cognitive error, the truth of a cognition would transform into falsity, and that, from Pārthasārathi's perspective, would be a contradiction in terms.<sup>10</sup> He further clarifies this point in his second objection to Sucarita. McCrea translates it to the effect that an introspective determinateness cannot be destroyed by an invalidating cognition, as Sucarita requires, since it always perishes of its own accord, and therefore, he finds the argument weak.<sup>11</sup> One can immediately begin to smell a rat here since it is hardly possible to claim something like that about an introspective determinateness: experience suggests that it is either invalidated or temporarily forgotten but does not perish of its own accord. That is because even if it is true that any cognition is transitory, a *nīścaya* still necessarily gets into memory, from which it is, to put it mildly, difficult to erase. In the corresponding fragment, everything rests on the word "*vinaśvaratvāt*", the literal understanding of which changes its meaning to almost the opposite.<sup>12</sup> On closer scrutiny, though, one can find that it is devoted to false cognitions only. With this in mind, its meaning can be conveyed as follows: an introspective determinateness formed by a false cognition, contra Sucarita, is false from the outset and, therefore, necessarily perishable (*vinaśvaratvāt*) when confronted with external invalidating factors. Then comes a conclusion that simply restates the same point in a different way, and then attempts are made to find similar statements in Kumārila's treatise. "*Vinaśvaratvāt*" in the sense that any *nīścaya* supposedly perishes of its own accord, does not fit with this context altogether.

The moral of the entire controversy under consideration is thus as follows. If a cognition is factually true, it cannot be invalidated since truth is inherently irrefutable, and only an error, i.e., the appearance of factual truth, can be subject to invalidation, and not in terms of causal transformation. A cup on a table may be a transitory object, but the fact that it was on the table at a particular time is absolute. In this respect, Pārthasārathi does not essentially differ from either Kumārila or Prabhākara, and all three can, for that matter, complement Plato, who denied the very possibility of relative truth. Accordingly, only a cognition that is false *ab initio* can be invalidated. However, to ensure all that in the context of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, it is necessary to acknowledge that, firstly, factual *yāthārthya* is possible, and, secondly, that it is justified in a completely acausal way, i.e., without any, even purely phenomenological, reference to causal factors generating the truth of knowledge. In other words, we have to acknowledge the fundamental inability of a particular cognition to discern the source of its origin at the moment of its arising — this is the only way to ensure proper abstraction in understanding the nature of cognitions necessary to explain why any of them can be considered justified. McCrea may object here that such a critique has nothing to do with the epistemology of Sucarita, as he denied the possibility of factual truth altogether. However, that is not important for Pārthasārathi because even given such a denial, Sucarita's theory admits that truth still can possibly transform into falsity, and that is unacceptable even from a purely phenomenological viewpoint and implies a causal interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, which makes truth an attribute of a cognition rather than that of an object. For our part, we would add here that, from our perspective, it is impossible to defend an interpretation like that of Pārthasārathi, as well as to solve the issue with the "Napoleon", firstly, without resorting to disjunctivism and, secondly, without distinguishing between the reality of knowledge and its truth. However, we have already written a lot about that, so let us turn to the works of L.G. Roman.

<sup>10</sup> McCrea L. Justification, Credibility and Truth... p. 108.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>12</sup> Nyāyaratnamālā of Pārthasārathi Miśra with the Commentary Nāyakarātnam by Śrī Rāmānujācārya / ed. by A. Subrahmanya Shastri. Varanasi, 1982, p. 46.

***Svataḥ Prāmāṇya* as a "Subtle Pragmatism": the Interpretation by L.G. Roman**

It is fair to say, though, that, perhaps, no philosopher tries to offer a purely causal interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* to the effect that it would have nothing whatsoever to do with the question about the way of justifying cognitions. Those whom we call proponents of the causal interpretation rather substitute the question of the justification of knowledge for the problem of causal factors that generate its truth. In contrast, however, as we have seen, a purely acausal interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is possible and actually advocated, and we would make the following rating of the medieval philosophers and schools according to the degree of drifting away from it. Pārthasārathi, Śaiva Siddhānta, and Kashmir Shaivism would rank here first, Kumārila second, Prabhākara and Advaita Vedānta third, and Uṃveka, Sucarita, and Gāgā Bhaṭṭa forth. Even though this list is incomplete, it contains enough paradigm cases to help us rank any other philosopher. However, L.G. Roman, as far as we can tell, has taken another step towards a causal interpretation compared to the central figure of the preceding section, Sucarita. That is largely due to the fact that she has stuck to the pragmatist interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* proposed by Karl Potter, which is surprising in itself, given that it never seems to have had any explicit adherents at all, and everyone has basically been doing nothing but criticizing it for forty years. At the same time, Roman has not yet made any special effort to defend it from this critique.

Potter's undertaking, though, was caused by the necessity to interpret not so much *svataḥ prāmāṇya* as *prāmāṇya* as such. Roman is well aware of that and even devoted a separate article to this topic.<sup>13</sup> The latter is interesting in that it draws a correct overall conclusion from a false premise, namely that the dilemma between the correspondence theory and the pragmatic interpretation of truth does not have to have an exact counterpart in Indian philosophy.<sup>14</sup> We would say that this dilemma arises only when one understands *svataḥ prāmāṇya* wrongly, but unfortunately, Roman herself did not rely on her conclusion during her own interpretation of this doctrine. As for the false premise, it has to do with the fact that J.N. Mohanty, contra Roman, did not seek to find a common denominator for the controversy over *prāmāṇya* at all but, on the contrary, put forward the thesis about the incommensurability between the principles of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* and *parataḥ prāmāṇya* implying that *prāmāṇya* in the two cases should be understood in different senses, albeit within the correspondence theory, which serves here not as a common denominator but, rather, as a basic implication. But even if we admit for the sake of the argument that he indeed tried to seek it, he still could not succeed insofar as he mistakenly equated *prāmāṇya* with truth. It was against this thesis that Potter spoke out, trying to offer a universal interpretation of this notion as workability. However, it led to the conclusion about the alleged irrelevance of the very notion of truth to Indian epistemology.<sup>15</sup> Roman questioned the possibility of a universal interpretation of *prāmāṇya* but, nevertheless, agreed with that conclusion.

However that may be, it is *svataḥ prāmāṇya* that interests us here, and in the preceding section, we already had the opportunity to see that even within Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā, not to mention Mīmāṃsā or Indian philosophy in general, thinkers have significantly differed in their understanding of *prāmāṇya*. Therefore, contra both Mohanty and Potter as well as Roman, from a purely historical and philosophical viewpoint, the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine cannot be considered as relying on a single interpretation of this notion, and it remains only to try to find out which of them is more correct from the epistemological perspective. In this regard, all three took the wrong path, as the question is neither about contrasting the correspondency theory of truth with the

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<sup>13</sup> Roman L.G. *K voprosu ob interpretacii praman'i...* pp. 189–196.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 195.

<sup>15</sup> Bandurin M.A. *Svataḥ Prāmāṇya...* pp. 173-E–175-E.

pragmatic one nor about the necessity of finding a special sphere for *svataḥ prāmāṇya* where it would be alternatively true but about why factual *yāthārthya* is necessary to make this doctrine consistent and single-option, and how to ensure it in these conditions. Still, when it comes to its adherents, it is arguably Sucarita's theory that fits with Potter's interpretation best. That is perhaps what explains a certain sympathy for this philosopher on Roman's part. In particular, she relies on a well-known fragment from his main treatise, trying to emphasize that even mistakenly cognized silver, taken for the true one, is seen as conducive to a useful activity, whereas a doubting consciousness is worthless.<sup>16</sup> That, she believes, can help her corroborate the interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* as a "subtle pragmatism", according to which the truth of knowledge is intertwined with its efficiency, and knowledge must work so that not be meaningless. But to whom exactly it is seen that a mistakingly cognized silver is conducive to a useful activity, and where is a useful activity here in the first place? Can't we then say that the "Napoleon" from a hospital ward is also engaged in it? Suppose it had seemed to us that there was a piece of silver lying on the ground, but when we tried to pick it up, we found that it was a mere nacre. We had not done any useful work because we had fallen victim to an epistemic error. The situation would have looked more optimistic if we, conversely, had found silver instead of a shell, but even in that case, our activity would have to be considered erroneous. Such an interpretation of the cognitive process naturally brings to mind Schopenhauer, who blamed Hegel for the implication that, if his philosophy were correct, every brain phantasm would be at once true and real — in the case under consideration, it would be useful as well, though.

Unfortunately, Roman did not fully understand Sucarita's theory on that point because she preferred the translation of this fragment made by Arnold. McCrea proposed a more accurate translation thereof, whose meaning comes down to the following: it is observed that both the one who mistakenly perceived silver and the one who perceived it correctly, as a consequence, immediately begin to engage in a certain practical activity.<sup>17</sup> It thus immediately becomes clear, firstly, that all that is seen from the outside, and, secondly, that the true and false cases are distinguished here deliberately. In other words, even Sucarita acknowledged the possibility of both true and false apparent *yāthārthya* and, therefore, could speak of a true or false *arthakriyā* — another thing is that even a true apparent *yāthārthya* did not, for him, imply factual *yāthārthya*. Besides, as we remember, any cognition is, for him, justified and, consequently, entails some kind of *arthakriyā*. Accordingly, in this respect, he differs little from other adherents of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, who proceed from the fact that a false cognition necessarily leads to an erroneous practical activity. As an example, it is enough to recall a prominent Kaśmir Śaiva philosopher, Somananda, who emphasized both that the world of everyday practical life as such is false and that, at the same time, any cognition within it entails some practical activity.<sup>18</sup> Thus, contra Roman, knowledge, firstly, can afford to be meaningless, secondly, it always works, even when it is meaningless or doubtful, and thirdly, it is not always conducive to a useful activity. And, of course, nothing prevents us from acknowledging the necessity of factual *yāthārthya*. Then, we will find out that the truth of a practical activity is derived from the truth of the correspondence between a mind-external object and a cognition. Only such an interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* can be considered fully correct and consistent, but it no longer fits with pragmatism, even a "subtle" one, since the correspondence theory of truth plays a crucial role in it. Given all that, it is of no use to dwell on the point that American pragmatism is a post-Kantian theory, and when we try to interpret it along spiritual lines and apply it to *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, we go beyond the transcendental paradigm and either, at best, reduce pragmatism to Sucarita's doctrine or, at worst, subordinate it to the direct realism it fights

<sup>16</sup> Roman L.G. *Epistemologicheskaya doktrina svatah-praman'ya mimansy...* p. 81.

<sup>17</sup> McCrea L. *Justification, Credibility and Truth...* p. 107.

<sup>18</sup> Bandurin M.A. *Epistemological Implications of the Pratyabhijñā Doctrine*. Vox. Философский журнал, No. 42, 2023, p. 157-E.



with, i.e., deprive it of its meaning.

### Wrapping It Up: An Acausal Interpretation of *Svataḥ Prāmāṇya* by Nilanjan Das

Recalling Napoleon once again, one cannot but catch oneself thinking that in the matter of interpreting *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, it is also, at times, but one step from the sublime to the ridiculous. Thus, a too literal understanding of one word changes the meaning of Pārthasārathi's argument to almost the opposite, and a loose translation of one fragment significantly distorts Sucarita's views. All that goes hand in hand with a strange aspiration on the part of Orientalists to "return to Kumārila" at all costs, which is reminiscent of the famous motto "back to Kant". It should not be forgotten here that even though one indeed can return to Kant, that still will not solve the causal problem that Schulze et al. drew attention to. Similarly, one can return to Kumārila, but that will not make his theory less ambiguous and contain fewer logic gaps. In other words, in this matter, we must first look for an epistemological rather than a purely historical and philosophical meaning. After reading our analysis, someone may even want to return to Uṃveka, but we must immediately warn them that the refusal to acknowledge the justifiedness of any cognition and the admission that the justification of a cognition depends on the truth that allegedly arises from that very cognition are two sides of the same coin in the form of the causal interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* — which was virtually acknowledged by Uṃveka himself — and the latter is false and senseless, even if we agree that it still cannot be considered *parataḥ prāmāṇya*.

However, the good news is that successful attempts at the acausal interpretation of this doctrine are also in place. In this connection, it is impossible not to say a few words about a study by Nilanjan Das, who clearly made a step forward in this respect compared to the works of Taber and Arnold. His approach is conceptually different from ours, but we do not see any significant discrepancies between them — although it is noticeable that this author studiously avoids delving into ontological issues and tries to remain at the level of abstract epistemology. He sees the main tendency of the Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā epistemology in the refusal to acknowledge the necessity of the pedigree condition on the justification of knowledge since to justify the latter, it is enough to take into account only the accuracy condition, i.e., *yāthārthya*, whose appearance is characteristic of a cognition itself.<sup>19</sup> For our part, we prefer to speak of the denial of the existence of a justificative ontological correlate of cognitions. That is a virtual acknowledgment of the correctness of Pārthasārathi's approach, which makes a clear distinction between the justification of knowledge and referring to sources of its origination. At the same time, Das rightly assumes that even from Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā's perspective, a cognition must form a determinateness that is introspective, thereby rejecting the false belief that this school allegedly denied the possibility of any introspection whatsoever and, on the strength of this, should be considered a kind of epistemic externalism. Besides, he correctly interprets *prāmāṇya* as justification, not truth or validity. He thus shows that contra McCrea, this term is applicable not only to the doctrine of Sucarita but also to the teachings of those who acknowledge factual *yāthārthya*.

Further, he thoroughly examines Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā's arguments against *parataḥ prāmāṇya*, but that lies beyond the scope of this survey. However, to systematize the conceptual toolset applied in this critique, he formulates two interesting principles. According to the first, a subject can rationally conduct a practical activity based on some appearance only provided that they already consider the latter as knowledge, which makes the so-called confirmatory action aimed at justifying it a performative contradiction.<sup>20</sup> According to the second, once the above has been done, if the subject wants to remain rational, they are required not to doubt this knowledge until its possible

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<sup>19</sup> Das N. Knowledge and Independent Checks in Mīmāṃsā... p. 21.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

invalidation insofar as knowledge is a condition for the possibility of any activity.<sup>21</sup> There is nothing new in them, but they vividly demonstrate an attitude of the school under consideration that is both anti-Cartesian and anti-Gettierist. We would also emphasize here that a practical activity can be performed only insofar as factual *yāthārthya* is admitted, and its truth will always be derivative from the latter. So if we, say, dig our entire vegetable garden all over in search of worms for fishing and do not find them, our activity will be erroneous, even if it would be of some use for us to have plowed beds — simply because there were no worms there, despite our conviction to the contrary.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, another reason why it is irrational to doubt knowledge is that truth is irrefutable by definition. Everything considered, we can conclude that the causal interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is incapable of refuting the acausal interpretation thereof since the latter contains all the necessary elements while being devoid of the flaws of the former.

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<sup>21</sup> Das N. Knowledge and Independent Checks in Mīmāṃsā... p. 40.

<sup>22</sup> Bandurin M.A. Epistemological Implications... p. 160-E.