Svataḥ Prāmāṇya and Disjunctivism:
A Study in Typology

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Abstract: The study presents the broad outlines for a relationalist interpretation of the Indian epistemological doctrine *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. Due to the inadequacy of the main western interpretations thereof, the paper's approach can be considered an inference to the best explanation. Its main part is devoted to the typologization of various epistemological doctrines based on the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle in terms of strong and weak disjunctivism. Three paradigm cases of strong disjunctivism and a special variety of weak disjunctivism have thus been identified in Indian epistemology, which allowed us to conclude that strong disjunctivism constituted one of its general paradigms.

Keywords: epistemology, Indian philosophy, disjunctivism, truth, knowledge, relationalism, *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, *svataḥ prakāśa,* Kumārila, Pārthasārathi.

A reader familiar with classical Indian philosophy may notice that the basic principles of strong disjunctivism articulated in our previous essays[1] have certain similarities with an Indian epistemological doctrine called *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. It should be noted from the outset that this observation would not be ungrounded, as *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, when properly interpreted, constitutes one of the two basic ontological principles of strong disjunctivism, namely, the denial of the existence of a justificative ontological correlate of cognitions. However, strong disjunctivism consists of at least six components — three main claims, two basic ontological principles, and a theory of appearance[2] — and so it becomes impossible to completely identify it with the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine. On the other hand, one can immediately suspect that various Indian teachings based on the latter must imply some form of disjunctivism in their epistemologies, and some of them could be typologically considered strong disjunctivism. Justification of this assumption is the main aim of this study. But to achieve it, it is necessary to attain several objectives, the first being a general analysis of the essence of the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle, along with an overview of the teachings which epistemologies are based on it.

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[1] M. A. Bandurin. Strong and Weak Disjunctivism: A Short Comparative Essay. Vox. Философский журнал, No. 29, 2020, pp. 66-E–91-E; Idem. The Noumenal Morass: Post-Kantian Representationalism and Its Relationalist Critique in the Light of Strong Disjunctivism. Vox. Философский журнал, No. 34, 2021, pp. 20-E–48-E.

[2] Which can be considered the third basic ontological principle.

I. A General Overview of the *Svataḥ Prāmāṇya* Doctrine and the Indian Teachings Based on It

Svataḥ prāmāṇya is an epistemological doctrine of classical Indian philosophy, which name is usually translated as "intrinsic validity" or "intrinsic certainty".[3] It should be noted from the outset that the doctrine in question is not a systematic set of principles but a basic principle shared by the epistemologies of various schools (*darśanas*), teachings, and currents. It is also necessary to keep in mind that it cannot be reduced to any of these epistemologies, as it serves only as their general paradigm. As for the term itself, it should be admitted that a concise translation thereof into European languages is hardly possible. The widespread variants are at least too vague, and the possible replacement of "intrinsic" for "*a priori*" makes them completely confusing, as *svataḥ prāmāṇya* does not split the truth into necessary and contingent and is incompatible with Kantianism. As for the more general definition of the term, it seems impossible without a prior interpretation of the doctrine itself. From our perspective, it can be formulated as follows: the inherent justifiedness of any cognition as regards a mind-external object[4], which is a constituent thereof. Accordingly, we will keep this definition in mind but leave the term itself without translation.

The classical formulation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is associated with the names of famous Indian philosophers Kumārila Bhaṭṭa and his disciple[5] Prabhākara Miśra who were the representatives of the Pūrva Mīmāṃsā school lived at the turn of the 8th century AD. In total, there are six orthodox schools (*darśanas*) of classical Indian philosophy, which are usually grouped in pairs due to certain proximity: Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya and Yóga of Patañjali, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. Each of them is constituted by one or more basic texts and a set of commentaries and subcommentaries[6] thereof. However, it is the latter two schools that have the greatest differences, both internal and between themselves. Indeed, their main task is the exegesis of the Veda, but the former school focuses on the general justification of the authority of these scriptures and their ritualistic aspects, while the latter on their gnostic aspects. It can be said that Mīmāṃsā primarily focuses on the main body of the Veda, whereas Vedānta on its "end", i.e., the Upanishads.[7] However, the matter is more complicated, as there are also serious divergencies within these schools. In particular, all the Vedānta teachings can be divided into three categories: dualistic, dualistic-cum-nondualistic, and nondualistic.[8] As for Mīmāṃsā, due to a particular interpretation of the traditional texts, Prabhākara became the founder of a separate current within this school — Prabhākara Mīmāṃsā — which began to be distinguished from the

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[3] See, e.g., D. Arnold. Intrinsic Validity Reconsidered: A Sympathetic Study of the Mīmāṃsaka Inversion of Buddhist Epistemology. Journal of Indian Philosophy, Vol. 29, Issue. 5–6, December 2001, pp. 589–675; *Indijskaya filosofiya. Enciklopediya. Otv. red. M. T. Stepanyants* [Indian Philosophy: An Encyclopedia, ed. by. M. T. Stepanyants]. Moscow, 2009, p. 739. (In Russian.)

[4] One may say, to a thing-in-itself.

[5] According to the traditional version.

[6] Kumārila and Prabhākara were precisely the sub-commentators of *Mīmāṃsā-sūtra-bhāṣya* of Śabara, who, in turn, was the commentator of the basic *Mīmāṁsā Sūtra* of Jaimini.

[7] Accordingly, the Vedānta school is also called Uttara Mīmāṃsā, i.e., the Second Mīmāṃsā, in contrast to Pūrva Mīmāṃsā.

[8] We deliberately avoid the more convenient term "monism" when translating the word "advaita" because we believe it is applicable exclusively in the context of modern philosophy.

Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā[9] of Kumārila's followers. It is important in this regard that one of these divergencies was related precisely to the interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*.

All of the above six *darśanas* are commonly called orthodox (*āstika*) since they recognize the authority of the Veda. Moreover, it is not uncommon to consider only these schools as *darśanas*. The narrowness of such an approach is obvious, as it can be of the utmost importance only for those who believe the Veda to be the ultimate truth. That is why the term "*darśana*" began to be applied broadly and denote any philosophical school as early as in the Middle Ages. In particular, *Sarva-darśana-saṅgraha*, the first encyclopedia of Indian philosophies compiled in the 14th century AD by an Advaita Vedānta follower Madhava, distinguishes sixteen *darśanas*.[10] Therefore, from a philosophical perspective, other grounds for the typology of Indian teachings seem much more significant, namely, *mokṣa*, theism, and *Ātman*. Thus, if the main goal of a particular school, teaching, or current is liberation from *saṃsāra* (*mokṣa*), it is often designated "soteriological" in oriental studies. This term should be put in quotation marks since it is a derivative of a Greek word meaning "salvation", while *mokṣa* has nothing to do with the Christian idea of the salvation of the soul, which should strive to get to heaven forever. On the contrary, for followers of the "soteriological" teachings, the eternal stay of a soul in heaven or hell is an impossible hypothesis, and the desire for a mere improvement of *karma* instead of complete liberation from *saṃsāra* is a false and mundane goal. The teachings of this group include Sāṅkhya, Yóga of Patañjali, Vedānta, Tantrism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Mīmāṃsā, on the contrary, aims to get to heaven, since the Veda, which authority this school serves to defend, contains an injunction to perform a particular ritual, presumably capable of ensuring such an achievement.

Taking this fact, along with the overall extremely conservative orientation of the school in question, into account, many who begin to get acquainted with its philosophy are surprised to find out that it is atheistic. In this regard, there may even be a suspicion that this so-called atheism actually disguises polytheism or paganism. However, things are not that simple, and it indeed turns out that Mīmāṃsā is closer to atheism in the common understanding of this term than it may initially seem. The fact is that its followers tried to reduce the Veda to a manual for the performance of the above *Agnihotra* sacrifice, and the Vedic gods to the names used in the scriptures and capable of bringing certain effects attributed to these gods — not because of their existence, but thanks to a special causal function hidden in the language itself.[11] So the atheistic and demythologizing tendency of this school goes further than, say, the one of the ancient Greeks.[12] It goes without saying that Mīmāṃsā cannot do without the admission of supersensible aspects of reality, such as *karma*, *Ātman*, or universals. Accordingly, if we insist that atheism is not just a denial of the existence of God or gods but the supersensible as such, then this school, along with Sāṅkhya, Buddhism, and Jainism, could not be considered atheistic in the full sense of the term, and only materialism would be eligible for this title in India. But in this case, atheism itself will be indistinguishable from materialism, positivism, or scientism, which will

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[9] Generally speaking, "bhaṭṭa" is an honorary title awarded to learned Brahmins, but it could become a surname.

[10] See Madhava. Sarva Darsana Samgraha: Review of the Different Systems of Hindu Philosophy. Translated by A. E. Gouth and E. B. Cowell. New Delhi, 1987.

[11] See, e.g., F. Clooney. What's a god? The quest for the right understanding of *devatā* in Brāhmanical ritual theory (*mīmāṃsā*). International Journal of Hindu Studies, Issue 1, 1997, pp. 337–385.

[12] Here, however, one cannot disregard the fact that Plato and Kumārila are separated by more than a millennium.

deprive it of independent significance and only confuse terminology. So, if we want to develop truly universal definitions suitable for analyzing any world teaching, Indian philosophy cannot be disregarded — as the situation with the term "atheism" clearly shows.

But even if we assume that Mīmāṃsā, Sāṅkhya, Buddhism, and Jainism are indeed atheistic, it would still be impossible to deny that numerous other schools of Indian philosophy recognize *Īśvara*, i.e., God, and many will argue that they certainly have to do with pure religion and theology. We cannot address this delicate issue in detail and have to limit ourselves to a short remark. If we try to give a broad picture of Indian philosophy, we can say that its identity is determined by the three doctrines: of *karma*, *Ātman*, and *Īśvara*. Theoretically, the presence of any of them is enough to understand that we are concerned with an Indian teaching. However, in practice, things are not that simple, as these doctrines are not isolated. Thus, while one can try to do with a sole doctrine of *karma* and deny both *Ātman* and *Īśvara*, as Buddhism did, it would no longer be possible to do with one doctrine of *Ātman* without recognizing the reality of *karma*, although one could still try to deny *Īśvara* in that case. According to the same principle, those who recognize *Īśvara* cannot do without the doctrine of *Ātman* and *karma*. Thus, even if we translate the term "*Īśvara*" as "God", the difference from the approaches of non-Indian religions and theologies should be obvious here. Indeed, if we take, for example, Christianity, which has had a huge impact on European philosophy, we will see just the opposite, namely the admission of God in the absence of the doctrine of *Ātman* and *karma*.[13] In contrast, *Īśvara* is primarily considered a *karma* controlling subject, often acting jointly with lower deities residing in *saṃsāra* along with humans and other living beings. Accordingly, all the Indian teachings can be divided into four groups: denying all the three doctrines (materialism), admitting only *karma* (Buddhism), admitting *Ātman* and *karma* (Mīmāṃsā, Sāṅkhya, and Jainism), and theistic (Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Yóga of Patañjali, Vedānta, and Tantrism).

At this point, we come to perhaps the main polemical component of classical Indian philosophy, namely the discussion between *ātmavāda* and *ānatmavāda*, i.e., the doctrines that recognize the existence of the *Ātman* and the teachings denying it. Since it was conducted in the "all *contra* Buddhists and materialists" format, it vividly demonstrates the secondary importance of the division into orthodox and unorthodox schools. In this regard, it is important to recall Tantrism in the first place, which has always acted as a united front with Brahmanism against Buddhism and contributed to the expelling of the latter from India. It must be noted that "Tantrism" is perhaps the most unfortunate term in orientalism[14] since, at the dawn of the study of this current, the most significant aspects thereof escaped the purview of researchers, whereas various kinds of clichés and stereotypes came to the fore and began to be overcome only in recent decades. Meanwhile, Tantrism is basically simply a commitment to a particular corpus of sacred texts — Agamas, or Tantras — that exist independently of the Veda[15] and, from the point

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[13] If we, in turn, consider modern philosophy, we will not find in it — even though the subject has come to the fore there — a teaching decidedly similar to ātmavāda, not least due to the absence of the doctrine of *karma* in it. However, for the same reason, a pronounced ānatmavāda is not peculiar to it as well.

[14] A. Padoux. What Do We Mean by Tantrism? The Roots of Tantra, ed. by K. A. Harper and R. L. Brown. Albany, 2002, p. 17.

[15] It should be noted that all the schools of Indian philosophy, except Buddhism and materialism, directly or indirectly rely on the traditions that have no historical founders. The different approach of Buddhism partly allowed it to become one of the world religions but at the same time became one of the reasons why it was resisted in India itself.

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of view of their consistent adherents, are considered the highest scriptures belonging to the category of "revelation".[16] Otherwise put, Tantrists recognize the authority of the Veda only insofar as it does not contradict their own traditions.[17] The matter is complicated by the fact that, on the one hand, Tantrism is a theistic trend, and, on the other, there were a huge number of Agamas that can be divided into three categories: dualistic, dualistic-cum-nondualistic, and nondualistic. Taking this into account, it is reasonable from a historical and philosophical perspective to deny the existence of Tantrism as a kind of unity, as its essential aspects would thereby not suffer, and unnecessary eclecticism would be avoided. Indeed, three currents are usually distinguished in Hindu Tantrism: Śaivism, Śaktism, and Vaisnavism. Each of them is based on a certain set of Agamas, which greatly differ in terms of content. Besides, there is great diversity within these currents. Accordingly, we should consider not Tantrism in general but Tantric Śaivism, Śaktism, and Tantric Vaisnavism and understand by Tantrism the factor that distinguishes these currents from their possible Brahmanical counterparts. Here, however, it is important not to go to the other extreme. The point is not that there were some Vedic or native cults of this or that deity, to which Tantrism was later added; on the contrary, reliance on certain Agamas determines the very essence of these currents. So, the differentiating factor between them should be sought in the Agamas themselves, which once again testifies to the substantial heterogeneity of the latter, further enhanced by the presence of three additional categories that determine the differences between the schools within each current. Thus, in particular, there are six philosophical schools of Tantric Śaivism, each based on a certain set of Śaiva Agamas belonging to one of three categories.[18] Accordingly, it is philosophically incorrect to think about Tantrism as a kind of historically formed organic unity and *a fortiori* to reduce it to Śaktism.

This lengthy introduction to the general typology of the schools of classical Indian philosophy was necessary because we would like to draw attention to several more grounds — this time epistemological — for their differentiation and, at the same time, as far as it is possible, embrace their entire totality, not limiting ourselves to only six orthodox *darśanas* and Buddhism. First of all, it is the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle itself. The schools which epistemologies are based on it have been distinguished as early as in the Middle Ages. These include Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, Sāṅkhya, Yóga of Patañjali, and Tantrism. They are contrasted with the schools which epistemologies are based on the opposite principle called *parataḥ prāmāṇya*. These include Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Buddhism, Jainism, and materialism. It thus becomes clear at first glance that a good few of the Indian philosophical schools were based on the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle, and if we do not count Buddhism eventually expelled from India, even the lion's share thereof. This allows us to consider *svataḥ prāmāṇya* the epistemological mainstream of Indian philosophy, and one can't stop wondering why the attention of Western researchers is still primarily focused on the logic and epistemology of Nyāya and Buddhism.

It is in the context of the Nyāya studies that papers convincingly demonstrating that the epistemology of this school can be considered as a kind of disjunctivism have already begun to

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[16] See, e.g., P. E. Burchett. A Genealogy of Devotion: *Bhakti*, Tantra, Yoga, and Sufism in North India. New York, 2019, p. 31.

[17] However, Tantrists never rebelled against the authority of the Veda, as did the Buddhists, and regarded them as exoteric texts that form a certain social order, which should be treated conservatively.

[18] It is important to note that non-dualistic Agamas and, accordingly, the nondualistic school are peculiar only to Tantric Śaivism, whereas Śakta and Vaisnava Agamas are exclusively dualistic-cum-nondualistic and dualistic.

appear.[19] It remains only to continue this line of reasoning and try to show that the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine is also a kind thereof. Generally speaking, it is not difficult to interpret the epistemology of the six orthodox *darśanas* and Tantrism in terms of disjunctivism, as the highlighting of naïve realism and empiricism of these schools has become commonplace in Oriental studies almost since the very beginning. As for *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, it would be even easier to interpret it as a disjunctivism since that would require only theoretical analysis without resorting to textual and historico-philosophical proofs. Indeed, if we assume that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is a denial of the justificative ontological correlate of cognitions, then it immediately becomes clear that it is incompatible either with the thesis about the indistinguishability of the phenomenal character of hallucination and true perception — which, by the way, is completely alien to classical Indian philosophy[20] — or, more generally, with the assumption that the introspective component of the justification of a belief may exist even if the belief itself is false. Otherwise, it would have to assert that all cognitions, including false ones, are true, which would lead to complete nonsense. Taking all this into account, we will not systematically prove that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is a disjunctivism but will rather proceed from the fact that it is since we find neither any theoretical possibility of the opposite nor textual evidence to refute that fact. Besides, we cannot dwell on Buddhism and so do not aim to build a typology of its teachings in terms of disjunctivism and conjunctivism. Therefore, let us confine ourselves to the assertion that it exhibited representationalist and idealistic tendencies that significantly deviated from the overall naïve-realist attitude of the other schools.[21]

However, the mere claim that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is disjunctivism is not enough. It is necessary to specify exactly which kind thereof we are dealing with. And first of all, it is necessary to determine whether it is a representationalist or relationalist one. In this regard, our approach will be the same: we will assume that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is a relationalism because we see neither any theoretical possibility that it could be a representationalism nor textual evidence to refute that fact. Indeed, *svataḥ prāmāṇya* cannot be representationalism simply because the latter necessarily presupposes the admission of a justificative ontological correlate of cognitions, the existence of which the former denies by definition. However, we will still give additional arguments in favor of this interpretation in the course of analyzing the doctrine itself. On the other hand, taking into account that we consider all the existing western interpretations of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* inadequate, our approach can also be considered as an inference to the best explanation. Accordingly, our interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, expressed in its very definition, can be called a relationalist.

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[19] See A. J. Vaidya. Nyāya Perceptual Theory: Disjunctivism or Anti-Individualism? Philosophy East and West, Vol. 63, Number 4, October 2013, pp. 562–585; Idem. The Nyāya Misplacement Theory of Illusion & the Metaphysical Problem of Perception. Comparative Philosophy and J. L. Shaw, ed. by P. Bilimoria and M. Hemmingsen. Cham, 2016, pp. 123–139; M. R. Dasti. Parasitism and Disjunctivism in Nyāya Epistemology. Philosophy East and West, Vol. 62, Number 1, January 2012, pp. 1–15; H. I. Schiller. The Nyāya Argument for Disjunctivism. History of Philosophy Quarterly, Vol. 36, Issue 1, pp. 1–18.

[20] See, e.g., B. K. Matilal. Perception: An Essay in Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge. Oxford, 1986, pp. 173, 230–231.

[21] In particular, Buddhists came closest to the indistinguishability thesis but still could not put it forward since the evil demon argument was alien to them, limiting themselves only to the dreaming argument. Therefore, the possible conjunctivism of certain Buddhist schools can only be partial.

What seems genuinely problematic to us is the additional typological classification of the teachings based on *svataḥ prāmāṇya* in terms of strong and weak disjunctivism. In this regard, we cannot analyze each particular school and so will have to limit ourselves to distinguishing several representative paradigm cases in each of the categories. The main ground for division, in this case, will be the second basic ontological principle of strong disjunctivism, namely the distinction between the reality of knowledge and its truth. The examination of Indian teachings according to this principle is the main aim of this study. However, before proceeding to this topic, it is reasonable to address historiographical issues in order to clarify why the relationalist interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* seems more adequate than all the others.

II. The Main Interpretations of *Svataḥ Prāmāṇya* in Oriental Studies

The *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine was largely disregarded because, as we have already noted, the main attention of orientalists has always been primarily focused on the logic and epistemology of Nyāya and Buddhism. That is partly due to the fact that, on the one hand, these schools often seemed more intelligible to Western researchers, and, on the other, Mīmāṃsā, responsible for the classical formulation of the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle, was able to discourage them with its "reactionary" and supposed pronouncedly religious attitude. Moreover, when Western researchers or Indian-born scientists working in the West still turned their attention to *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, they often interpreted it by employing irrelevant Western concepts. On the other hand, in the modern epoch, the latter have begun to penetrate the Indian history of philosophy itself. As a result, we have the following situation. English-speaking Indian pandits better grasped the meaning of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* and its role in epistemology, but trying to be more comprehensible for Western readers, began to apply completely irrelevant Western terms for its description, such as "sense-data", "transcendental", and "idealism", the meaning of which, moreover, they did not fully understand.[22] In contrast, Western researchers are usually aware of the exact meaning of the latter but do not fully grasp the essence of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. Accordingly, surges of interest in this doctrine in the West usually implied various kinds of misunderstandings.

One of the first such surges was marked by a discussion between a renowned Indian-born specialist in comparative philosophy who worked at various universities in the West, J. N. Mohanty, and a prominent American orientalist, the General Editor of the multi-volume *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies* series, K. Potter.[23] It is notable for the fact that both sides, despite the fundamental disagreement on the interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, missed the point of this doctrine. The discussion was related to the publication of Mohanty's book *Gangeśa's Theory of Truth*[24] in 1966, which, on the one hand, was an expression of the main interests of this researcher (like that of his colleague, B. K. Matilal) — logic and epistemology of Nyāya and Navya-Nyāya — and, on the other, was written during a period of heightened general interest in the issue of the nature of knowledge aroused by E. Gettier's 1963 article *Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?*[25] This resulted in that Mohanty began to treat Indian epistemological doctrines in

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[22] Indian philosophical studies in English on any topic usually teem with such equivocations.

[23] Passed away in January 2022, at the age of 94.

[24] J. N. Mohanty. Gangeśa's Theory of Truth. Delhi, 2006.

[25] E. Gettier. Is Justified True Belief Knowledge? Analysis, Vol. 23, No. 6, June 1963. pp. 121–123.

terms of the justified true belief analysis of knowledge. Besides, in this book, he formulated the thesis about the incommensurability between *svataḥ prāmāṇya* and *parataḥ prāmāṇya*, i.e., suggested that these principles should not be opposed because of their applicability in their own spheres. It must be noted that the approach contrasting these principles was put forward by Kumārila himself in his basic work, *Ślokavārttika*. And if the former is understood as the denial of the existence of a justificative ontological correlate of cognitions, the letter, in this case, should be interpreted as the admission thereof.[26] However, Kumārila, unlike Mohanty, contrasted these principles as true and false, respectively, and harshly criticized *parataḥ prāmāṇya*. What could be the reason for such a manifest divergence?

There are two most obvious reasons for that, and they have already been noted. These are, firstly, Mohanty's commitment to the epistemology of Nyāya, which Kumārila considered one of his opponents, and, secondly, a particular interpretation of Indian epistemological terminology. It must be said that the latter is very rich, and there are at least two candidates there to be translated as "knowledge": "*jñāna*" and "*pramā*". The discussion in question suggests that it is *pramā* that is closer to knowledge in the "classical" sense of the term, whereas *jñāna*[27] is more epistemically amorphous and can include true, false, and even completely indeterminate beliefs. Thus, say, ravings of a madman who imagines himself to be Napoleon I can be considered *jñāna* since there is a firm and even definite belief but cannot be considered *pramā* due to its falsity. However, the most difficult task for comparative philosophy in this regard is to find a Sanskrit counterpart for the term "belief". As Mohanty noted, in contrast to Western philosophy, "in the Indian epistemologies, a valid *jñāna* or *pramā* is indeed characterized as a certainty (*niścaya*) but not as a certainty that may be tagged onto a proposition external to it, but as *having itself* a propositional structure, so that the doubt about the same would have a quite different structure."[28] Describing *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, we would use even a more radical expression: for it, belief, although being a propositional attitude, has no representational content in the case of true direct knowledge. However that may be, no participant in the discussion sees an impassable gap between the Western and Indian understanding of the nature of belief, as it is in any case difficult to consider the latter otherwise than as a propositional attitude, and the Indian approach to epistemology does not contradict this interpretation.

The discussion itself, however, began about 18 years after the release of the book by Mohanty and was related to the publication of K. Potter's article *Does Indian Epistemology Concern Justified True Belief?*[29] at the end of 1984. The answer to this question was negative, because according to the author, that concept applies only to the Western understanding of belief as having a dispositional nature, unlike the Indian understanding thereof as a cognitive episode. In our view, such an approach immediately showed a certain shift of emphasis that moves us in the opposite direction from the heart of the matter, as the main question is rather how to interpret the notion of propositional attitude. Indeed, both understandings of the nature of belief admit that

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[26] "Parataḥ prāmāṇya" is usually translated as "extrinsic validity". One can say, "justification that comes from the outside."

[27] It is interesting to note that "jñāna" and "prāmāṇya" are neuter, whereas "pramā" is feminine.

[28] J. N. Mohanty. Indian Theories of Truth: Thoughts on Their Common Framework. Philosophy East and West, Vol. 30, No. 4, October 1980, p. 441.

[29] K. H. Potter. Does Indian Epistemology Concern Justified True Belief? Journal of Indian Philosophy, Vol. 12, Issue 4, December 1984, pp. 307–327.

it is precisely a propositional attitude, and only a certain interpretation of the latter nourishes the Western tendency towards dispositionalism. It should also be stressed that one can contrast Western and Indian understanding of the nature of belief as much as one wants, but this would not negate the fact that the emphasis on representational content in this matter has led Western epistemology to a dead end, and it has proved unable to ensure the unity of direct perception and a perceptual judgment.[30] Indian philosophy, at least, can offer ways out of it. In any case, Potter, trying to overcome the thesis about the incommensurability between *svataḥ prāmāṇya* and *parataḥ prāmāṇya*, put forward a pragmatist-like interpretation of the term "*prāmāṇya*" as "workability" as opposed to "truth". And it must be acknowledged that there are certain grounds for it — the fact is that most schools of Indian philosophy imply that only a true cognition can lead to the achievement of a practical goal. However, it is already clear from the latter thesis that workability here accompanies truth, not opposes it.

The result of the discussion was thus the contraposition of the thesis about the double nature of truth to the statement about the alleged irrelevance of the very concept of truth for Indian epistemology. It clearly cannot be considered satisfactory both as such and because, trying to embrace very diverse schools, both approaches lead to the distortion of the very notion of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. Moreover, if we take a closer look at the incommensurability thesis, it will become obvious that it does not do justice to this doctrine at all. Indeed, in a shortened form, it goes as follows: the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle is applicable if *prāmāṇya* is considered an attribute of knowledge; if *prāmāṇya* is defined as an attribute of belief, then *parataḥ prāmāṇya* holds good.[31] It would seem that the situation should be quite the opposite, and the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle should be applicable primarily in relation to belief. Some would insist that the term "*jñāna*" cannot be understood as belief since Indian epistemology has no obvious counterpart for the corresponding term at all. However, the main problem lies not even in that but in the interpretation of the very notion of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. At first glance, *prāmāṇya* should be a differentiating factor within *jñāna* that makes it *pramā*, i.e., true knowledge. Indeed, what else could make knowledge true except truth? That is why Mohanty was inclined to interpret *prāmāṇya* in this way. However, the justified true belief approach to knowledge does not allow one to interpret *jñāna* either as knowledge or as belief, so in order to constitute true knowledge, truth in Indian philosophy would have to be added to something unclear. This difficulty makes Mohanty reject such a strict approach and still interpret *jñāna* in both of the above senses — and he is right in this regard. However, if one were to continue insisting that *prāmāṇya* is precisely truth, it would follow that in the case of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, the attribute in question must deprive false knowledge of the status of knowledge. That would fit well with the "classical" understanding thereof but would not do justice to the fact that a significant part of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*'s exponents adhered to the opposite approach.

The above issue came to the fore at the next stage of the studies. Thus, in his 1992 article *What Did Kumārila Bhaṭṭa Mean by Svataḥ Prāmāṇya?*[32] the American orientalist J. Taber concluded that the epistemology of this philosopher should be viewed in the light of the later

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[30] M. A. Bandurin. The Noumenal Morass... p. 40-E.

[31] J. N. Mohanty. Prāmāṇya and Workability. Journal of Indian Philosophy, Vol. 12, Issue 4, December 1984, pp. 331–332.

[32] J. Taber. What Did Kumārila Bhaṭṭa Mean by *Svataḥ Prāmāṇya*? Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 112, No. 2, April–June 1992, pp. 204–221.

interpretation by Pārthasārathi Miśra — a commentator of the Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā school lived in the 10th century[33] — which Mohanty misunderstood and consequently rejected. It should be noted that the epistemological component of Kumārila's writings is characterized by certain vagueness, which makes it very difficult to understand without additional interpretations. In this respect, it can be compared with Kant's philosophy, the need for the "completion" of which was felt by all German idealists. And, as in the case of transcendental idealism, Kumārila's followers diverged in largely opposite directions. Apart from authors of secondary importance, there are two main commentators of *Ślokavārttika*: Uṃveka (Umbeka) Bhaṭṭa, who lived in the 8th century, and the already mentioned Pārthasārathi Miśra. And, as noted by Taber, they fundamentally diverged in the interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. It is important to keep in mind here that it is impossible to interpret *prāmāṇya* in any way without this interpretation also affecting its attribute, i.e., *svataḥ*. Accordingly, since Uṃveka understands *prāmāṇya* as truth, and the latter necessarily has to do with causal factors of the generation of true cognitions, he is forced to interpret *svataḥ* not in the sense that *prāmāṇya* is an attribute of any cognition but that it is produced by normal causal factors together with true cognitions.[34] All this fits well with the commonplace truth, which says that a cognition cannot be true by definition. However, the problem is that in such a case, in order to consider a particular cognition justified, we would first have to somehow confirm the fact that it, along with its truth, was produced by normal causal factors, and that cannot be done by virtue of the reality of the cognition itself. The approach in question thus admits the necessary existence of a justificative ontological correlate of cognitions and therefore cannot be considered *svataḥ prāmāṇya* at all. Moreover, if we were to assume that Uṃveka faithfully expresses exactly what Kumārila himself wanted to say, then we would have to admit that the doctrine under consideration is not contained in the basic epistemological treatise. In an attempt to demonstrate the falsity of such an assumption, Taber argues in favor of the fact that Pārthasārathi's interpretation better corresponds to the approach of Kumārila. Besides, he emphasizes that the theory of truth adhered to by the Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā philosophers should be considered correspondence.[35] We believe that the approach peculiar to the article in question, while not being fully systematic, remains the most deliberate.

This topic was picked up by the American orientalist D. Arnold, who tried to systematize the above insights in his 2005 monograph *Buddhists, Brahmins, and Belief*[36] and other works. The methodological basis of his research was the distinction between two conceptions of truth and the consideration of Indian epistemologies in terms of the justified true belief analysis of knowledge. Regarding the first point, he follows the renowned American epistemologist W. Alston, who opposed a realist conception of truth to the epistemic one and tried to defend the former against the latter.[37] Arnold tries to follow this approach but also calls the epistemic conception causal. From our perspective, the distinction between these two accounts of truth is quite legitimate; however, Alston's approach cannot be opposed to a causal conception of truth.

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[33] K. Potter, however, insists that the peak of his activity falls on ca 1075. See Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies: Vol. XVI: Philosophy of Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā. Delhi, 2014, pp. 363–364.

[34] J. Taber. What Did Kumārila Bhaṭṭa Mean… pp. 208–210.

[35] Ibid., p. 216.

[36] D. Arnold. Buddhists, Brahmins, and Belief: Epistemology in South Asian Philosophy of Religion. New York, 2005.

[37] See W. Alston. A Realist Conception of Truth. New York, 1996.

Either way, Arnold explicitly states that Mohanty and Matilal misinterpreted the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine since they were primarily guided by Uṃveka's account thereof, which can only be called causal, given that he considers *prāmāṇya* precisely as truth.[38] Indeed, otherwise, there would be no grounds for the incommensurability thesis. Thus, even the opponent of Kumārila Prabhākara, whom Mohanty allegedly followed, did not admit that the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine could be true in its own sphere and, in fact, did not adhere to a causal conception of truth.[39] However, despite its obvious advantages, Arnold's interpretation is inconsistent due to its being an externalist. Indeed, he criticizes the identification of *prāmāṇya* with truth, but at the same time identifies it with the reliability of belief's sources,[40] which clearly goes in line with reliabilism — one of the main currents of externalism. Moreover, he explicitly calls the epistemology of Pārthasārathi an externalist.[41] All that may puzzle the reader, because everything seems quite simple: there can be no pure epistemic externalism in classical Indian philosophy, given that it is a critique of internalism on the basis of the seriously taken "Gettier problem", for which there were no necessary preconditions there. So, one can only guess why Arnold decided to choose such a doubtful approach. However, there are two most obvious reasons for that: the assumption that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* fits well with Alston's theory and the peculiarities of the notion of introspection in Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā. Let us dwell on the first point.

To begin with, it should be noted that Arnold's interpretation shows a certain distortion of the justified true belief account of knowledge due to the need for its adaptation to the context of Indian philosophy. Thus, the issue is usually posed as follows: to be able to claim to have knowledge, we must, firstly, consider a particular true belief true and, secondly, justify its truth. Alston himself was well aware of that.[42] Accordingly, if we fail to justify the truth of a belief, it would at best be true but unjustified and thus could not be considered knowledge. In turn, if we justify a false belief, then, although being justified, it could not be considered knowledge because of its falsity. However, if we begin to examine arguments in favor of these two inferences, their infantile character will become obvious. Thus, arguments in favor of the possibility of justified false belief often boil down to the claim that rational support for a particular belief can be equal in extent regardless of its truth.[43] Such an approach makes one think once again about whether it would not be more consistent just to recognize the fact that the very reality of any cognition comes down to its justifiedness, i.e., to the fact that it is a justified appearance of truth. Among other things, this would make it possible to understand that the "Gettier problem" is, in fact, a pseudo-problem since one of the starting points of Gettier's reasoning is the admission of the possibility of justified false beliefs, along with the existence of

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[38] D. Arnold. Buddhists, Brahmins… p. 253.

[39] We will return to this issue later.

[40] D. Arnold. Intrinsic Validity Reconsidered… p. 613.

[41] D. Arnold. Buddhists, Brahmins… p. 109. This approach was subsequently taken up by D. Immerman, who, however, in addition to externalism and naïve realism, contrived to attribute epistemological disjunctivism to Kumārila. See D. Immerman. Kumārila and Knows-Knows. Philosophy East and West, Vol. 68, No. 2, April 2018, pp. 408–422. To complete the picture, it should also be noted that the similarity of the approaches of Kumārila and Alston was already hinted at by Taber, which was explicitly referred to by Arnold. See J. Taber. The Significance of Kumārila's Philosophy. Beyond Orientalism: The Work of Wilhelm Halbfass and its Impact on Indian and Cross-Cultural Studies, ed. by Eli Franco and Karin Preisendatz. Delhi, 2007, p. 378.

[42] See, e.g., W. Alston. A Realist Conception of Truth... p. 240–241.

[43] See R. Feldman. Epistemology. Upper Saddle River, 2003, p. 29.

a justificative ontological correlate of cognitions. Be that as it may, at this juncture, we are concerned not with justified false belief but with unjustified true one.

Indeed, the distortion under consideration occurred precisely in this connection. The fact is that, as we have already noted, in the context of Indian philosophy, the issue at stake is what attribute should be peculiar to *jñāna* so that it can be considered *pramā*. And it is difficult to conceive of any candidate for this role other than truth. Therefore, Arnold, apparently following Alston, consciously or unconsciously reformulated the issue about the nature of knowledge as follows: to be able to claim to have knowledge, we must, firstly, have a justified belief in something and, secondly, to know that this belief is true by virtue of additional reasons.[44] It would seem that there is nothing special here since this new formulation implies the basic one. However, it still masks the most important problem. The fact is that no one, including Alston himself, doubts that we cannot know something without considering a true belief true. Truth always accompanies a belief *ab initio*, so even if we additionally prove its truth, we will not add this attribute to the belief but simply be able to claim to have full-blown knowledge of its object. Alston protests only against the requirement of additionally justifying the truth of a *prima facie* justified belief. All the confusion arises from the fact that he systematically identifies the justifiedness of a belief with the reliability of its sources. In fact, internalists may agree that a particular belief can be *prima facie* justified,[45] but they will never concede that what Alston calls justifiedness can indeed be called thus. Therefore, the modified formulation of the issue about the nature of knowledge under consideration can be left unchanged even according to classical internalism. But why should it be precisely such? Due to the supposed need for a two-level justification of belief, which Arnold rightly considers as a manifestation of *parataḥ prāmāṇya*. Indeed, if it is assumed that the justification should be two-level, this necessarily implies that a particular cognition is incapable of properly justifying its object by virtue of its very reality, and we have to rely on already gained knowledge in this task. This is a pronounced *parataḥ prāmāṇya*. However, that is only the tip of the iceberg. Thus, we have defined this doctrine not as an acknowledgment of the need for a two-level justification of knowledge but as an admission of the existence of a justificative ontological correlate of cognitions, and therefore must posit the following question: if Alston denies the necessity of the first, does this imply that he rejects the existence of the second? And the answer will be negative because he only wants to say that an internalist justification is not required at all since it adds nothing to the already existing truth of a *prima facie* true belief. However, the very principle according to which a belief has to be true so that it could both be and be considered knowledge is also a manifestation of *parataḥ prāmāṇya*, which does not distinguish externalism from classical internalism.

So Arnold, correctly emphasizing that the epistemology of Kumārila and Pārthasārathi does not imply a second-level justification, overlooked the possibility that it does not make a choice in favor of the first level since it does not discern these levels at all and, in particular, does not distinguish the doxastic justification from the propositional one.[46] As a result, he interpreted *svataḥ prāmāṇya* in many respects correctly but spoiled everything by references to externalism, to which it cannot be reduced. And this is not accidental, as there is indeed a certain similarity between *svataḥ prāmāṇya* and externalism. It lies in the fact that both conceptions admit the

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[44] D. Arnold. Buddhists, Brahmins… p. 83.

[45] See, e.g., M. Huemer. Skepticism and the Veil of Perception. Oxford, 2001, pp. 98–103.

[46] The abovementioned particular understanding of propositionality allows them to do so.

fundamental possibility of the identity of the justification of a belief and its truth, in contrast to classical internalism, which systematically dissociates them. We will return to this issue in the next section and now should dwell on the second possible explanation of why an externalist interpretation seemed to Arnold the most appropriate, namely, the peculiarities of the notion of introspection in Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā. It would seem that even by limiting oneself to the analysis of the very term "*svataḥ prāmāṇya*", it is easy to guess that this doctrine presupposes some internal justifiedness of cognitions. Why then shouldn't it admit a full-fledged epistemological introspection and internalist justification? There is only one thing that can confuse in this regard — this school is famous for adhering to the *parataḥ prakāśa* doctrine. It is another difficult-to-translate name which meaning comes down to the claim that a cognition cannot be aware of itself at the moment of cognizing its object. It is opposed by the *svataḥ prakāśa* doctrine, according to which a cognition is capable of that.

Formally speaking, they are not directly related to the *svataḥ* and *parataḥ prāmāṇya* principles, and the history of philosophy knows all four possible combinations of these doctrines: *svataḥ prāmāṇya* with *svataḥ prakāśa* (Prabhākara Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, Sāṅkhya, Yóga of Patañjali, Tantrism), *svataḥ prāmāṇya* with *parataḥ prakāśa* (Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā), *parataḥ prāmāṇya* with *svataḥ prakāśa* (Buddhism, Jainism), and *parataḥ prāmāṇya* with *parataḥ prakāśa* (Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika). It is immediately clear that among the adherents of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā defends the doctrine of *parataḥ prakāśa* in proud solitude and absolute minority since even its kindred philosophers in the Brahmanist camp held the opposite point of view. The explanation for this can be that Kumārila simply went too far in an effort to resist Buddhism, which assumptions, from his perspective, could lead to a teaching comparable to Berkeley's idealism.[47] Prabhākara, Vedāntists, and especially Tantric Śaivas have convincingly shown that *svataḥ prakāśa* cannot lead to idealism without additional assumptions and even that it serves as a necessary ontological condition for *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. Moreover, the Śaiva philosophers explicitly relied on this principle to achieve the same goal as Kumārila, i.e., to defeat Buddhism.[48] However, Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā took a negative stance towards Tantrism and so could not follow a similar path.

In any case, even if we were to assume that Kumārila was right in this regard, *prakāśa* would still remain a kind of awareness, albeit presumably possible only as a second-level one, i.e., as *parataḥ*. Therefore, there are no grounds for denying the existence of introspection and its epistemological role in Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā. Moreover, even those who emphasize the necessity of *svataḥ prakāśa* do not try to justify *svataḥ prāmāṇya* directly appealing to it. This is because these theories remain at different levels: the former mainly at the ontological and the latter at the epistemological. This is especially noticeable, again, in the case of Tantric Śaivism, where *svataḥ prakāśa* serves as one of the basic ontological principles.[49] That is why, when reading primary sources and secondary literature, it is immediately clear when the doctrine of *svataḥ prakāśa* is defended, but one has to put extra effort at understanding whether *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is

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[47] Buddhist idealism, like Indian philosophy in general, did not distinguish between appearances and things-in-themselves — it literally considered the nature of things as mental. Therefore, it cannot be compared to either transcendental or post-Kantian idealism.

[48] See, e.g., A. Watson. The Self's Awareness of Itself: Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha's Arguments Against the Buddhist Doctrine of No-Self. Wien, 2006.

[49] See, e.g., M. Ferrante. Studies on Bhartṛhari and the Pratyabhijñā: The Case of *svasaṃvedana*. Proceedings of the Conference of the Society for the Tantric Studies. Religions, No. 8: 145. URL: https://doi.org/10.3390/rel8080145

also at stake. For the purposes of this study, the following point is important here: to offer an alternative to *svataḥ prakāśa*, Kumārila was forced to put forward a serious ontological theory that clearly does not fit with either externalism or eliminativist internalism. It basically runs as follows: a mind-external object is the cause of a cognition, and that, in turn, adds the attribute of cognizedness to the former, on which basis the congition's existence is inferred.[50] Adherents of *svataḥ prakāśa* are deprived of the need for such an intricate theory because they believe that a cognition simply becomes aware of itself at the moment of cognizing its object. However, both doctrines have a pronounced ontological character, which does not prevent one from admitting the possibility of a purely epistemological introspection, peculiar to any cognition, even within the framework of Kumārila's approach. On this positive note, we should return to the main topic of the present study.

III. *Svataḥ Prāmāṇya* of Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā as a Paradigm Case of Strong Disjunctivism

So, having analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of various interpretations, we are now ready to consider *svataḥ prāmāṇya* of Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā as a variety of strong disjunctivism. And since we have established that the epistemology of Uṃveka cannot be classed as *svataḥ prāmāṇya* at all, the scope of our study naturally narrows down to the teachings of Kumārila and Pārthasārathi. The main difficulty on its path is, as we have already noted, the distinction between the reality of knowledge and its truth, which must at least be implied by these philosophers so that their epistemology can be considered strong disjunctivism. It should be noted from the outset that, taking into account the above difficulties of translating various Sanskrit terms into European languages, we cannot count on finding direct textual evidence of this distinction and can rely only on the interpretation of these terms and theoretical arguments. We should begin with a brief summary of the main claims of Kumārila's theory as interpreted by Pārthasārathi.

Kumārila begins the exposition of the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine as follows: "The justifiedness of all justified cognitions is to be understood as inherent, since a capacity not already existing by itself cannot be brought about by something else."[51] Some commentators and researchers cling to the view that this fragment allegedly refers only to justified cognitions, as opposed to unjustified ones. However, Pārthasārathi emphasizes that each and every cognition is at stake here.[52] In other words, the justifiedness of a cognition is cognized as its inherent attribute. Kumārila is thus trying to convey a pretty simple truth: just as, for example, the capacity to shine pertains to the sun and the capacity to flow to water, the capacity to justify pertains to a cognition. What may seem strange here is that the sun or water are objects, and cognitions are put on a par with them. Certain ontological difficulties indeed arise in this respect, since Kumārila, along with other Indian philosophers, has to distinguish the object of a cognition from a cognition as an object of another cognition. Moreover, the possibility for a cognition to serve as an object is of

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[50] C. Ram-Prasad. Indian Philosophy and the Consequences of Knowledge: Themes in Ethics, Metaphysics and Soteriology. Aldershot, 2007, p. 56.

[51] Kumārila Bhaṭṭa. Ślokavārttika. Translated by G. Jhā. Calcutta, 1907, p. 28. Our translation is a reinterpretation of J. Taber's, D. Arnold's, and G. Jhā's versions.

[52] J. Taber. What Did Kumārila Bhaṭṭa Mean… p. 210.

particular importance for him, as, as we remember, a cognition, according to him, cannot be aware of its own reality and must become an object to be cognized. However, it should be borne in mind that even for the overwhelming majority of adherents of the *svataḥ prakāśa* doctrine, the possibility, and even the necessity, for a cognition to become an object of another, even if it presents a certain problem, is, in any case, not questioned.[53] However that may be, at the basic level, the issue is solved as follows: cognitions have a unique inherent attribute, namely, justifiedness, which cannot pertain to other objects, even if they are the causes of cognitions. This is so because, according to Kumārila, "things depend upon a cause in arising, but once they exist they exercise their functions by themselves."[54] However, given such an approach, another problem arises: how to explain the possibility of false cognitions.

Kumārila was well aware of it and, accordingly, even before formulating his own position, raised the question of how cognitions are invalidated. In this connection, along with the terms "*svataḥ*" and "*parataḥ prāmāṇya*", he introduces the opposite terms "*svataḥ*" and "*parataḥ aprāmāṇya*", related to the unjustifiedness, invalidation, and falsity of cognitions. Thus, the typology under scrutiny becomes even more complicated since four additional possible combinations of the doctrines have now to be taken into account: *svataḥ prāmāṇya* with *parataḥ aprāmāṇya* (Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, Tantrism), *svataḥ prāmāṇya* with *svataḥ aprāmāṇya* (Sāṅkhya, Yóga of Patañjali), *parataḥ prāmāṇya* with *parataḥ aprāmāṇya* (Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Jainism), and *parataḥ prāmāṇya* with *svataḥ aprāmāṇya* (Buddhism). It is noteworthy that Kumārila disqualifies the second option, i.e., the Sāṅkhya epistemology, straight off as untenable, and most medieval and modern authors agree with that. However, it may seem that the main argument here comes down to a mere pointing to the fact that Sāṅkhya adheres to the ontological doctrine of *sat-kārya-vāda* — the pre-existence of the effect in the cause. If that is indeed the case, then Kumārila's own conclusion is untenable since *sat-kārya-vāda* is fundamentally compatible with *svataḥ prāmāṇya* in conjunction with *parataḥ aprāmāṇya*.[55] Either way, Sāṅkhya cannot boast a properly elaborated epistemology, and so the question remains open. So, it becomes clear that the main epistemological opponent of Kumārila remains Buddhism, while Nyāya was considered by him as a partial ally. As for the definition of the term "*parataḥ aprāmāṇya*", it can, from our perspective, be formulated as follows: the doctrine of the ontological character of the invalidation of cognitions. If this is the case, then it will correspond to the third main claim of strong disjunctivism.

At this point, the following question may arise: why use the term "ontological" if one can just speak about the extrinsic nature of the invalidation, especially since the whole issue can be reduced to the relationship between cognitions? We proceed in this way simply because we find this term slightly less vague than the term "extrinsic", which can mean almost anything. As for the fact that we are ultimately dealing with cognitions, it indeed deserves attention. Thus, in the case of both *parataḥ prāmāṇya* and *parataḥ aprāmāṇya*, what is implied is that one cognition, respectively, confirms or invalidates another. Accordingly, when we admit the existence of a justificative ontological correlate of cognitions, we, in the final analysis, do not mean that it is an

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[53] It must be borne in mind here that a cognition cannot become an object of a cognizing subject directly, without the participation of another cognition, since it is an aspect thereof.

[54] Kumārila Bhaṭṭa. Ślokavārttika… p. 28. See note 51 above.

[55] See O. Łucyszyna. Sāṃkhya on the Validity (*prāmāṇya*) and Invalidity (*aprāmāṇya*) of Cognition. Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia, No. 34. Warsaw, 2021, pp. 145–176.

object, or even cognitive faculties,[56] but simply another cognition, which is considered true, i.e., verified knowledge. This leads to a *regressus ad infinitum*, which epistemologists usually seek to put an end to by appealing to a privileged class of self-evident cognitions. Both of these undesired consequences are relentlessly criticized by the followers of Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā, who, unlike the ancient skeptics who put forward similar arguments, emphasize that all cognitions are justified. On the other hand, when we admit the existence of an invalidatory correlate of a cognition — and the adherents of the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine, unlike Buddhists, do admit it since its denial encourages extreme dogmatism that makes the possibility of refuting already confirmed knowledge highly doubtful — we, again, simply imply that another cognition may arise in which the same object will as it were appear in its true light. All right, but what does all that have to do with ontology? The fact is that in both doctrines in question, truth is considered as an ontological attribute of an object, not a belief or cognitive faculty. Moreover, the followers of *parataḥ prāmāṇya* in conjunction with *parataḥ aprāmāṇya* believe that, despite the obvious problems associated with the *regressus ad infinitum*, there ultimately must be some finally confirmed knowledge of a true object to rely on. That is why it is reasonable to cast the issue in ontological terms, even though it is, in any case, impossible here to do without cognitions.

However, pointing out the way of invalidating cognitions by itself does not solve the problem of their possible falsity for *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. Therefore, Pārthasārathi is forced to put the issue in terms of appearance. In other words, he emphasizes that the justifiedness of any cognitions is possible only in the sense that any of them is not true but merely seems so.[57] Such an approach goes against the translation of the term "*prāmāṇya*" as "truth". Accordingly, if we accept it, the translation of the respective terms should be something like the following: "*jñāna*" — "knowledge", "*prāmāṇya*" — "justifiedness"[58], "*pramā*" — "true knowledge". Here one may argue that we are translating "*jñāna*" as "knowledge" too hastily, since few doubt that even a justified belief can be false, but that is not a reason to declare any justified belief to be knowledge. On the contrary, that is the basis for depriving a *prima facie* justified belief of this status. However, for the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine, such an option is actually unavailable. This is because it actually cannot do without the admission that any cognition is justified by definition and so cannot but be knowledge. This point often eludes those who begin to study this doctrine, and the latter thus may seem to them to be a second-rate epistemic foundationalism. In fact, there is a strict choice: either we accept *svataḥ prāmāṇya* and consider any cognition to be knowledge, or we accept *parataḥ prāmāṇya* and thereby tacitly separate cognitions into two classes — potentially entailing knowledge and not entailing it. All because cognitions as a justificative instance are fundamentally homogeneous, whereas their alleged justificative ontological correlate could only be heterogeneous, i.e., different from other possible candidates for such a role. It is a sound argument in favor of Pārthasārathi's approach.

It can thus be said that Mohanty correctly translated the term "*jñāna*" as "knowledge", but due to the fact that he persistently considered *prāmāṇya* to be truth, came to the erroneous conclusion that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* should deprive a false belief of the status of knowledge. In fact, the opposite is the case: this doctrine has to acknowledge that even a false belief is knowledge.

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[56] Even so, in Western philosophy, it is these that usually admitted as such, in particular, when one appeals to the functioning of the senses, perception, experience, *a priori* forms of sensibility and understanding, etc.

[57] J. Taber. What Did Kumārila Bhaṭṭa Mean… p. 210.

[58] Or, in other words, justified appearance of truth.

But another difficulty seems to arise here. If we translate the term "*prāmāṇya*" precisely as "justifiedness", we have to translate the term "*aprāmāṇya*" primarily as "unjustifiedness". However, this seemingly contradicts the view that any cognition is both justified and knowledge-entailing and bring us back to the need to separate cognitions into two classes. The answer will be that *aprāmāṇya* is not sheer unjustifiedness but non-existent justifiedness, since there is no place for the former in the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* doctrine. But does this solve the problem? Indeed, it remains the case that any cognition is justified, but still, in some cases, justifiedness does not exist. So that this contradiction does not seem impassable, it is necessary to take into account the following. Firstly, justifiedness is not an object, and so one cannot forbid attributing contrary attributes to it straight off. Secondly, there is a solid philosophical tradition that allows for the possibility of the existence of non-existent objects.[59] And since justifiedness and, consequently, knowledge are not objects, this approach can be applied to them even if we question this tradition as a whole. Finally, non-existent justifiedness can still be considered partially existing, but only provided that it is acknowledged as non-existent in the strict sense of the term.[60] This is so because in the case of a cognitive error, even a very serious one, its object cannot be considered utterly unreal, since both of its components — a subjective appearance and a true object with which it is mistakingly correlated — are quite real and actually knowable: only their combination is erroneous here.[61] However, despite all these reservations, it is clear that if one adopts this approach, one cannot do without disjunctivism, and in a double sense. Firstly, in terms of acknowledging the different ontological status of the subjective component of the justifiedness of a belief in a "good" and "bad" case. In the broadest terms, as we have already noted, it is expressed in the fact that in the case of a cognitive error, this component does not exist due to the falsity of its object. And secondly, in terms of distinguishing between the reality of knowledge and its truth, i.e., appealing to strong disjunctivism. The distinction between reality and existence may in itself seem strained, but it has a technical meaning. Indeed, we need a general term to denote an attribute inherent in both justified appearance of truth and partially existing justified[62] false appearance of truth. And since the term "partial existence" is suitable only for a "bad" case, it is difficult to find any other term here other than "reality".

But if *svataḥ prāmāṇya* clearly does not fit with classical internalism, would it not be more correct to consider it in terms of externalism? We have already begun to answer this question; it remains only to fully clarify why it does not fit with externalism either. Another indication of this is that Arnold, trying to interpret *svataḥ prāmāṇya* in these terms, in fact, somewhat distorted the views of Alston himself, i.e., offered an interpretation that is a cross between them and what we ourselves are trying to convey. Thus, we have already noted that most epistemologists, including Alston himself, accept justified true belief as the basic definition of knowledge. Arnold rather interprets it as true justified belief, but only in order to criticize it and show that knowledge is, rather, just a true belief. As a result, one of Arnold's main conclusions about the nature of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is as follows: "That is, to be justified just is to

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[59] Besides, there are even proposals to dissociate the concepts of truth and reality. See M. Ferraris. New Realism a Short Introduction. Speculations VI, ed. by F. Gironi, M. Austin, R. Jackson. New York, 2015, pp. 141–164.

[60] In other words, the partial existence of justifiednessshould, in this case, be understood in a privative sense.

[61] We deliberately put the question in the most general terms since there are various theories of cognitive error based on *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, which we cannot dwell on here.

[62] Partially existing justufiedness cannot be literally considered partial justifiedness since even it is full-fledged.

be entitled to think that one's beliefs are really true. Nothing would be added by showing (what the Mīmāṃsakas are arguing we cannot show anyway) that one's justified beliefs were also true; for to be justified is already to be entitled to believe this!"[63] It would seem that the difference is insignificant, but this modification will have a sense only if we, firstly, assume the necessity for a two-order justification of belief, secondly, strive to abandon the second level in favor of the first trying to avoid epistemic circularity, and, thirdly, consider the first level in purely externalist terms.

However, Alston does not actually struggle against epistemic circularity, as Arnold tries to suggest, but defends its legitimacy at the basic level while denying it within the second-order justification.[64] And while it is true that a two-order form of justification of belief is *parataḥ prāmāṇya*, it cannot be said that a defense of epistemic circularity on the first level is *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. In fact, Kumārila does not distinguish these levels at all,[65] and not by accident, as that is precluded by the very thesis of the justifiedness of any cognition. Thus, he[66] criticizes the view according to which the *regressus ad infinitum* can allegedly be stopped by acknowledging one of the confirming cognitions as self-evident; not because only the first cognition should be acknowledged as such, though, but because any cognition is inherently justified and cannot act as a justificative ontological correlate, since there is nothing to confirm in these conditions. As for Alston, he merely tries to identify a special class of true beliefs that do not require additional justification, and he is close to epistemic foundationalism in this regard.[67] Another thing is that he insists that they are, in a sense, already justified, while internalists cannot agree with that. Alston thus cannot deny the existence of a justificative ontological correlate of cognitions simply because he does not admit the inherent justifiedness of any of them.

All of this has serious implications for the respective theory of truth. Everything comes back to the fact that Arnold, Alston, and classical internalists imply that in order to possess knowledge, we must consider a certain true belief to be true. But how do we know that it is true? The very statement of the question shows the signs of both a *regressus ad infinitum* and a vicious circle. That is why internalists insist that we, of course, cannot know that and must additionally justify this knowledge. This can be compared to the situation when a judge refuses to use reliable but inadmissible evidence against a defendant. However, the fact that we refuse to acknowledge the reality of knowledge in the case of a true belief until the completion of a justification procedure does not mean that we refuse to consider it true regardless of its justifiedness, even in a "good" case. Externalism protests against such an approach and calls for considering true belief as knowledge without delay. As noted by Alston, epistemic circularity would occur in this case, but it would be quite legitimate, since potential second-order justifications would assume it.[68] It

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[63] D. Arnold. Buddhists, Brahmins… p. 97.

[64] See T. McGrew, L. McGrew. What's Wrong with Epistemic Circularity? Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review, Vol. 39, Issue 2, 2000, pp. 219–240.

[65] His approach partially conforms to the first-order account of knowledge presented in the works of B. Brewer, but we would rather call it a single-level doctrine of justification. See B. Brewer. Perceptual Experience and Empirical Reason. Analytic Philosophy, Vol. 59, No. 1, March 2018, pp. 1–18.

[66] According to Pārthasārathi's interpretation.

[67] See, e.g., M. L. Czapkay Sudduth. Alstonian foundationalism and higher-level theistic evidentialism. International Journal for Philosophy of Religion, Vol. 37, No. 1, February 1995, pp. 25–44.

[68] See, e.g., W. Alston. Epistemic Circularity. Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, Vol. 47, No. 1, September 1986, pp. 1–30.

goes without saying that we can thus forget about introspective infallibilism, but, after all, internalists themselves have not unanimously defended it for a long time. Thus, a true belief can be considered true simply by virtue of the presumed reliability of its sources. However, the equivocation of the term "justification" poses a serious obstacle here, because Alston actively applies it, but internalists either deny him the right to do so or admit that this "justification" is, in fact, introspective but incomplete — and no compromise is possible. In any case, it can be said that externalists consider a belief to be justified by virtue of its truth, whereas internalists insist on distinguishing between the justifiedness of a belief and its truth, even when it is actually true. But what about Kumārila? From our perspective, he claims that a belief is true by virtue of its justifiedness, but since all cognitions are inherently justified, the difference between a belief and its truth can be discovered only in a "bad" case.

The similarities between Kumārila's doctrine and externalism thus come down to the following: the denial of the difference between the justifiedness of a belief and its truth in a "good" case and a certain epistemological non-normativity.[69] On the other hand, against the background of its comparison with the main epistemological theories, the similarities between externalism and classical internalism become evident, namely the necessity for a true belief to be considered true as a condition for obtaining knowledge and the admission of a justificative ontological correlate of cognitions. Thus, Alston argues as follows. In order to claim knowledge, we must consider a particular belief to be true, but to ensure its justifiedness, we should proceed from a mere assumption of the reliability of its sources. At the same time, the truth of the principle, according to which a belief can be considered justified because of its truth, is itself based on the presumed reliability of a belief's sources. In other words, according to this approach, the metajustificatory principle[70] of any belief is considered external to the introspective sphere of a subject.[71] That supposedly allows one to benefit from epistemic circularity without coming under fire from skeptics. Of course, all this has serious consequences for both the theory of truth and the theory of appearance. In particular, that implies "reliance" on the indistinguishability thesis[72] and leads to the apparently insoluble problems in explaining a false belief. Thus, it is difficult to interpret the presumed reliability of the sources of a belief other than in terms of appearance, and appearance is naturally associated with introspection. Accordingly, the transition from an internalism of appearance to an externalism of a belief's sources is very difficult to comprehend, especially given that the indistinguishability thesis reigns supreme within such an approach. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that a belief can prove to be false, and so it is impossible to conclude that it is capable of supporting the metajustifying principle in all cases — and this makes an appeal to the reliability of a belief's sources unreliable.[73] Be that as it may, in Alston's theory, there is neither denial of the existence of a justificative ontological correlate of cognitions nor, contrary to Arnold, an active struggle against

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[69] Which, in particular, is related to the fact that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* denies the legitimacy of positing criteria of truth.

[70] And thus a justificative ontological correlate.

[71] D. Yehnert. How to Account for Externalist and Internalist Intuitions. Honors Projects, 12, December 1991, p. 8.

[72] Which is incompatible with classical Indian philosophy in general. That, however, did not prevent Arnold from virtually claiming that it is peculiar to *svataḥ prāmāṇya*.

[73] P. Bondy. Epistemic Circularity, Reliabilism, and Transmission Failure. Episteme, Vol. 11, Issue 3, September 2014, p. 344.

foundationalism[74] nor a protest against a causal theory of truth, and, therefore, it cannot be considered *svataḥ prāmāṇya*.

But what does the thesis that a belief is true by virtue of its justifiedness mean? In general terms, it implies that a belief does not have to be true in order to be knowledge but must be justified in order to be able to both be and be considered true. This is the difference between *svataḥ prāmāṇya* and classical internalism, which implies that a belief must be true in order to be knowledge since to be and to be considered true are, in any case, different things. Of course, this thesis presupposes a distinction between the reality of knowledge and its truth, the literal formulation of which can hardly be found in the primary sources. However, the very existence of the two terms for knowledge in Indian epistemology allows us to give them such an interpretation. Besides, it is important to recall here that Kumārila and Pārthasārathi virtually identified the concepts of *prāmāṇya* and determinateness (*niścaya*),[75] which means that determinateness, or even certainty, of knowledge is for them not identical to its truth. Accordingly, if some Pyrrhonist were to object to *svataḥ prāmāṇya* along the lines that any thesis allegedly invokes an antithesis, an adherent of this theory could answer: for a full-fledged invalidation of any statement to occur, the corresponding invalidating and invalidated cognitions must first arise, i.e., at least form an introspective determinateness, even if the latter can in principle be false. Thus, for example, if we now ask someone about who will be president of the USA in 2100, most people will not have any directly relevant cognition. In contrast, if we return to our "Napoleon" from a hospital ward, he has a determinate, and even certain, knowledge, even given that the latter is complete nonsense. Accordingly, *svataḥ prāmāṇya* does not commit us to consider any statement true simply because it is perceived or give an answer to any question simply because it is asked.[76] Between these two forms of erroneous knowledge, Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā admits a third — doubt — which is, so to speak, a partially arisen cognition. Arisen — because we are sure of some general attributes of an object; partially — because we fail to distinguish its special attributes.[77] Thus, from *svataḥ prāmāṇya*'s perspective, the methods of radical or systematic doubt of Descartes, Hegel, etc. can only be counterproductive and irrational.

But if determinateness is an inseparable attribute of *prāmāṇya*, doesn't the latter cease to be a differentiating factor within *jñāna*, making it *pramā*? Quite so, it is not such a factor at all but merely serves as a differentiating factor between cognitions and is thus a necessary but insufficient condition for their truth. As for another condition, it remains the widely-appealed reliability of their sources, i.e., causal conditions of their generation. Therefore, the concept of truth, although it may be acausal in the aspect of its justification, must still remain causal in terms of its generation. But if we turn to the theory of truth itself, we will have to admit that orientalists often show Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā in an unfavorable light. The fact is that they employ expressions that might make readers think that Kumārila suggests abandoning the full-fledged truth in favor of a more realistic but less "authentic" conception thereof. Thus, Taber argues that

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[74] In fact, Alston's theory can even be interpreted as a variety of foundationalism.

[75] J. Taber. What Did Kumārila Bhaṭṭa Mean… p. 214.

[76] Theoretically speaking, any vague belief can be interpreted as knowledge, but that would not have any sense from a purely epistemological standpoint.

[77] G. P. Bhatt. The Basic Ways of Knowing: An In-Depth Study of Kumārila's Contribution to Indian Epistemology. Delhi, 1989, pp. 91–93.

he refuses to recognize our ability to ultimately know that a particular cognition is really true.[78] In turn, Arnold, although he emphasizes that the truth in Pārthasārathi's theory is full-blooded, reduces the entire question to the method of its justification — as if the fact that we can justify the truth of a belief at the first level is in itself enough to ensure it.[79] In fact, Kumārila raises the question of both justification and truth and therefore claims something more: that truth does not exist as a justificative ontological correlate of knowledge and is identical to justifiedness in a "good" case, which can be distinguished only introspectively. Here we should not be confused by the fact that Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā admittedly adheres to a correspondence theory of truth — it indeed adheres to a special variety thereof that does not allow the possibility of truth beyond introspective justification. Let us explain the general situation with specific examples.

Suppose my neighbor came up to me and said, "Let's go see what a tree has been planted in our public courtyard!" If I were to follow him and see the planted tree, according to *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, I could look at it even a whole day but still would not confirm my belief that a tree has been planted in our courtyard — all because it was already justified at the time of the arising of the corresponding cognition. Accordingly, my motive to go out into the yard could be anything but to make sure that the tree had been planted. This is so because the knowledge of this fact was the cause, not the result, of my action. Only two reservations are necessary here: the respective cognition had indeed to arise, and the knowledge I initially had was indirect. As for the first condition, there had to be certain general and particular prerequisites for the arising of the cognition: I had to know what a tree is, that my house had a public courtyard, that trees could be planted there, that they perhaps were planned to be planted there, etc. The second point is that since I still did not have a direct perception of the tree when my cognition arose, the knowledge I acquired in that case can only be called indirect. But we should not go too far in this regard: in terms of the way of justification, direct and indirect knowledge are no different. Their only difference is that the truth of indirect knowledge depends on the truth of direct knowledge, and, accordingly, the former is less secure, i.e., more susceptible to invalidation. Thus, at the moment of direct perception of the tree, a new cognition had simply arisen in me, whereas the old one had neither been invalidated nor confirmed. A two-order justification of belief is here out of the question.

Another example, frequently found in the literature, will help us to better understand the difference between *svataḥ prāmāṇya* and externalism. Thus, according to the latter, we have every reason to consider the readings of a car's gas gauge reliable without having to additionally check the fuel level in the tank — simply because numerous assumptions about this level based on the gauge's readings have proved successful.[80] Let's leave an explanation of how a gas gauge can be considered reliable regardless of the actual fuel level, especially if it is broken, on the conscience of externalists and confine ourselves to comparing this approach with *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. From its perspective, we indeed can — and even cannot but — know the fuel level based on the gauge's readings, even if it is broken and regardless of previous experience of its use, provided that a relevant cognition arises. This knowledge would be indirect, but it would be irrational to doubt it without additional reasons. Thus, if we check the fuel level by other

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[78] J. Taber. What Did Kumārila Bhaṭṭa Mean… p. 214.

[79] D. Arnold. Buddhists, Brahmins… p. 107.

[80] J. Briesen. Reliabilism, bootstrapping, and epistemic circularity. Synthese, Vol. 190, No. 18, December 2013, p. 4362.

methods and find that it is normal, we will gain direct knowledge that neither confirms nor invalidates the knowledge obtained according to the readings. In this way, we can indeed consider the gauge reliable just by looking at it, but only as a consequence of the justifiedness of the respective belief, not because the presumed reliability of the gauge is a necessary condition for justifying a belief about its reliability. Therefore, we do not have to consider the gauge reliable in order to justify the respective belief; on the contrary, we must acknowledge it as justified regardless of the question of the gauge's reliability — at least, if we want to be rational and start a car trip. As a result of this procedure, we will, of course, also consider the gauge reliable, but if it turns out to be broken, that will not imply that the justifiedness of our false knowledge had something to do with the gauge's reliability. One of the Indian researchers of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* came to the following conclusion: "The Mimamsakas differ from the Naiyayikas[81] in two respects. First, the former regards the validity of knowledge as intrinsic and the invalidity of knowledge as extrinsic, while the latter the validity and the invalidity of knowledge both as extrinsic. Secondly, the former regards the novelty (*agrahitagrahitra*), correspondence (*arthavyabhicaritva*) and non-contradiction (*abhadhitatva*) as the cheracteristics of truth, while the latter correspondence as the content of truth, and workability (*prartisamarthya*) as the test of the knowledge of truth. Thirdly, the former advocates realism, pure and simple, while the latter realism and pragmatism, and regards validity as determined by the knowledge of practical efficiency, and invalidity as determined by knowledge of practical inefficience."[82] Thus, according to *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, only true knowledge can lead to a successful activity, but the successfulness itself will only be an indicator, not a criterion of its truth.

At this juncture, the following question may arise. We constantly emphasize that the justification of a belief occurs by virtue of the reality of a cognition itself, and it is inextricably related to appearance. But from the perspective of realist epistemologies, appearance is an attribute of an object. Moreover, according to relationalism, the variety of which *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is supposed to be, all cognizable attributes of an object belong to the object itself. Where does here remain room for the justificatory role of a cognition? To answer this question, it is appropriate to recall a few points. Firstly, a cognition is not limited to the functioning of the mind in general and thinking in particular,[83] although the latter participate in the process of cognition — all this was well known to Indian philosophers, primarily Brahmanists and Tantrists. Secondly, according to relationalism, an object, together with all its cognizable attributes, is an integral part of a cognition, which means that the latter is, in any case, a necessary condition for its knowledge. As for its justificatory role, the abovementioned Kumārila's theory of mutual causality between an object and a cognition, according to which the former is the cause of the latter, and that, in turn, is the cause of the cognizedness thereof,[84] serves simply to, on the one hand, emphasize that even a mind-external object outside cannot be known without a cognition, and, on the other, explain why this or that object is cognized by a specific, not by any, subject. However, the adherents of *svataḥ prakāśa* stress the fact that this theory does not cope with the

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[81] Of course, we do not mean to imply that Nyāya is a form of externalism. It is very far from it, although even Nyāya could not do without certain elements thereof.

[82] M. Sreenivasulu. The Test of Truth and Error in Indian Philosophy. Tirupati, 1991, p. 78.

[83] To claim the opposite would mean trying to make thinking a justificative ontological correlate of cognitions, which has been actually done by Western philosophers since antiquity.

[84] G. P. Bhatt. The Basic Ways of Knowing… pp. 48–50.

second task; but anyway, the overall focus of both doctrines is obvious. Thus, according to *svataḥ prāmāṇya,* even an objective appearance cannot be justified without a cognition since it determines which object is known and by whom. After all, we should not forget that even though the truth of a belief depends on the truth of an object, the belief itself is inherent in a subject, who is not an object.

To complete the consideration of the relationalism of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, it remains to give additional arguments in favor of this interpretation. The first one, as we have already noted, is obvious: it seems that no researcher of this doctrine doubts that it is a kind of direct or naïve realism. Thus, Arnold himself noted that the Mīmāṃsā philosophers show a "peculiarly strong reluctance to allow the possible involvement of anything like 'sense-data'."[85] But nothing prevents us from taking another step and claiming that they were motivated by the more general reluctance, peculiar to relationalism, to admit the existence of what is now called representational content in the case of true direct knowledge. Besides, no matter what one thinks about Kumārila's theory of cognizedness, it is clear that it is aimed at harmonizing ontology and realist epistemology. In particular, Pārthasārathi's oft-quoted claim that a cognition is reduced to a justified appearance of an object's truth[86] can be interpreted not just as an argument against *svataḥ prakāśa* but also as an argument in favor of the fact that an object is an integral part of a cognition. Finally, it should be recalled that Kumārila also put forward the doctrine of the perceptibility of universals. This topic is rarely touched upon in Oriental studies, and the very need for such a statement of the question may seem puzzling. Thus, Taber, who paid special attention to it, noted that according to Kumārila, the perceptibility of universals is a necessary condition for the functioning of language and inferential knowledge.[87] This conclusion can be elaborated by pointing out that the doctrine in question can serve to bridge the gap between the direct perception and a perceptual judgment within the framework of relationalism[88] — at least, it actually serves that purpose. Moreover, Kumārila is far from the only proponent of this theory in Indian philosophy. Thus, one can notice a remarkable pattern: all the schools that proceed from the doctrine of the *tattvas*[89] acknowledge both *svataḥ prāmāṇya* and the perceptibility of universals. These include Sāṅkhya, Yóga of Patañjali, Vedānta, and Tantrism.[90] This suggests that *tattva* is nothing but a most general elementary perceived universal, and the doctrine of the perceptibility of universals is necessary for *svataḥ prāmāṇya* precisely as a kind of relationalism.

In concluding this section, it is also important to mention that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* of Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā was almost unconditionally accepted[91] by at least two other schools of Indian philosophy — Śaiva Siddhānta[92] and Pratyabhijñā[93]. Both are the most philosophically

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[85] D. Arnold. Buddhists, Brahmins… p. 90.

[86] Ibid., pp. 92–94; J. Taber. What Did Kumārila Bhaṭṭa Mean… pp. 213–214.

[87] J. Taber. A Road Not Taken in Indian Epistemology: Kumārila's Defence of the Perceptibility of Universals. Indian Epistemology and Metaphysics, ed. by Joerg Tuske. London and New York, 2017, pp. 255–257.

[88] See M. A. Bandurin. The Noumenal Morass... pp. 41-E–44-E.

[89] "*Tattva*" literally means "suchness" and is considered a general element of reality irreducible to others.

[90] This picture is somewhat spoiled by Mīmāṃsā itself, which, along with Nyāya and other schools, adheres to the doctrine of categories (*padārthas*), not of *tattvas*.

[91] The divergencies mainly come down to the *svataḥ prakāśa* doctrine and a theory of cognitive error.

[92] See K. Sivaraman. Śaivism in Philosophical Perspective. Delhi, 1973, pp. 337–368.

[93] See, e.g., I. Ratié. Le Soi et l'Autre: Identité, différence et altérité dans la philosophie de la Pratyabhijñā. Leiden and Boston, 2011, p. 654.

developed doctrines of Tantric Śaivism — dualistic and nondualistic, respectively.[94] The former shares with Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā ontological dualism, *ātmavāda*, and a general anti-Buddhist attitude. The latter rejects dualism, differing from both these two schools in this respect, but is allied to Śaiva Siddhānta since it is also a kind of Tantric Śaivism and adheres to the doctrine of *svataḥ prakāśa*. However, despite substantial ontological differences between the three schools, from a purely epistemological viewpoint, they can be called congenial. Accordingly, if it is true that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* of Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā is a paradigm case of strong disjunctivism, then the epistemologies of these two tantric schools are also paradigm cases thereof. Moreover, if we consider Śaiva Siddhānta and Pratyabhijñā as the Tantric Śaiva philosophy par excellence and take into account that less significant schools of Tantrism might be drawn in their orbit, we can say that strong disjunctivism constituted one of the common paradigms of Indian epistemology, and in two varieties that do not affect its very essence — in conjunction with *parataḥ* and *svataḥ prakāśa*, respectively. Therefore, even if it is true that the *parataḥ prakāśa* doctrine is untenable, the epistemological paradigm of Kumārila and Pārthasārathi would not suffer from that. We will return to this issue in the next section.

IV. The Defence of the Veda's Authority and Other Shortcomings of *Svataḥ Prāmāṇya* of Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā

Now, towards the end of this study, it is necessary to dwell on the issue for the sake of solving which the epistemological doctrine of Kumārila was largely formulated, namely, the defense of the Veda's authority. Such an approach is quite deliberate since we believe that Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā has only partially achieved this goal. Indeed, it cannot be denied that the authority of the Veda has been justified by it on common grounds. However, a purely epistemological approach seemed insufficient to Kumārila, and he resorted to ontological arguments. The general background of the issue is as follows. Even though *svataḥ prāmāṇya* radically dissociated the sources of the justifiedness of knowledge with the sources of its origin, causal factors of the generation of cognitions remain for it — as they do for other epistemologies — a necessary condition for truth. Accordingly, from its perspective, a false cognition is generated by a non-existent object, but since, at the moment of the arising of the former, causality is reversed as it were, and the cognizedness of the object, along with the justifiedness of the knowledge thereof, begins to be determined by the cognition — since, as Kumārila emphasized, it has to perform an independent causal function — it becomes possible to discover the falseness of the object only provided that an ontological invalidation of the corresponding belief occurs. Such a situation, when the nature of a cognition is, so to speak, naïvely convincing and of its source brutely factual, expectedly breeds a certain suspicion towards sources of cognitions as such, since it by no means possible to discover their unreliability in each specific case until a moment of the possible invalidation of knowledge.

All this prompted Mīmāṃsā to put forward a doctrine according to which human speech concerning an object that cannot be perceived and/or uttered by an untrustworthy person is

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[94] And, among other things, they adopt the *sat-kārya-vāda* doctrine, which indicates that it is quite consistent with *svataḥ prāmāṇya* and gives reason to believe that Sāṅkhya should also be included in this list. In turn, the fact that both of these doctrines adhered to the *svataḥ prakāśa* principle is an additional argument against an externalist interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*.

disqualified as a source of knowledge. So far, everything is quite reasonable, but Kumārila does not stop at that. Thus, even if the above two conditions are satisfied, human speech is still deprived of the status of being a possible source of knowledge of supersensible truths, even if it is uttered by a representative of the highest caste. Accordingly, even *The Laws of Manu* are acknowledged as true only insofar as they are based on the Veda.[95] Finally, all this culminates in the well-known doctrine according to which the Veda has neither a divine nor a human author, which from an epistemological perspective is tantamount to the claim that a certain class of cognitions has no source at all. And since that is so, then, even though Vedic knowledge can be considered true only on common grounds, there is no even a theoretical possibility of its refutation.[96] But how is the very thesis of the authorlessness of the Veda justified? Kumārila's opponents emphasize that the key role is played here by the epistemological principle, rejected by other philosophical schools, including Prabhākara Mīmāṃsā, according to which we are capable of knowing the non-existence of an object independently of perception or inference.[97]

In modern terms, it is an application of the epistemic closure principle, which is indeed an integral part of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. Thus, if we know that it is raining now, this implies that we necessarily know that it is not not raining now, i.e., we cannot know that it is not raining now. Kumārila, however, believes that we can also assert the following: if we know that it is not raining now, we cannot know that it is raining now. This is logically correct, but the question is how exactly we know that it is not raining. Indeed, it is one thing to assert that there is no "not-cup" on a particular part of a table because we perceive a cup there, it is another to claim that we can know a "not-cup" independently of perception or inference. However, Kumārila virtually claims the following: since we know that the Veda does not have an author, we cannot know that the latter exists, which means that they really do not exist.[98] However, the possibility that we can know the non-existence of something irrespective of the existence of something else seems unconvincing even in terms of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, and so it is not surprising that that is denied by the majority of its followers, not to mention the adherents of *parataḥ prāmāṇya*.

But in fact, the problem is even deeper. *Contra* Kumārila, we cannot claim that the Veda has no author merely on the basis of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* since this requires going beyond epistemology. As we have already noted, this doctrine denies the possibility of discovering a source of a cognition before its possible invalidation, and therefore it would be strange to try to make ontological claims based on the doctrine under consideration about the general nature of a source of even a limited class of cognitions and even trying to deny it. Accordingly, in this situation, we should at least not be able to know that the Veda does not have an author, even if they indeed do not exist. Moreover, from a purely epistemological point of view, we should rather have grounds to claim that any cognition must have a source. This conclusion, however, is still very far from anthropomorphism. Tantric Śaivism is revealing in this regard, as it, basing on the very same *svataḥ prāmāṇya* and relying on Agamas, claims the exact opposite of Kumārila's doctrine: that any sacred text, including the Veda, and even worldly teachings, has a single

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[95] K. Kataoka. Kumārila's Notion of Pauruṣeyavacana. Rivista Di Studi Sudasiatici, II, 2007, pp. 39–40.

[96] D. Arnold. Buddhists, Brahmins… p. 63.

[97] J. Taber. Much Ado About Nothing: Kumārila, Śāntarakṣita, and Dharmakīrti on the Cognition of Non-Being. Journal of the Americal Oriental Society, Vol. 121, No. 1, January–March 2001, p. 77.

[98] J. Taber. What Did Kumārila Bhaṭṭa Mean… p. 205.

source — *Īśvara* (Śiva), who is necessarily a universal cognizing subject (*Ātman*), and that the spiritual truths of Agamas can be potentially cognized by anyone, even in direct perception.[99]

Finally, we should return to the *svataḥ prakāśa* doctrine to make arguments in favor of the fact that, contrary to Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā, it cannot affect the essence of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. From its perspective, a false cognition is also produced by a non-existent object, and at the moment of the arising of the former, causality also is reversed as it were so that the cognition of the object, along with the justifiedness of knowledge thereof, begins to be determined by the cognition, which has to perform an independent causal function, and it becomes possible to discover the object's falseness only in the case of an ontological invalidation of the corresponding belief. The only principal difference here will be that the object will not receive an attribute of cognizedness accessible to a second-order cognition, and the cognizedness thereof will be determined by the cognition together with its self-awareness so that the unity of the cognition and the object becomes a differentiating factor of the cognizing subject.[100] So, *contra* Kumārila, *svataḥ prakāśa* cannot by itself lead to idealism, and it is compatible with relationalism at least as well as *parataḥ prakāśa*, if not better — at any rate, it is a perfect expression of a single-level doctrine of justification and cannot even be suspected of representationalism. However, it should be said in defense of Kumārila that he did not mean that in order to fully cognize an object, one cognition must become the object of another along with its object, but only that the attribute of cognizedness added to the object by the first cognition becomes accessible to direct perception by the second one and serves as the basis for an inference about the existence of the first.[101] However, this line of reasoning convinces far from all philosophers. Thus, it seems quite logical that in order for a cognition to appear true, it must appear so to a cognizing subject of which it is an aspect. And for it not to become true simply by the fact of self-awareness, it is not necessary to deprive it of the capability of being aware of itself at the moment of its arising — it is enough just to emphasize the difference between the reality of knowledge and its truth, implied by strong disjunctivism. The *parataḥ prakāśa* doctrine, along with a particular way of defending the Veda's authority and the admission of the possibility of knowing the non-existence of an object independently of direct perception and inference, is thus one of the three most obvious shortcomings of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* of Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā.

V. *Svataḥ Prāmāṇya* of Prabhākara Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta as a Variety of Weak Disjunctivism

Since our study so far has been mainly devoted to Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā and other paradigm cases of strong disjunctivism in Indian philosophy, it remains to say a few words about another variety of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, which in our terminology falls under the category of weak disjunctivism. Its most vivid representatives are the epistemologies of Prabhākara Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta. Despite the significant divergences between them, they, along with other schools drawn in their orbit, can be considered belonging to the same category. The similarity between them is as follows. Both of them are, unlike Uṃveka's doctrine, a full-fledged *svataḥ*

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[99] See, e.g., R. Torella. Inherited cognitions: *prasiddhi, āgama, pratibhā, śabdana*: Bhartṛhari, Utpaladeva, Abhinavagupta, Kumārila and Dharmakīrti in dialogue. Scriptural authority, reason and action. Proceedings of a panel at the 14th World Sanskrit Conference, Kyoto, Sept 1–5, 2009. Wien 2013, pp. 455–480.

[100] See C. Ram-Prasad. Indian Philosophy… pp. 71–74.

[101] G. P. Bhatt. The Basic Ways of Knowing… p. 69.

prāmāṇya, i.e., they deny the existence of a justificative ontological correlate of cognitions. Besides, they admit that the invalidation of a cognition can only be ontological, i.e., they adhere to the principle of *parataḥ aprāmāṇya*. However, they do not admit the possibility that the reality of knowledge can embrace both truth and falsehood. In other words, it can be said that these doctrines agree with the first and third main claims of strong disjunctivism but reject the second, according to which the appearance of the truth of an object characteristic of a cognitive error, while being completely real knowledge, does not exist either before or after the moment of its invalidation.[102] For them, it is not real knowledge, because they believe that only true knowledge deserves this status. These epistemologies thus resemble ancient infallibilism, or at least the way it is usually conceived, but the one denying the existence of a justificative ontological correlate of knowledge. Besides, it can even be said with some reservations that they accept the justified true belief account of knowledge. That is the salient feature of these doctrines, which apparently have no counterparts in Western philosophy.

At this juncture, the following objection may arise. Everything stated above is quite consistent and logical: the truth of a belief is justified by virtue of the reality of a cognition itself, but a false belief still cannot be considered knowledge. Why then is this variety of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* called weak disjunctivism? The general answer is that it is irrationalism, incapable of explaining a practical activity of a subject accomplished on the basis of a false belief. Indeed, emphasizing that false belief is not knowledge will not help the case because this leads to intractable difficulties even for *parataḥ prāmāṇya*.[103] For *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, in turn, these difficulties are doubled, as it will have to simultaneously deny the difference between belief and knowledge and claim that in the case of a cognitive error, a belief proves to be not knowledge *ab initio*. This situation forced the schools in question to get out of it in two different ways: a realist and an illusionist. Thus, Prabhākara is famous for his claim that any cognition is by definition true, and a cognitive error is therefore a sheer impossibility. Accordingly, his task was reduced to showing that the so-called error cannot be fully considered as such in any case. In this connection, he rejected the two theses advocated by Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā and other schools: that a true cognition should lead to a successful activity[104] and that at the moment of a cognitive error, we perceive a true object, which is as it were substituted by a false one. From a purely epistemological perspective, our insane "Napoleon" is thus the real Napoleon, and the fact that he does not perform the functions of the emperor of France is a manifestation of the erroneous activity resulting from a certain confusion, which in itself is not a cognition proper but complements the existing true knowledge. This is so because a cognition cannot have a relation to an object that might not be what it is. The problem with such an approach is that an object of an erroneous action must actually exist and be sufficiently similar to what it is confused with, but Prabhākara's theory is unable to do justice to this. Therefore, it is rightly criticized by pointing to the fact that an appeal to an erroneous action to explain a cognitive error within it is useless and concluding that it lacks sufficient grounds to consider the so-called error false.[105] As for Advaita Vedānta, it agrees with Prabhākara that any cognition is true by definition and that it cannot

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[102] M. A. Bandurin. Strong and Weak Disjunctivism... p. 67-E.

[103] Manifested, in particular, in the inability to positively explain the content of a "bad" case.

[104] T. Chatterjea. Knowledge and Freedom in Indian Philosophy. Oxford, 2002, p. 45.

[105] See G. P. Bhatt. The Basic Ways of Knowing… pp. 106–107.

relate to an object that might not be what it is,[106] but is spared the need to reduce the error to the sphere of false activity. From its perspective, a cognitive error is indescribable in terms of reality and unreality, which perfectly fits with its ontology, according to which the world as such enjoys a similar status. It cannot be called a cognition proper but only a resemblance thereof and thus a kind of by-effect. However, unlike Prabhākara, Advaita Vedānta does not try to emphasize that only an erroneous action, and not the concomitant knowledge, lacks the status of a cognition — for it, both a false cognition and an action based on it equally lack this status. Of course, within such an approach, a false action also acquires the status of neither real nor unreal, which is discovered at the moment of the invalidation of the corresponding cognition, even given that it must first arise for this event to make sense.[107] This is the price that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* has to pay if it wants to emphasize that knowledge must be true by definition.

As an additional illustration of what such an approach can lead to, it is appropriate to consider the works of J. N. Mohanty's pupil T. Chatterjea, who defended a fundamental dissertation on *svataḥ prāmāṇya* in 1968.[108] She fully adhered to her teacher's thesis that *prāmāṇya* is precisely truth and strictly followed the principle that knowledge must be true by definition, but took the path of defending *svataḥ prāmāṇya*.[109] This led to a particular interpretation thereof. It should be noted from the outset that its indubitable merit is in many respects a fair criticism of Prabhākara's doctrine and a clear comprehension of the differences between the latter and the epistemology of Uṃveka; however, we are primarily interested in its criticism of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* of Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā. Chatterjea proceeds from the assumption that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is a doctrine according to which truth constitutes an integral part of cognition. Accordingly, from her perspective, it turns out that this doctrine serves as the best expression of the principle according to which knowledge must be true by definition, which fits well with Mohanty's thesis that the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* principle is applicable precisely when *prāmāṇya* is considered as an attribute of knowledge. She even claims that *svataḥ prāmāṇya* virtually identifies the concepts of *jñāna* and *pramā* and considers knowledge to be true belief since the question of its justification for this doctrine does not arise.[110] From our perspective, it is better to leave this definition of knowledge for externalism, and "justified belief" would be more suitable for *svataḥ prāmāṇya*. According to such an approach, Chatterjea sees Advaita Vedānta as the most consistent variety of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, Prabhākara's doctrine as somewhat less consistent, and the epistemology of Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā as highly questionable since it allegedly faces an insurmountable dilemma.

However, no independent arguments are given in favor of the principle that knowledge must be true by definition, and since *prāmāṇya* is interpreted as truth, it looks like *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is simply chosen as the best expression of this principle. If Chatterjea had doubted it even for a second, she would have been able to look at *svataḥ prāmāṇya* in a completely different way, realizing that it is those who admit the existence of a justificative ontological

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[106] This thesis is perhaps the only serious obstacle to a relationalist interpretation of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* of Prabhākara Mīmāṃsā and Advaita Vedānta. However, there are no grounds to assert that it is a kind of representationalism, either, and so it remains only to admit that it is inconsistent relationalism.

[107] See T. Chatterjea. Knowledge and Freedom... pp. 25–40.

[108] T. Chatterjea. A Critical Examination of the Theory of Svataḥ-Prāmāṇya, Ph.D. Thesis. Calcutta, 1968.

[109] And because of this, she refused to make a distinction between knowledge and belief.

[110] T. Chatterjea. Knowledge and Freedom... p. 29.

correlate of cognitions, i.e., adherents of *parataḥ prāmāṇya*, that cannot do without it in the first place. In contrast, those who deny it have the grounds not to allow this assumption, and not as an end in itself, but as a necessary consequence of the internal logic of the doctrine. From this point of view, it is Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā's approach that will look the most consistent and the one of the other two schools irrational. However, Chatterjea sees an insurmountable dilemma for it: if truth is an attribute of any cognitions, it cannot serve as a distinctive feature of only true ones.[111] And in order to overcome this dilemma, Kumārila allegedly claims that in case of the invalidation of a cognition, its very truth is destroyed. As for Pārthasārathi's reservations that only an appearance of truth is invalidated, they are dismissed straight off[112] because we supposedly have only two options at our disposal: to assert either that truth cannot manifest itself in an erroneous cognition or that what manifests itself in it is not truth. This is so because something cannot be manifested and absent at the same time.[113] With all that said, truth in the epistemology of Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā is tantamount to a psychological claim to truth,[114] and *svataḥ prāmāṇya* of Advaita Vedānta compares favorably with it since it effectively deprives false knowledge of the status of knowledge.

Such an approach to the issue is interesting in that it immediately rejects the arguments on which rest the interpretations of Taber, Arnold, and our own. Moreover, no arguments at all are given in favor of the thesis that something allegedly cannot simultaneously be manifest and absent. The following question immediately arises: even if one were to assume that truth in *svataḥ prāmāṇya* of Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā is indeed reduced to a psychological truth-claim, why then insist that at the moment of the invalidation of a false cognition, it is precisely truth that is destroyed? However, Chatterjea literally identifies them because she believes that such a psychological understanding is the result of the fact that truth is allegedly considered by Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsā as a common element between truth and falsehood.[115] All this suggests the following. There is indeed a common element between a true and false cognition — knowledge in the form of justified appearance of truth. But its admission is possible only if we distinguish the reality of knowledge from its truth. Besides, in that case, we will have no reason to believe that truth cannot be simultaneously manifest and absent, since this latter claim looks like a mere corollary of the thesis that knowledge must be true by definition because truth is supposedly an integral part of any cognition. We will be thereby spared the need to choose between the destruction of truth of a cognition and the "destruction" of a cognition itself by reducing it to the status of neither real nor unreal at the moment of its invalidation.

VI. Conclusion

The subject matter of the last section unwittingly makes the question of which exactly of the three main claims or three basic ontological principles of strong disjunctivism makes it strong more acute. If we were to remain within the framework of Western philosophy, we could give quite a long list of criteria, including both these principles and claims and additional

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[111] Ibid., pp. 83–84.
[112] As in the works of Mohanty.
[113] T. Chatterjea. Knowledge and Freedom... pp. 52–53.
[114] Ibid., p. 28.
[115] T. Chatterjea. A Critical Examination... p. 100.

arguments, while finding it difficult to identify the main one. However, the inclusion of Indian philosophy in the research field reduces the elements of this list one by one. Thus, it could be reasonably argued that one of these criteria is the denial of the thesis about the indistinguishability of the phenomenal character of hallucination and true perception. But it turns out that this thesis is basically alien to Indian philosophy, including epistemologies that can be called weak disjunctivism, for example, the one of the Nyāya school. Further, it turns out that even the denial of the existence of a justificative ontological correlate of cognitions cannot be called such a criterion, since there is a special kind of weak disjunctivism, apparently having no counterparts in Western philosophy, which agrees with this denial but refuses to admit the difference between the reality of knowledge and its truth. Therefore, if we want to identify a truly universal criterion of strong disjunctivism, our choice virtually narrows down to one option — the principle according to which the reality of knowledge embraces both truth and falsity, understood as justified appearance of truth. It is indeed not peculiar neither to any of the numerous varieties of weak disjunctivism nor to conjunctivism or externalism. The main thing is not to lose sight of the reason that makes one accept it. Thus, of course, it cannot be considered in isolation from the first basic ontological principle, according to which knowledge has no justificative ontological correlate. The latter necessarily implies that any cognition is justified. And as a result of reflection on the nature of any cognition, it becomes clear that each of them cannot be true but, at the same time, must remain itself. This must be acknowledged if we want to avoid absurd conclusions.

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