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New intellectuals in seventeenth-century India

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I

The intellectual history of Sanskrit South Asia in the last centuries before European expansion poses serious obstacles to scholarly understanding. Indeed, if there is a dilemma about these last Sanskrit intellectuals beyond the crucial fact, and the causes of the fact, that they were to be the last, it is that they are so difficult for contemporary scholarship to approach.

The first and foremost problem is the complexity of the discourses themselves that they produced. In idiom and subject matter, these surely represent some of the most sophisticated and refined known to human history. And this complexity is redoubled by the fact that the seventeenth-century intellectuals were the legatees of two millennia of brilliant thought, whose most important representatives, from the earliest among them onward, always remained partners in argument. Understanding anything later, therefore, always presupposes understanding everything earlier. A second obstacle pertains to the greater social world within which these discourses were produced, and, more particularly, to the relationship between them and other forms of intellectual production, whether Persianate or vernacular. For most of the key thinkers in question, we are confronted with what is virtually a total absence of contextuality. In many cases not a shred of documentary evidence is available to help us give life to their writings, which we can only vaguely situate in time and place. An additional, and in some ways the most obstructive, problem is a higher-order question, namely, whether we can even reasonably speak of history

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for South Asia at all, intellectual or otherwise. Indeed, whether culture or polity or society in South Asia can be said to have a history before European colonialism and modernity blasted life in the subcontinent out of its putative continuum has been a central if sometimes tacit concern of both orientalist and post-orientalist humanistic scholarship. The conceptual terrain that scholarship on the question has covered in the twentieth century has been enormous, and deserves a brief recapitulation.

The dominant view at the beginning of the century was expressed by the Oxford Sanskritist whose argument, that the reason India has no written history is because it never made any, provided comfort to a colonial administration that conveniently discovered stagnation everywhere. This gave way, in the post-independence period, to an obsessive search for historical dynamism, with the two or three centuries before colonialism in particular coming under increasing scrutiny. At the present moment, by a *commodius vicus* of recirculation that is almost Joycean, we are told once again, only this time by the subjects of South Asian history, that the very mode of historically experiencing and knowing the world is alien to authentic India (Ashis Nandy, an unrefined argument) or inadequate for understanding the nonsecularity purportedly characteristic of it (Dipesh Chakrabarty, a subtle one).¹

Among the many complexities that beset the problematic of an Indian history, intellectual, political or other, not the least if the most obvious is what we mean by the term history itself. Less self-evident but equally intractable are the different ideological commitments that press upon our analyses. For instance, the revelation of change as such in India's past, originating in the impulse to provide a counterpoint to the imperialist and vulgar Marxist belief that colonialism offered emancipation from archaic quiescence, has come to be regarded in post-orientalist

¹ The Oxford Sanskritist is A.A. Macdonell (see his *History of Sanskrit Literature*, Oxford, 1900, pp. 10–11). The ideologeme has a much longer history (recall Marx: 'Indian society has no history at all' except of invasions into an 'unresisting and unchanging society'; see Shlomo Avineri, ed., *Karl Marx on Colonialism and Modernization*, New York, 1969, p. 132), and it remains very much alive today. Consider Michel de Certeau, who compounds this error with another: in India, 'la marche du temps n'a pas besoin de se certifier par la mise à distance de "passés", pas plus qu'il n'est nécessaire à un lieu de se définir en se distinguant d'"hérésies"' (*L'Écriture de l'histoire*, Paris, 1975, p. 4). The quest for historical dynamism at all costs, but often with diminishing returns, may be perceived in a variety of texts on the late medieval/early modern period, for example, on Vijayanagara (Noboru Karashima, *Towards a New Formation: South Indian Society under Vijayanagar Rule*, Delhi, 1992); the Telugu Nayakas (V. Narayana Rao, David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nayaka-Period Tamil Nadu*, Delhi, 1992); even among Cambridge School historians (C.A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire*, Cambridge, 1988, pp. 7–44). The return of the repressed may be seen in Ashis Nandy, 'History's Forgotten Doubles', *History and Theory*, Vol. 34(2), 1995, pp. 44–66 (I thank Sanjay Subrahmanyam for this reference), to which we must juxtapose the remarkable essay of Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The Time of History and the Times of Gods', in Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd, eds, *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, Durham/London, 1997, pp. 35–60. I omit discussion of lumpen History as practised by, for example, RSS founder Savarkar, for whom seventeenth-century India was 'a veritable Pakistan', a view exploded by an ounce of real historical knowledge.

historiography as something of an absolute good—and stasis as something akin to mortal sin. A third complication has to do with what we might call multiple temporalities, the possibility that in some worlds, culture (or polity or society) might be unevenly historical. As one example of these various complexities, consider Sanskrit literature. Can this be said to have a history (a beginning for example, or an end) whether from an external perspective or from the internal one of the producers of the literature? If, viewed from both the inside and the outside, Sanskrit literature has a history in one sense (as I believe it indisputably does have), it seems to have none in another. Certain norms were considered as transhistorically valid; the expressive and aesthetic universe that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers aspired to inhabit was that of fourth-century masters, an aspiration they sometimes, if rarely, achieved. And in this there may lie an analogy to be drawn with certain larger dimensions of pre-colonial polity. Whatever other innovations may be going on in the domain of early modern polity and economy broadly construed (in terms, for example, of the expansion of Mughal rule or of India's incorporation into the nascent capitalist world-system), in the self-understanding of Sanskrit polity one could argue that a steady state of perfected governmentality, of very old stamp, was everywhere sought, and that in this domain, accordingly, 'stasis' represents not failure but achieved goal.

All these conceptual difficulties constrain our understanding of the remarkable transformations in the discursive and social world of South Asian intellectuals in the last centuries before colonialism, and no doubt help explain the fact that the intellectual history of this period—one that witnessed an explosion of scholarly production unprecedented for its quantity and quality—remains as good as unwritten. I should note at once that I am using the term 'intellectual' here in a wide and not very specific sense (as in the well-known essay of Edward Shils), and although I will break down the catch-all category 'South Asian intellectuals' at the end of this article, suffice it here to say that I am concerned with that class of literati or 'prestige intellectuals' who expressed themselves through the medium of Sanskrit, still the premiere code of discourse for systematic thought outside the Persianate order.² What is of interest to me here is the crucial if little appreciated fact that increasingly throughout the seventeenth century, these intellectuals in all the core disciplines, foremost among them the traditional trivium of knowledges of 'words, sentences, and reasons' (grammar, hermeneutics—that is, *Mīmāṃsā* and, by this date, *dharmaśāstra*—and epistemology) as well as literary theory and rhetoric, began to identify themselves or their opponents as *navya* or 'new' scholars. The term appears to signify not just a different relationship with the past but a different way of thinking.

² See Edward Shils, 'The Intellectuals and the Powers: Some Perspectives for Comparative Analysis', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 1(1), 1968, pp. 1–23. The narrow sense of the term (as in, say, Pierre Bourdieu's 'The Corporatism of the Universal: The Role of Intellectuals in the Modern World', *Telos*, Vol. 81, 1989, pp. 99–110), is post-Dreyfus. The term 'prestige intellectuals' is borrowed from Didier Masseau, *L'invention de l'intellectuel dans l'Europe du XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1994, pp. 38 ff.

Sometimes *navya* will refer specifically to the remarkable innovations associated with the school of ‘new philosophical analysis’ (*navyanyāya*) that originated in late thirteenth- to early fourteenth-century Mithilā, spreading from there across India with extraordinary rapidity and appeal; typically, these innovations are associated with Gaṅgeśa himself, author of the founding text of the movement (*Tattvacintāmaṇi* [Wishing Stone of Philosophical Principles]), sometimes with later thinkers such as Raghunātha Śiromāṇi (fl. ca. 1550, Assam, Navadvip, Mithilā). But very often, the use of the term by seventeenth-century scholars will have no reference whatever to the new philosophical analysis in this narrow sense. When, as we shall see, the great polymath Kamalākara sometime in the 1620s or 1630s identified the position of Kaunda Bhaṭṭa (and others) on vernacular communicability as *navya*, what he is characterising as new is an idea that is new as such, one that in fact stands in opposition to the *navyanyāya*. Moreover, many seventeenth-century thinkers, regardless of the label they may have adopted, began to produce what, historically viewed, are objectively innovative kinds of scholarship, and in such a way as to suggest that a new conception of the development of knowledge itself had come into being. In fact, I believe we are able to perceive a sharp line being drawn, for the first time in Indian history, that systematically separated present knowledge from its past forms. At the same time, new social facts in the lifeworld of the Sanskrit intellectual begin to manifest themselves. Not least of these was the opportunity for increased circulation in unfamiliar conceptual universes, especially in Mughal north India but elsewhere as well, where interactions with Persianate intellectuals or Europeans became more common and more cordial.

I characterise and assess—very schematically, given the limits of this article, but also very provisionally given the complexities mentioned above—four thematics of a history of South Asian intellectuals and their discursive practices in the epoch that I will call (in a sense whose specificity will emerge from what follows) early modernity. These are: (a) the structure of the new historicality by which intellectuals began to organise their discourses; (b) the substance that was structured by this historicality, in other words, what is novel in the new intellectuality; (c) the important transformations in the lifeworld of the early modern Sanskrit intellectuals, difficult though these are to capture with any specificity, and the possible effects of new social circulation on Sanskrit cultural production; and (d) the history of intellectuals in seventeenth-century Europe, which, having run parallel to that of India for centuries, now diverged dramatically and produced a very different, uncompromising modernity that, through colonial dissemination, would eventually contest and undo the Sanskrit intellectual formation.

II

To appreciate the innovations in conceptions and discursive protocols, as these pertain to historicality, that we find among the writings of seventeenth-century intellectuals, we need some basic sense of the mentalité they inherited. The first

thing to remember is that for much of its existence and across most of its communities of practitioners, systematic thought in South Asia completely and utterly erased all evidence of its temporal being: it presented itself as something that took place entirely outside of time. In this, Sanskrit thought differed little from the theory and practice of European philosophy (modern no less than scholastic), which in its very core projects itself as discourse that transcends historicity as a relevant condition of its possibility.³ In India this kind of transcendence was achieved most notably by the elimination of all historical referentiality. The names and times and places of participants in intellectual discourse across fields are largely excluded even where such exclusion makes it appreciably more difficult to follow the dialogue between disputants that forms the basic structure of most Sanskrit philosophical exposition. We never hear the name Dignāga, for example, when the hermeneutist Kumārila (seventh century) critiques the fifth-century Buddhist logician, or the name Kumārila when he is critiqued by the eighth-century Śāntarakṣita. The names of the great Vedantic philosophers—Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Śrīpati, and so on from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries—are unspoken through all this entire half-millennium during which their mighty controversies with each other are conducted. This may seem like a simple case of the common ‘forms of censorship specific to the field of philosophical production’ that we can find elsewhere.⁴ In India, however, this mode of discourse also implied that all intellectual generations, disembedded from any spatio-temporal framework, were thought of as coexistent: the past was a very present conversation partner. It was also viewed as a superior partner, the master who made the primary statements in a discussion upon which later participants could only comment. In the face of the grandeur of the past, intellectuals typically assumed an attitude of inferiority: the universe was systematically entropic, and intellectual effort could be nothing but a quest to recover what had once been known more perfectly, but now was lost.⁵

It is these elementary tendencies of South Asian thought—perhaps they have become by now among specialists even intellectual-historical clichés—that appear to have been dramatically and fundamentally reversed in the late medieval/early modern period, beginning in the fourteenth century but gaining far greater currency by the seventeenth. Now it is the very history of the development of thought-systems itself, the periodisation of viewpoints, that not only becomes a principal method of organising the presentation of intellectual discourse but at times seems to constitute its very purpose. Concomitantly, ‘new’ has ceased to connote ‘worse’, and instead effectively serves to signify the furthest point of advancement in a discourse.

³ See for example Roger Chartier, ‘On the Relation of Philosophy and History’, in *Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations*, Ithaca, 1988, pp. 53–73.

⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger*, Stanford, 1991, pp. 3–4; cf. pp. 70 ff.

⁵ See my essay, ‘The Theory of Practice and the Practice of Theory in Indian Intellectual History’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 105, 1985, pp. 499–519.

This can be briefly illustrated by reference to a work exemplary of the procedure, and deserving of much wider appreciation than it appears yet to have received, the *Nyāyakaustubha*. This is a vast treatise on logic written by Mahādeva Punatāmbekara (fl. 1675), a Maharashtrian ‘from Puṇyastambha’ on the Godāvarī, as he tells us, but, like many of his intellectual compatriots, resident in Varanasi.⁶ Mahādeva deals in his work with matters that had long been standard in textbooks on epistemology and metaphysics, and follows the organisation of the discipline canonised by the *Tattvacintāmaṇi*, for which the *Nyāyakaustubha* functions as both commentary and fuller exposition. Much of what in Mahādeva’s text is symptomatic of the new intellectual method is coded already in the title. For the *kaustubha*—this refers to the gem made manifest at the primeval churning of the milk ocean by the gods and worn on the breast of Viṣṇu, and figuratively points to the precious knowledge that is now believed to be uncovered as much as recovered—becomes something of a new scholarly genre in our period. In it the attempt is made to organise the totality of knowledge in a given discipline by determining the most significant positions that had been taken in the past, and by sorting these chronologically and indicating where advancements had been made, to produce a new synthesis.⁷

The mode of exposition in Mahādeva’s treatise is thus dominantly historicist. He sets forth problems by differentiating the views of scholars, making very fine distinctions between schools, whom he often names and always positions in time. They are categorised—and such categories appear consistently throughout his work—as ‘ancients’ (*prācīna*), ‘followers of the ancients’ (*prācīnānuyāyin*), ‘moderns’ (*navīna*), ‘most up-to-date scholars’ (*atīnavīna*), and ‘contemporaries’ (*ādhunika*). He further links these categories to particular disciplines, such as ‘followers of the Mīmāṃsā’, and to specific individuals: ‘Raghunātha’, for example, ‘the followers of Raghunātha’, ‘the recent followers of Raghunātha’, and so on.⁸

⁶ *Nyāyakaustubha Pratyakṣakhaṇḍa*, edited by Umesh Mishra, Varanasi, 1930; *Nyāyakaustubha Śabdakhaṇḍa*, edited by V. Subrahmanyā Sastri, Thanjavur, 1982. Mahādeva’s genealogy is given in Vol. 1, p. 6; see also that of his grandfather Ananta Pāṇḍita at the conclusion of his commentary on the *Āryāsaptaśatī* (he was already resident in Varanasi when this work was completed in 1646, though he notes in his introduction to the *Rasamañjari* that his father was still living in Maharashtra). On the Maharashtrian population of Varanasi during this period, see fn 32 below.

⁷ Thus we have well-known *kaustubha* works on Mīmāṃsā by Khaṇḍadeva (ca. 1575–1665, Varanasi), on grammar by Bhāṭṭojī Dikṣita (d. 1645, Varanasi/Keladi), and on moral order by Anantadeva (fl. 1675, Varanasi; see below), less well-known works on literary theory, one by Kavikarṇapūra (d. ca. 1600, Navadvip) and by Viśveśvara (d. ca. 1750, Almora), and a little known text on Vedānta, the *Tattvakaustubha* of Bhāṭṭojī Dikṣita (a Kumbhakonam edition of 1964 is inaccessible to me). Not all these works follow the same discursive procedures. (I profited from discussion on the genre of the *kaustubha* with my former student Lawrence McCrea, University of Chicago, to whom I am also grateful for help in gathering various materials for this article.)

⁸ The many complications in these identifications remain to be fully disentangled. The *mīmāṃsakānuyāyin*, for example, appears to refer elsewhere, as in the *Śaktivādavicāra* of Gadādhara (ca. 1600), to certain ‘deviant’ schools of *nāvayanyāya*. See Gerdi Gerschheimer, *La théorie de la signification chez Gadādhara*, Paris, 1996, p. 626.

Such designations are applied to hermeneutists, grammarians, literary theorists as well as logicians and cosmologists (*Vaiśeṣika*), demonstrating how vast, indeed culture-wide, was the temporal revaluation of forms of knowledge that was under way in the eyes of Mahādeva.

Other scholars of the period reproduce many of these, and add still more categories, including further grades of contemporaneity such as ‘very new’ and ‘brand new’ (*navyatara*, *abhinava*), as in the grammarian Kauṇḍa Bhaṭṭa (fl. 1650, Maharashtra/Varanasi) and the hermeneutist Gāgā Bhaṭṭa (ca. 1600–85, Varanasi) respectively, or further grades of antiquity such as ‘the oldest’ (*ciramtana*), and *jīrṇa*, a term sometimes positively valorised (‘the elders’), as in Kamalākara Bhaṭṭa (fl. 1620, Varanasi), sometimes negatively (‘antiquated’) as, it seems, in Kamalākara’s nephew, Gāgā. A significant binary without obvious antecedent also comes into use now, which counterposes to ‘traditionalists’ (*sāṃpradāyika*) or the ‘ancients’ (*prāñcāḥ*) either ‘independents’ (*svatantra*), as in Kauṇḍa Bhaṭṭa, or ‘moderns’ (*navīna*), as in the logician, *mīmāṃsaka* and grammarian Annam Bhaṭṭa (fl. 1560, Andhra/Varanasi).⁹ It is clear, too, that while for some scholars (as shown by Kamalākara’s remarks cited below) the title ‘new’ intellectual could be a term of reproach, for others it was a proud self-description, as in the case of the literary theorist Siddhicandra (1587–1666, Delhi), who uses this descriptor of his own position in his *Kāvyaprakāśakhaṇḍana* (Critique of the *Treatise on Literature*), a systematic attack on Mammaṭa’s eleventh-century classic.

One should not infer from this evidence and my arguments based on it that prior to this period chronological thinking as such was never attested, that earlier knowledge was never described as earlier in scholarly discourse. Such is certainly not the case. A good example of how innovation recognised itself as such and in contradistinction to past thought may be found in the literary theory that arose, during an epoch of profound intellectual ferment, in ninth- to twelfth-century Kashmir. Abhinavagupta, for example, who around 1000 introduced a radically new understanding of the very object of aesthetic analysis, contrasts his view on the subject of *rasa* with those of the ‘most ancient’ (*ciramtana*) authorities (he has in mind the late seventh-century writer Daṇḍin). Both the category and the reference (but now with the addition of Bhāmaha, another seventh-century writer) are shared by Kuntaka, a second important literary theorist from around the same period. He

⁹ *navyatara*, *Padārthatadipikā* (edited by Rama Krishna Sastri, Varanasi, 1900), p. 21; *abhinava*, *Bhāṭṭacintāmani* (edited by Surya Narayana Sukla, Varanasi, 1933), p. 100; *jīrṇa*, ‘the elders’, *Mīmāṃsākutihala* (edited by P.N. Pattabhirama Sastri, Varanasi, 1987), p. 33; *jīrṇa*, ‘antiquated’, *Bhāṭṭacintāmani*, p. 9 (their views often being set aside with a *vastutah*, ‘But in fact . . .’); *sāṃpradāyika*/*svatantra* in *Brhadvaiyākaraṇabhusaṇa* (edited by Manudeva Bhattacharya, Varanasi, 1985), p. 47; *prāñcāḥ*/*svatantra* in *Pakṣatāprakarana* of Jagadiśa (ca. 1650) (edited by Sivadatta Misra, Varanasi, 1980), pp. 68 and 75; *sāṃpradāya*/*navina* in *Tarkasamgraha* (edited by Ramacandra Jha, Varanasi, 1990), p. 10. One of Mahādeva’s *ādhunika* authors, incidentally, is Jagannātha himself, whose views regarding the nature of idiomatic and etymological semantemes in reference to the existence of suggestion he attempts to refute in *Nyāyakaustubha Śabdakhaṇḍa*, p. 753; cf. *Rasagaṅgādhara* (edited by Kedarnath Ojha, Varanasi, 1981), Vol. 1, pp. 252 ff.

too introduced what he believed to be a totally new departure in the analysis of literariness, and contrasted this with the view of the ancients, though this is largely to differentiate his views of certain tropes (*svabhāvokti, dipaka*)—in short, only to provide new arguments in the contest over old questions.¹⁰ It is also worth noting that in the *Tattvacintāmaṇi* itself, certain temporal divisions of knowledge were already articulated, with Gaṅgeśa's own logic designated as new and contrasted with old forms of knowledge, as for instance that of the 'antiquated *mīmāṃsakas*'.¹¹

I am also not suggesting that the categories discussed above are always and everywhere to be understood as exact conceptual equivalents of the English translations I provide (no more than *moderni* in Carolingian Europe has the same meaning it has eight centuries later). The 'independent', for example, who breaks with the 'traditionalists' in Kaunda Bhaṭṭa's work on language philosophy, corroborates his position by citing 'the blessed Patañjali', an authority from 15 centuries earlier.¹² Clearly in this case independence can connote not so much overthrowing tradition as renewing it by returning to foundational texts.

What I do wish to suggest is that in the seventeenth century, historicist periodisation for the first time becomes the very modality of understanding how knowledge is to be organised, and, more important, how new knowledge can actually be produced. The former finds expression in what I perceive to be an increase during this period in the production of independent treatises (*prakaraṇagrantha*) and of works that directly comment on *sūtra* texts while summarising the entire earlier history of interpretation, and in the concomitant decrease in ever more deeply nested commentaries on canonical works that had been a hallmark of the earlier schoolmen.¹³ The complexity of the field of scholarly production is exemplified nowhere better than in the grammatical treatise of Bhāṭṭoji Dikṣita (ca. 1575–1645), the *Praudhamanoramā* ([Exposition] Pleasing the Learned). This is a commentary on Bhāṭṭoji's own *Siddhāntakaumudi*, a grammar that helped revolutionise the teaching of Sanskrit by rearranging the venerable *sūtras* of Pāṇini according to the logic of the language phenomena themselves (phonology, morphology, nominal-

¹⁰ See *Nātyaśāstra* with the commentary of Abhinavagupta (edited by K. Krishnamoorthy, Baroda, 1992), p. 266; *Vakroktijīvita* (edited by K. Krishnamoorthy, Dharwad, 1977), pp. 153 *et passim*. Similarly, in the discourse on *dharma* from around the ninth century, we find the past signalled as the past by the use of the adjective 'old [authorities]' (*vṛddha*) in titles of works (cf. J. Duncan M. Derrett, *Dharmaśāstra and Juridical Literature*, Wiesbaden, 1973, p. 40; there is a mere reference; the questions of periodicity here merit investigation).

¹¹ Gaṅgeśa refers to the *navyas* in *Tattvacintāmaṇi* (edited by Kamakhyanath Tarkavagisha, Delhi, 1990), Vol. 4, pt. 1, p. 241, for example, and to the *jaranmīmāṃsakā* on p. 83.

¹² *Bṛhadvaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇa*, p. 47.

¹³ This is particularly well illustrated in the case of *Mīmāṃsā* with such works from seventeenth-century Varanasi (in chronological order, ca. 1620 ff.) as Kamalākara's *Mīmāṃsākutūhala*, Śaṅkara Bhaṭṭa's *Mīmāṃsābālaprakāśa*, Āpadeva's *Mīmāṃsānyāyaprakāśa*, which are all *prakaraṇagranthas*, and four *sūtravṛttis*: Gāgā's *Bhāṭṭacintāmaṇi*, Khanḍadeva's *Mīmāṃsākaustubha* and *Bhāṭṭadīpikā*, and (from mid-eighteenth-century Thanjavur) Vāsudeva Dikṣita's *Adhvaramīmāṃsākutūhala* *vṛtti*.

isation and so on).¹⁴ The commentary itself proceeds by systematically juxtaposing Bhaṭṭoji's explanations to the *prācām mata*, the 'views of the ancients'. This juxtaposition of new and old knowledge constitutes the scientific logic of the work, to the same degree that the new architectonics constitutes its form. Note that it was Bhaṭṭoji's readiness here as elsewhere to criticise the work of his predecessors, especially the *Prakriyāprakāśa* of his own guru, Śeṣa [Śrī] Kṛṣṇa, that earned him the enmity of the great poet-scholar Jagannātha, who wrote a counterblast entitled, with intentional vulgarity, *Manoramākucamardana* (*Fondling the Tits of the 'Pleasing [Lady]'.*)

Evidently, knowledge is now thought to be better not just because it may be better (of greater coherence, economy, explanatory power), but also in part because it is new. Bhaṭṭoji, after all, could simply have called the positions he opposed the 'views of others', as had been the practice of centuries of earlier scholars. Why it is exactly now that this new periodicity enters Sanskrit discourse remains unclear. One might be inclined to look for inspiration first to forms of cultural production newly made available in the immediate surroundings of the Sanskrit intellectuals, such as Islamicate or Persianate historiographical practices with their unfamiliar temporal sensibilities. But there is no evidence that this is so, and, in the case of this historiography in particular, nothing quite comparable is offered. What we may be observing here instead are innovations in Sanskrit discourse generated from within the intellectual tradition itself but under conditions of intensified social change that rendered change itself an object of consciousness.

III

To determine what is objectively new in the substance of the work of the new intellectuals presents a very serious challenge. For, as mentioned at the start, it requires understanding some of the most exacting scholarly writing the world has ever seen as well as mastery of its development over centuries. Even judging what the intellectuals themselves thought to be new is far from simple. Accordingly, I must be sketchy in this preliminary review, and diffident even about that.

What most immediately and forcefully strikes contemporary readers of this scholarship—and in this reaction we probably differ little from original audiences—is the extraordinary innovation in style. This consists above all in a new philosophical metalanguage developed for specifying types of relationships that normal language and thought occlude. There is a prehistory to this style in Gaṅgeśa, but it reaches an extreme form in the writings of Raghunātha Śiromāni a century and a half

¹⁴ The grammar that seems actually to have sparked the revolution was the *Prakriyākaumudi* of Rāmacandra Dikṣita, composed probably in the mid-sixteenth century (often erroneously placed earlier). He was almost certainly the uncle of Śeṣa Kṛṣṇa, whose *Prakāśa* appears to be the earliest commentary on the text. The *prācām mata* that Bhaṭṭoji criticises in his commentary are those of Rāmacandra, whose work he appropriated without acknowledgement.

later. In the eyes of many seventeenth-century writers, Raghunātha represents the new scholar par excellence, and his metalinguistic innovations in the search for ever greater precision and sophistication of definition and analysis were enormously influential. These innovations sometimes produced—as readers of, say, Heidegger would appreciate—the opposite of the intended result: Raghunātha's style makes his work undoubtedly the most challenging to read in the whole of Indian philosophy.¹⁵ In addition to this transformation in discursive style, which I forego illustrating in this presentation, new or reinvigorated criteria of argument are employed. One example is the appeal to parsimony, in particular ontological as opposed to epistemological parsimony. Although by no means unknown earlier, a Sanskrit version of Occam's razor is now so frequently invoked as to signal an unmistakable change in standards of philosophical judgement.

A passage from Kauṇḍa Bhaṭṭa's little work, the *Padārthadīpikā* (Treatise on Categories), illustrates this criterion as well as the periodised exposition I just mentioned. In his discussion of the exact mechanism of inference, a subject that profoundly concerned the new logicians, Kauṇḍa tells us that for the ancients (*prāñcaḥ*), the means of inference was to be identified with the inferential sign (*linga*). Gaṅgeśa then argued that it was the knowledge of invariable concomitance that was determinative, whereas the new intellectuals (*navaya*)—whom Kauṇḍa thus distinguishes from Gaṅgeśa himself—believed this knowledge to require ‘reflection mediated by latent traces’. This is a position, we are then told, that the most recent thinkers (*navyatara*) reject on the grounds of parsimony, differentiating reflection as a functioning of the organ of intellection, which in itself constitutes the means of inference.¹⁶

Radically at odds, however, with the genuine innovations signalled by historicist exposition, discursive style and mode of argument is the traditionalism of the problematics themselves. The universe of thought, it seems, did not expand in a way at all commensurate with the expansion of the instruments and styles of thought.

¹⁵ A point made recently also by Karl Potter in his overview, *Indian Philosophical Analysis: Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika from Gaṅgeśa to Raghunātha Śiromani*, Princeton, 1992, p. 521.

¹⁶ Here is a literal translation of the passage: ‘The ancients (*prāñcaḥ*) are those who hold inference to be that which provides the means of inferential knowledge, and this means is the inferential sign (*linga*) one is cognizing. The author of the [*Tattvacintāmani*], however, holds the means of inference to be the knowledge of the invariable concomitance to which the sign pertains, because we can still have inferential knowledge when the sign itself is past or yet to come. The new intellectuals (*navaya*) hold that the knowledge of the invariable concomitance with respect to inferential knowledge, the cause of which is not present—as in the case of inferential reflection that occurs only in recollection—cannot be the means since it is mediated by dispositions (*samskāras*) generated by an earlier reflection. Thus the real means of inferential knowledge must be knowledge of an invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*) but only insofar as this generates a reflection (*parāmārsha*) commensurate with [or: common to] these dispositions. However, the most recent thinkers (*navyatara*) consider this explanation fundamentally to violate the law of parsimony (*atigauravagrastam*) . . . and hold the organ of intellection (*manas*) itself to be the means of inferential knowledge [and] reflection to be [its] functioning’ (*Padārthadīpikā*, pp. 20–21).

Of course, it may be that the sometimes mind-numbing complexity of the discourses before us simply renders the newness of its content elusive. But the general tenor is certainly one of epistemic continuity. Consider for example Mahādeva's discussion of the *manas* (the seat of will and affect). He employs his new historicist framework to explicate a philosophical dispute on its physical dimensions. For the ancients, the *manas* had an atomic size (*paramāṇu*), whereas for the moderns (the reference here is to Raghunātha again) it is the minimally perceptible entity (*trasareṇu*). Mahādeva, apparently seeing himself as an *atinavīna*, finds the argument dubious and rejects it for lack of parsimony.¹⁷ The exposition itself, the sophisticated conception of logical relationships, and to some degree the autonomy of judgement, especially temporalised as it is—implying that it is only now, at the end of the development, that one can see and adjudicate the whole matter—are strikingly new; the philosophical question itself, the method of analysis of the problem, and the actual judgement rendered, are archaic.

A second example, from the other end of the thought spectrum, is provided by Gāgā Bhaṭṭa's discussion of ultimate emancipation. The 'antiquated' scholars of the past (*jīrṇa*), he tells us, believed that emancipation was possible either through knowledge or through works. The 'new' scholars (*navya*), by contrast, hold that knowledge alone is able to produce genuine liberation. But the grounds Gāgā offers for this assertion are scripture, in fact, two passages from the ancient Upaniṣads where the efficacy of means other than knowledge is flatly denied.¹⁸ One might be inclined to see in Gāgā's argument a certain historically contingent resistance to the ever-expanding devotionalism of seventeenth-century north India. This was, after all, precisely the time and place of some of the most accomplished and articulate productions of theistic devotionalism, as exemplified in works of, say, Tulsidās. In fact, Gāgā's own uncle, Kamalākara, had himself earlier mounted a very sustained and highly unusual defence of Mīmāṃsā theism, going so far as to assert that the way of devotion (*bhaktimārga*) is perfectly in keeping with the strictest tenets and representatives of the philosophical system, concluding that 'The atheism with which Udayanācārya has charged me and my fellows, or the [author of the] *Naiṣadha*, derives from their failure to examine our works or to understand our tenets, and can

¹⁷ Vol. 1, p. 122. Raghunātha's position on the matter is found in his *Padārhatātτvānirūpaṇa*, cf. Potter, *Indian Philosophical Analysis*, p. 529. Raghunātha's rejection of the hypothesised existence of imperceptible atoms in fact hearkens back to Kumārlila, as he himself makes clear (cf. *ibid.*, p. 33).

¹⁸ *Bhāṭṭacintāmaṇi*, p. 44 (unless I am much mistaken, 'new' in this passage does not refer to the *navyanyāya* school). Gāgā does, however, take pains to add what earlier *mīmāṃsakas* would hardly have bothered to add, though it was a common position: 'Just because the knowledge of the truth to be derived from study of the Upaniṣads is accessible only to the three higher *varṇas* it by no means follows that *sūdras* and so on are excluded from ultimate liberation. They can achieve liberation because they have access to the meaning of the Upaniṣads by learning those texts that reproduce it in another form, such as the *purāṇas* and the like,' though the actual texts of the Upaniṣads themselves are restricted. Perhaps one should not expect any less from the ritual adviser who transformed the *sūdra* Śivājī into a *kṣatriya*; see below.

safely be ignored.¹⁹ But just as Kamalākara's principal argument here is with a tenth-century logician and a twelfth-century poet, so Gāgā's remains, in intellectual-historical terms, only the recapitulation of a very old position.

The mode of analysis of every topic on the philosophical menu between these two problems (on the one side, elementary categories such as the *manas*, and on the other, ultimate purposes such as emancipation) and the very topics selected for analysis—and this holds not just in epistemology and theology but across intellectual disciplines—are largely of a piece with what we find in Mahādeva and Gāgā. The new historicity and the awareness it seems to imply of the possibility of new truths are clearly in evidence, but remain securely anchored in a very old practice of thought, on an invariant set of questions.

These are, to be sure, assertions in need of sustained substantiation, and although that cannot be offered here in the requisite measure, a brief review can serve to indicate the general contours such a substantive account would take. This will allow us at the same time to flag some general trends in seventeenth-century intellectual discourse, to illustrate certain different styles of argument, and, where appropriate, to adduce the actual language of the texts. All this seems to me methodologically crucial, for we will hardly be taking the dilemma of the South Asian intellectuals seriously if we do not take seriously the nature of their intellectuality.

It is important to recognise, in the very first place, that the newness of historicity or periodicity by no means meant convergence with a newness of method (such as empiricism, for example), or a newness of ontology (such as a realist philosophy of nature), as trends in contemporaneous developments in European thought might lead us to expect. An illustration of the dominant tendency is provided by Mahādeva's discussion of the problem of yogic perception. He represents as the tradition of thought (*saṃpradāya*) on this matter the view that the practice of yoga produces a specific kind of non-phenomenal cognition that enables a yogin to cognise all objects. For visual and other sensory perception, the yogin remains constrained by the fitness of objects to the sensory organ (by a thing's visibility in the case of visual perception, and so on); mental cognition, however, is not constrained by the fitness of things to the mind. Kumārila's great *Ślokavārttika* (ca. 650), which argues powerfully against the possibility and very intelligibility of omniscience, is adduced in corroboration of such phenomenal limitations: 'Even extraordinary sensory acuity operates on distant or subtle things without exceeding its appropriate object. The sense of hearing, for example, cannot operate on the visual' (*Codan-*

¹⁹ *Mīmāṃsākutūhala*, p. 44; the 'Naiṣadha' verse (beginning *mīmāṃsayeva bhagavaty amṛtāñśumaulau*) is not found in published editions of the *Naiṣadhiyacarita*, if that is in fact the text meant. (Other, earlier scholars had of course already addressed the problem of Mīmāṃsā atheism, notably the fourteenth-century scholar Vedāntadeśīka in his *Seśvaramīmāṃsā*.) Similarly, the 'new' in Gadādhara's *Navamuktivāda* (New Discourse on Liberation, or, Liberation Discourse of the New [Logicians], of ca. 1600, edited by Kalipada Tarkacharya, Calcutta, n.d.) derives from Gaṅgeśa's *Īśvarānumāna*, and in this the work stands in contrast, as the editor points out, with Gadādhara's innovative intelligence in other domains of logic (cf. the Sanskrit introduction, p. 62).

āśūtra 114). The *navyas*, however, respond that the perceptual capacity produced by yoga is a causal factor of cognition as such, irrespective of the distinction between its visual and mental varieties, and accordingly it is difficult to rule out the possibility that atoms and the like could be visual objects for yogins.²⁰

Despite the historicised labelling of positions and the argumentation on the basis of such positions, it seems reasonably clear that these did not represent camps or schools; on the contrary, the new and old often show themselves to coexist in any given author. We might, in fact, even identify such intellectual independence as a second tendency among the new intellectuals. Most writers do not systematically reject the old or assert the new, but pick and choose among positions on grounds of consistency, rigour, economy and associated values of argumentation. No one instantiates this better than the mid-seventeenth-century poet and literary theorist Jagannātha, in his celebrated treatise *Rasagaṅgādhara* (The [Five-Faced] ‘Śiva’ of Aesthetic Emotion). In discussing whether a given trope (in this case, *sahokti*) should be recognised as a separate category of figure, he argues that the ancients constitute the final authority for the classification (they are said to have sensed some aesthetic difference in *sahokti* that set it apart from all others), and he criticises his imaginary disputant, who refuses to accept the ancients ‘when they shut their eyes’, by calling his arguments a mere exercise of arrogant authority and ungrounded in any actual aesthetic response. Elsewhere by virtually the same argument Jagannātha himself rejects the ancients’ view completely (‘A claim of the ancients [in reference to a particular trope], when no adequate definition for it is provided, amounts to nothing more than a royal command’), or both the ancient and the new together (thus he asserts, when discussing the trope *utprekṣā* or poetic fantasy, that ‘the statements neither of the ancients nor of present-day scholars can withstand criticism’). By contrast, he will just as frequently strive to preserve a position of the ancients (among whom he includes not only Bhāmaha and Udbhaṭa of the seventh–eighth centuries but also Mammaṭa and Ruyyaka of the eleventh–twelfth) out of what seems to be the sheer anxiety that ‘their taxonomy’ would be ‘destroyed’ or even ‘weakened’. Thus, on the question of whether *bhakti* should be considered a tenth *rasa*—note that the sentiment of devotion constitutes one of the few truly new developments in sixteenth-century poetry and theory—Jagannātha argues in line with the old school: ‘The enumeration of *rasas* as nine is constrained by the declaration of the Sage [Bhārata], and therefore the view of the śāstra is preferable.’ What is decisive above all for Jagannātha, however, is the adequacy of categories and the consistency of definitions. A typical passage is his critique of the introduction of a new subspecies of the trope ‘denial’

²⁰ *yogābhyaśajanyādrṣṭaviśeṣaḥ tenaiva sannikarṣena yoginah sarvavīṣayakasāksātkāraḥ . . . yogajadharmaśya . . . svavīṣiṣṭasāksātkāramātre hetutvam na tu cākṣusamānasādibhedeneti paramāṇvādeś cākṣusādīvisayatā durvārā* (*Nyāyakaustubha Pratyaksākhanḍa*, pp. 192–93). ‘Others’ (perhaps *mīmāṃsakas*) are shown to challenge this view on the grounds that both the ‘natural way of understanding’ (*svārasya*) the scriptural passages that are cited to prove yogic perception, and the fact that the knowledge of yogins at issue is knowledge of the transcendent principle (*brahma*), entail that the only cognition pertinent to the discussion is mental cognition.

(for example, ‘that is not her face, it is rather the moon’) by the late sixteenth-century scholar Appayya Dikṣita in his treatise on tropology, the *Kuvalayānanda*. The proposed subtype cannot be a form of denial to begin with, since it is not covered by the general definition of the category. ‘First of all, it is clearly outside the definition given by the [eleventh-century] *Kāvyaprakāśa* . . . nor does the definition given by the [mid-twelfth-century] *Alankārasarvasva* pertain to it. And the same holds true even of the definition contained in the *Citramimāṃsā* that [Appayya Dikṣita] himself wrote.’ The subspecies, accordingly, turns out to be nothing more than a type of metaphor:

If [Appayya] is prepared like [Śobhākaramitra, author of] the *Alankāraratnākara* [thirteenth–fourteenth century] to ignore the view of the ancients and to include this subspecies in ‘denial’, why does he not simply subsume the whole species under metaphor, given that its specific features (including the non-reality of the perception, along with identification of source and target entities and certitude of the identification) are identical to what we find in metaphor? He could finally then give up his disingenuous deference toward the ancients. Yet even in that case, the fact would remain that the definition of ‘denial’ that he provided in his own rhetorical treatise, the *Citramimāṃsā*, would not apply to the subspecies offered in *Kuvalayānanda* . . . whereas the definition of metaphor provided in the *Citramimāṃsā* would . . . But perhaps he would say that in the *Citramimāṃsā* his definition of metaphor follows the ancients, whereas in the *Kuvalayānanda* his account of ‘denial’ follows the *Ratnākara*, etc., etc. Somehow or other in this fashion he might put it all to rights.²¹

A third general observation is that whereas we can perceive a remarkable enthusiasm for rethinking a very wide range of important philosophical questions, these remained, without exception, questions inherited from tradition. Consider, for example, Gāgā Bhaṭṭa’s analysis of the cognitive status of semantic coherence. He notes that according to the *jirna* or old-fashioned scholars, among the three factors required for intelligible verbal communication—the satisfying of syntactic expectation (*ākāṅkṣā*), semantic coherence or compatibility (*yogyatā*), and the contiguity of syntactically related items (*āsatti*)—the first two enable verbal cognition only when we actively understand them, whereas the third, contiguity, functions simply by its presence; we do not need to be actually aware of it. The new scholars, however, disagreed about the function of the second factor, semantic coherence:

²¹ See *Rasagaṅgādhara*, Vol. 2, p. 430 (*prabhutaiva kevalā na sahṛdayatvam*; the ancients ‘shut their eyes’ presumably in pleasure, as testifying to the aesthetic experience, rather than in blindness to the truth); p. 655 (*anugatalakṣaṇam vinā prācīnoktir ājñāmātram eva rājñām*); p. 309 (*prācīnānām ḍhunikānām coktayo na kṣodakṣamāḥ*); p. 311 (*evam ca vibhāgaś cirantanānām ucchinnaḥ syāt*), cf. pp. 123–24, 282, 431, 529. His remarks on Appayya are found on pp. 271–73 ('give up his disingenuous deference toward the ancients', *nirasyatām ca prācīnamukhadākṣinyam*).

According to the new logicians and hermeneutists, it is not the knowledge of semantic coherence that is a causal factor in verbal cognition. From a sentence like 'One should sprinkle [the sacrificial offering] with fire', we derive no verbal cognition, and from this we conclude (only) that the determination of *semantic incoherence* [since fire cannot act as an instrument in the act of sprinkling] *obstructs* verbal cognition . . . [not that] a [positive] knowledge of semantic coherence [is required for verbal cognition].

What is most significant about this discussion—it is in fact a standard question addressed in the new logic—is what follows. Gāgā goes on to discuss the view of the literary theorists, who hold that both positions are wrong:

Neither does a knowledge of semantic coherence cause verbal cognition, nor does a determination of the lack of semantic coherence prohibit it. This is so because (a) even in the absence of the former and the presence of the latter we find such cognition to be produced, as for example in [what *prima facie* can be considered the semantically incoherent] metaphor 'Her face is the moon'; and (b) because we derive an unmistakable aesthetic pleasure through cognizing the meaning in such a [semantically incoherent line of verse as] 'The son of the barren woman passes by/crowned with a chaplet of flowers from the sky.' One cannot argue that in these two cases we are only recalling the meaning of the individual words, not experiencing 'verbal cognition'. The very notion of verbal cognition would thereby dissolve, since one could make the same claim about a sentence like 'fetch the pot'. It is only cognition other than verbal that is negated when [the statement is] known to be falsified. And it is no use raising the argument [against the cognisability of a false sentence] that action must follow [since action is held to be entailed by all real verbal knowledge]. The only knowledge that motivates action is knowledge free of doubt as to its own invalidity, that is to say, one that does not produce, at the moment the knowledge is coming into existence, a doubt about its invalidity through an earlier instance of falsification. And such knowledge is absent in the case of [a metaphor and the like; no one thinks they are true-as-stated in the first place]. As the *Khandana* puts it: 'Language can produce cognition even with respect to a thing/meaning that is totally non-existent.' In actual fact, however, a sentence like 'Her face is the moon' does not produce verbal cognition in a country bumpkin, but only in those familiar with Sanskrit rhetoric, and it brings aesthetic pleasure only to such people. For these reasons we must conclude that trace memories from an earlier life are a stimulating factor here. And accordingly, we can not regard as reasonable the view that the absence of a determination of semantic incoherence, when it is not qualified by such stimulating factors, is the cause of verbal cognition.²²

²² *Rākāgama* on *Candrāloka* (edited by Ananta Ram Sastri Vetal, Varanasi, 1938), p. 8 ('it is only cognition other than verbal that is negated when [the statement is] known to be falsified,'

This is highly sophisticated argumentation, and for those outside the discourse no doubt in some areas dark if not impenetrable. In its extending a hitherto exclusively philosophical problem to poetry, it is, so far as I can judge, altogether new. Moreover, the question Gāgā is addressing—the significance for a general philosophy of language of the possibility of grammatically acceptable but semantically incoherent sentences—is one that will not enter Western thought explicitly until Croce in 1910 (who, much less interestingly, denies aesthetic value to meaningless or irrational statements) and Chomsky in 1965 (one of whose concerns is to demonstrate that ‘the notion of “grammaticalness” cannot be related to “interpretability” . . . in any simple way,’ or in Sanskrit terms, that *ākāṅkṣā* is relatively independent of *yogyatā*).²³ All that said, this remains—and I offer this as a purely neutral judgement—a discourse that intimately cleaves to very old Sanskrit epistemic principles, rules of evidence, modes of argumentation.

It is in the realm of political thought, crucially, that we find the most compelling illustration of the persistence of the old among the new. In this connection the massive treatise on the moral order (*dharma*) called the *Smṛtiakaustubha* (ca. 1675) claims our attention. This is a work of Anantadeva, the son of the *mīmāṃsaka* Āpadeva, and perhaps a kinsman of Khaṇḍadeva, one of the leading new hermeneutists.²⁴ His patron was Bāj Bahādur Candra, lord of Almore (in today’s Himachal Pradesh), though the writer himself clearly lived in Varanasi (*Smṛtiakaustubha* vs. 25). Although a *kaustubha* by title, Ananta’s work is really a standard law digest (*nibandha*) and incorporates little of the *nāvya* expository

bādhaniścayasya śabdānyatvam eva pratibadhyam; ‘one that does not produce . . . a doubt’, read ‘jananāt’ for *jananāt*). (It is unclear what text Gāgā is referring to by the word *khaṇḍana*. The verse does not appear in Śrīharṣa’s *Khaṇdanakhaṇḍakādya*.) For the standard *nāvyanāyā* analysis, as propounded in the generation before Gāgā, see Viśvanātha Pañcānana’s *Siddhāntamuktāvalī* (edited by Atmaram Narayan Jere, Varanasi, 1982), pp. 309–11 (= *Kārikāvalī* vss. 82–3). A brilliant if complex reprise of the whole question is found in *Rasagangādhara* (Vol. 1, pp. 313 ff.), which I hope to treat on another occasion.

²³ Croce’s essay ‘This Round Table is Square’ appears in his *Problem di estetica* (the essay itself was written in 1905); I know it from Gramsci’s brief discussion (*Cultural Writings*, Cambridge, 1991, pp. 179–80). In his *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (Cambridge, 1965, pp. 148 ff.), Chomsky allows for, but is uninterested in, the possibility of aesthetically ordered semantic coherence (what he calls ‘metaphorical’ or ‘allusive’ interpretation) in such a sentence as ‘Colorless green ideas sleep furiously,’ which is precisely the concern of Gāgā and many of Chomsky’s later commentators.

²⁴ Āpadeva is the author of the *Mīmāṃsānyāyaprakāśa*, which quickly became a standard introduction to Mīmāṃsa across much of India. Of Khaṇḍadeva’s family or birthplace we know almost nothing (cf. Baldev Upadhyaya, *Kāśi ki Pāṇḍitya Paramparā: 1200 CE–1950 CE*, Varanasi, 1983, p. 32; Upadhyaya is oddly silent on both Āpadeva and Anantadeva). He is thought to have been a pupil of Gāgā Bhaṭṭa (see Surya Narayana Sukla, ed., *Bhāṭṭacintāmani*, Varanasi, 1934, Bhūmikā, p. 2), but this seems dubious if he was, as he certainly was, the teacher of Perubhaṭṭa, Jagannātha’s father (*Rasagangādhara*, vs. 2). We know he was alive at least as late as 1658 (see below).

mode.²⁵ The reason I cite it here is the vision of the state it offers in the prodigious central section on 'The Moral Order of Kings' (*Rājadharmaṅkaustubha*). Although this was written for a court that since 1587 had been incorporated into the new political order of the Mughals, and by a man living in the very midst of the new intellectuals, it is hard to identify anything in this text that could not have been written a millennium earlier, the time in which most of the sources it cites were composed.²⁶ In fact, nowhere in the writings of the seventeenth-century Varanasi intellectuals do we hear the faintest resonance of the incorporation of the region into the Mughal Empire at the beginning of the century (nor even of the depredations of Aurangzeb in Varanasi itself in 1669). Ananta's work is evidence of the astonishing resilience of ancient political theory—the steady state of governmentality I mentioned earlier—and of the fact that political reality often seems to have adapted to this theory, and not vice versa. Nothing shows this quite so vividly as the royal consecration famously invented for Śivājī in 1674 by one of the leading intellectuals of the period, Gāgā Bhaṭṭa himself.²⁷

All these phenomena—the remarkable new subtleties of argument and exposition but directed toward the analysis of ancient categories and the establishment of archaic principles—suggest to me a serious tension in a newness that could not achieve innovation: a newness of the intellect constrained by an oldness of the will.

IV

I have no space here to argue out the importance of a socially grounded contextual history of the Sanskrit intellectuals of the seventeenth century. Despite the strong emphasis in recent years on rational and, more particularly, language-centred reconstruction as a dominant mode of intellectual history—represented most prominently in the West by the work of scholars of political philosophy such as Quentin Skinner and John Pocock—others have felt the need, and argued powerfully, for the centrality of an examination of the individual agencies out of which intellectual discourses emerge, the macro-societal institutions in which they are embedded,

²⁵ Ananta does frequently use the argument based on parsimony, however (e.g., p. 23). And the fact that the distinction between old and new knowledge in *dharmaśāstra* was wholly clear to writers of the period is demonstrated by the introduction to the *Āsaucadīdhiti* of his younger brother Jivadeva, who notes that he compared the *jīrṇagranthas* and the *navaṇagranthas* in writing the chapter.

²⁶ The text has been edited by Kamala Krishna Smritirtha, Baroda, 1935. Note that manuscripts of portions of Anantadeva's *Rājadharmaṅkaustubha* are available in Bengal, Baroda, Thanjavur, Bikaner and Kashmir. One suspects that at least in some of these cases the presence of this text may have been the result of pre-colonial circulation, and that accordingly there was a demand for such works on the part of distant Hindu kingdoms.

²⁷ The rise of a new discourse on *śūdras*, to which Śeṣa Kṛṣṇa, Kamalākara and Gāgā Bhaṭṭa contributed decisively, and the relation of this discourse to changes in polity and society in western India during the latter part of the sixteenth and through the seventeenth centuries, are the subject of a University of Chicago dissertation now in progress by Ananya Vajpeyi.

and the political consequences they entail.²⁸ Although our documentation from seventeenth-century India is wholly inadequate to a serious contextualisation of this sort, I sought in an earlier paper on the history of Sanskrit literature in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to assemble materials that provide some sense of the remarkable transformations that were occurring in the social worlds of these intellectuals.²⁹ I summarise my findings succinctly with respect to modalities of circulation, subjectivity and sociality.

Cross-cultural interactions began to take place from the beginning of the Mughal period that are without parallel for the distances being bridged. Siddhicandra, for example, whose discussion of literature was noted earlier, was one of a number of influential Jain *sādhus* at the early Mughal court. His teacher Bhānucandra was Abu-l Fazl's informant on Hindavī culture for the third book of *Ain-i Akbari*, while Siddhicandra himself eventually became tutor to the sons of Akbar—before whom he recited works in Persian—and a favourite of Jahangir and Nūr Mahal. In the 1650s, Kavīndrācārya Sarasvatī, a Maharashtrian renunciant and leading Varanasi intellectual, became an intimate of Dānishmand Khān, the Mughal courtier, and companion of François Bernier, physician and translator of Descartes into Persian, who accompanied him to Varanasi, 'the Athens of India' in Bernier's idiom. Jagannātha, the best known of these intellectuals and a celebrated poet at the court of Shāh Jahān, was son of an orthodox Telangana Brahman family and, according to some, a descendent of Vallabhācārya. Whether he actually married a Muslim woman and drowned in the Gaṅgā at Varanasi in a kind of romantic agony (material available in an unpublished, late-seventeenth-century history of the Vallabhasampradāya makes some of this very likely), it is what the age of the new intellectuals somehow demanded that he do.

Inseparable from the new social circumstances of these scholars is the presence of a striking new subjectivity in their literary works. Never before in Sanskrit literature had a writer constructed a self quite so vividly present as Siddhicandra does in his autobiography. The work itself, embedded in the biography of his teacher (*Bhānucandragaṇīcarita*), almost objectifies the tension between a very old conception of heteronomy and a very new self-fashioning that the text thematises throughout. Jagannātha composed verses on the death of his wife that are unprecedented in earlier Sanskrit poetry, and his lyrics on a Yavāṇī woman he named Lāvāṅgī (who almost certainly had become his wife) are probably an appropriation of the Persian motif of the *mahbūb*, the ever-unattainable beloved whose unattainability is typically exaggerated by the code of otherness. At the level of literary expression, as well, the seventeenth century was a time of border-crossings we are just beginning to learn how to perceive.

What seem to be new or intensified forms of social interactions among the intellectuals themselves may also be glimpsed, if just barely. A minor but telling example

²⁸ See for example Björn Wittrock, 'Social Theory and Intellectual History: Rethinking the Formation of Modernity', in F. Engelstad and R. Kalleberg, eds, *Social Time and Social Change*, Oslo, 1999, pp. 187–232.

²⁹ 'The Death of Sanskrit', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 43(1), 2001, pp. 392–426.

is offered by the biography of Kavīndra. When this scholar was able to persuade Shāh Jahān to rescind the *jizya* tax imposed on pilgrims travelling to Varanasi and Prayaga sometime in the 1630s, what we may call with justice a *festschrift* was created in his honour, the *Kavīndracandrodaya* (Moonrise of Kavīndra), comprising poems of praise elicited from leading Sanskrit intellectuals across eastern India. Later undertakings, like the petitions to Warren Hastings by the pandits of Varanasi or those of the Maharashtrian pandits (in pursuit of the Peshwa's *dakṣinā* fund) in the early Bombay Presidency, suggest that wider structures for collective action may have come into being at an earlier date.

Certainly the dense concentration of intellectuals in urban centres would have encouraged such structures, and played a significant role in the new conversations taking place. Undoubtedly Sanskrit scholars had long been peripatetic, and other cities, from Takshasila in the third century B.C. to Vijayanagara in the sixteenth, had acted as powerful magnets. But Varanasi in the seventeenth century witnessed a confluence of more or less free intellectuals—stipendiaries like Kavīndrācārya, clients of distant courts like Gāgā Bhaṭṭa, and no doubt rentiers—of a sort it had almost certainly never seen before, certainly not in such numbers; something similar, though on a smaller scale, may have held true elsewhere, as in Maratha Thanjavur.³⁰ Here, two important documents can be adduced in evidence of the remarkable transregional representation and vital interaction of intellectuals in Varanasi. Both are *vyavasthāpatra* or proclamations of legal judgements. The first dates from 1583 and lists as signatories scholars resident in Varanasi from Maharashtra (including Śeṣa Krṣṇa), Gurjara, Gauḍa and Tailamukta (Andhra?). The second, of 1658, shows an extraordinary array of scholars 'from Maharashtra, Karnataka, Konkana, Tailanga, Dravida, and so on'. These include, besides Gāgā, Anantadeva and Khanḍadeva, the great *dharmaśāstrin* Bhaṭṭa Nilakanṭha (the youngest son of the brilliant *mīmāṃsaka* Saṅkara Bhaṭṭa and cousin of Kamalākara), Jayarāma Nyāyapañcānana, a leading *naiyāyika* from Bengal, Nṛsiṁhāśrama, an important *vedāntin*, and Appayya Dikṣita III, grandnephew of the 'Bull of Dravida'.³¹ We have no usable social history of Varanasi intellectuals before the period under consideration here. But it is hard not to believe that the city's incorporation into the Mughal Empire at the end of the sixteenth century, and the growth of pilgrimage, especially on the part of Maharashtrians, that may have been facilitated by the

³⁰ On contemporaneous Thanjavur, see the introduction to V. Raghavan, *Śāhendravilāsa of Śridharavenkatesvara* (Tiruchi, 1952).

³¹ These documents are cited in *Bhaṭṭacintāmani*, Bhūmikā, pp. 1–2. It is not clear what problem the first document adjudicates; the second, however, is a judgement on the 'true brahmanicalness' of the Devarṣi Brahmins (I thank Lawrence McCrea for his suggestion as to the likely identity of Appayya Dikṣita mentioned in the list.) These brahmanical councils continued to activate subcontinental networks into the mid-eighteenth century. A *vyavasthāpatra* of 1750 mentions 133 pandits 'from various countries, Maharashtra and so on, who have been invited by Śrīmān Mahārājādhirāja Rājavallabha'. See Gaurinath Sastri, 'Post-Gadādhara Naiyāyikas of Bengal (1600–1800 A.D.)', in J.C. Heesterman, G.H. Schokker and V.I. Subramoniam, eds, *Pratidānam*, The Hague/Paris, 1968, pp. 516–22.

establishment of the empire, did not have something to do with the efflorescence of the intellectual class and its cosmopolitan mixture as represented in these documents.³²

V

I conclude by considering the fate of Sanskrit intellectuals, and doing so by returning to the problem of historicity with which I began. I have three points to make and will do so very briefly, concerning (a) culture-internal representations and developments; (b) culture-external standards and the possibility and limits of synchronous comparativism; and (c) the irruption of those external standards into internal history, and the end of the creative Sanskrit intellectual tradition.

It should be clear that pre-colonial South Asia knew multiple temporalities (as it knew multiple spatialities, both pragmatic and cosmic) as well as multiple modes of representing and using the past, and of denying and arresting the past. Any theory of South Asian historicity (or dehistoricity) that fails to acknowledge this multiplicity will be fatally flawed. In the seventeenth century, systems of thought that for centuries had been seen as synchronic conversations were historically periodised in such a manner that altogether unprecedented ways of both organising and evaluating knowledge came into being. If we accept the construction of modernity that judges it to be, among other things, a different mode of structuring temporality, whereby the 'continuous present' of tradition gives way to a world in which the past and the future are understood as discrete phenomena, a modernity of a certain sort must be said to confront us here.³³ In other domains of both thought and life, however, such as visions of polity, it is precisely rupture that is denied, with a very ancient continuum being stubbornly maintained. We are encountering, accordingly, a coexistence of radically different modes of being in time, resistant to theoretical purification. There is nothing mystical about such existence, I would insist; it is simply the ability to live simultaneously in several conceptual realities, however incompatible they would eventually come to be seen.

At exactly the same period of Indian history I have been describing, western Europe witnessed a series of strikingly comparable developments that impinge upon our evaluation of the Indian case. We notice, for example, a similar sense of intellectual renewal, one celebrated in the titles of some of the more famous books of the period: Kepler's *Astronomia nova* (New Astronomy, 1609), Bacon's *Novum Organon* (1620), Galileo's *Discorsi e dimostrazioni matematiche, intorno à due nuoue scienze* (Discourses and Demonstrations concerning Two New Sciences,

³² Maharashtrian clerics and intellectuals, as we have seen, were massively present in Varanasi in the seventeenth century. Estimates for the early nineteenth century exceed 11,000 (see Surendra Nath Sen and Umesh Mishra, eds, *Sanskrit Documents*, Allahabad, 1951, p. 4). Pilgrimage traffic had clearly increased under the Peshwas (see Stuart Gordon, *The Marathas 1600–1818*, Cambridge, 1993, p. 146), but one wonders if this is not a continuation of earlier trends.

³³ See Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Stanford, 1990, pp. 104–5.

1638), Pascal's *Expériences nouvelles touchant le vide* (New Experiments concerning the Void, 1647), and Boyle's *New Experiments* (1660).³⁴ This novelty was often seen at the same time to be a purification of older knowledge ('one was to get ahead by going back'), and it is almost banal to comment on the coexistence of very archaic with very new forms of knowledge, astrology with astronomy, for example, or alchemy with chemistry. The *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*, which began in France in the last quarter of the seventeenth century and quickly spread to England, presents a range of additional parallels. Here the problem first posed in terms of transcending ancient science (as Descartes was believed to have done) soon became one of literary evaluation. Could contemporary writers similarly transcend Cicero, whether in the excellence of style or thought? Many thoughtful minds answered 'No', and demanded continued imitation of the classics. 'Style', or ways of being in the world, may be less important than ways of knowing the world, though I take it to be a serious historical fact that among Sanskrit writers, too, literary sensibilities, even Jagannātha's, remained largely continuous with the past. But the *Querelle* was also symptomatic of powerful changes in the ways of knowing, and if we compare these with India we shall find evidence of a major bifurcation in historical trajectories that had up to that point been remarkably parallel for centuries, from the origins of both in an axial moment some two millennia before, and classicised and shaped thereafter in a long and brilliant tradition of scholasticism.

Among Sanskrit intellectuals we see nothing comparable to the moment in seventeenth-century England when scholars of natural philosophy decided to look at nature itself rather than read Aristotle and Galen—whose works from that moment on became chapters in a history of science and no longer science; and when they aspired, in addition, to turn this knowledge towards the transformation of social or political arrangements. In India, old limits on what could be known, or at least on what was worth discussing, and the ends to which this knowledge could be directed, remained securely in place. Characteristically, the ancients remained authoritative and living disputants (with *svatantra* or independent scholars of the seventeenth century citing, as we saw, foundational texts from the beginning of the common era). While modes of analysis and the historicisation of whole disciplines were new, the actual methods of producing knowledge remained unchanged. Nor did anyone seek, as Descartes did, to 'begin anew, from first principles'. This explains, or at least helps us register, the crucial fact that neither the new intellectuals nor their opponents ever thematised their new historicity or sought to make second-order sense of what made them new. And unlike some of the poets, they evinced no awareness of, let alone interest in, the new conceptual possibilities around them, whether Persianate or European. These and other differences can lead easily to normative judgements, of the sort early colonial officials made ('revolving in perpetual circles of metaphysical abstractions never ending still begin-

³⁴ On the vernacular shift visible in these titles, see further below. Steven Shapin, in *The Scientific Revolution*, Chicago, 1996, remarks on the titles and also provides the quote in the next sentence (cf. pp. 65–75; 4–5).

ning', as the education surveyor William Adam described Sanskrit intellectuals in 1835). It is only a self-authenticating ideology of progress, however, that prevents us from seeing how bizarre such normativity actually is.

Yet when these norms entered Indian history—when colonialism made the norms of Europe the norms of India—the Sanskrit intellectual formation melted like so much snow in the light of a brilliant, pitiless sun. Consider only the scholarship on *dharmaśāstra*, one of the most prolific and discursively central forms of knowledge in the seventeenth century. During this period, a dozen extraordinary works were produced, including the *Viramitrodaya* under the direction of Mitramiśra at the Orccha court in the 1630s (the work is in 22 volumes, and twice the size of the great epic, the *Mahābhārata*). Yet, following Nāgojī Bhaṭṭa, who wrote during the first half of the eighteenth century, the production of new works totally ceases throughout India (with the sole exception of Kāśinātha Upadhye's *Dharmasindhu* of 1790). It is almost as if the intellectuals knew their world was being altered fundamentally and forever. This desuetude was not of course preordained, but clearly neither the newness in intellectual practices that was powerful enough to reorganise core knowledges of great antiquity and to mark an age as *navya*, nor the new kinds of fertilising interactions, forms of subjectivity and social networks, proved sufficient to prevent it. In the face of European modernity, Indian systems of thought, or rather Sanskrit systems, simply vanished as a significant force in Indian history.

I here introduce a distinction between Sanskrit and other South Asian systems of thought because the fate of the Sanskrit intellectuals cannot be understood without being seen in relationship to other forms of culture in India in the centuries preceding colonialism. Something in this relationship, I believe, may help us grasp why the kind of modernity self-generated in India proved resourceless against the European variant.

Over the course of what I have called the vernacular millennium—a profound but still poorly understood transformation of culture and polity in South Asia between ca. 1000 and 1500—a new or at least more powerful fissure in the intellectual class itself emerges as a fact of ever greater consequentiality. For the first time since the archaic split in religious consciousness that led Buddhists and Jains to develop alternative forms of communication, a split that had been wholly transcended in the course of the first millennium among both Jain and Buddhist literati, we find a growing divergence between what I would call *mārga* intellectuals, thinkers of the 'Great Way', and *desī* intellectuals, thinkers of 'Place'. (I use Indic terminology not as an indigenist gesture, but simply because no other way of categorising intellectuals is adequate in the South Asian context. Gramsci's distinction between 'traditional' and 'organic', for example, does not work, since an important stratum of *desī* intellectuals was typically from the same class formation as *mārga* intellectuals.)³⁵

³⁵ Moreover, 'total intellectual' (Sartre), or 'specific intellectual' (Foucault), or 'collective intellectual' (Bourdieu) is each indissolubly linked to the political environment of post-War Europe. For the general historical argument I am making here, see my 'India in the Vernacular Millennium: Literary Culture and Polity, 1000–1500', in Samuel Eisenstadt and Wolfgang Schluchter, eds, *Early Modernities* (*Daedalus*, Vol. 127[3]), 1998, pp. 41–74.

What I mean is that an increasingly noticeable gap arose between those intellectuals, on the one hand, who continued to cleave to a kind of cosmopolitan culture of Sanskrit (though the same argument would apply to Persianate intellectuals), and those, on the other, who chose to think and write vernacularly. This is especially apparent in the domain of literary culture, which represented a mode of textualising the world even more influential in South Asia than elsewhere, but it has powerful resonances across the wider field of intellectual production, and is closely linked—or so I have argued—with transformations in the political order.

Now, political-cultural transformations of an astonishingly comparable order are to be found in western Europe during the same period, running parallel to developments in India—again, until about the seventeenth century. At that moment, the vernacular both intellectualised itself and institutionalised its power, processes indissociably linked to new national and statist projects. Perhaps the most dramatic instance is provided again by Descartes: two years after the founding of the Académie française in 1635 (the first of eight national academies founded in western Europe before 1671) and undoubtedly connected to this event, Descartes decided to publish his *Discours de la méthode* first in French, an act of considerable risk (so much so that he felt compelled to publish a Latin version within a couple of years). His decision to write in French was also conditioned by the very philosophy he was promulgating—the universalism of natural reason, despite the fact that this stands in some tension with the particularity of the so-called natural language in which the philosophy was written—as well as by his sense of the market represented by an emergent cultivated public.³⁶ Similar developments, if not always quite so obvious in their causal sequence, are to be found throughout seventeenth-century Europe. In Italy, for example, the scientific Lincei Academy was founded in 1603 (the literary Accademia della Crusca had been established in 1582), and in 1638, as we noted earlier, Galileo published his *Discorsi* in Italian, probably the first significant scientific treatise in that language.³⁷ In England, the first important philosophical text in English, Francis Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, appeared in 1605; here the fact that the Royal Society was founded only two generations later, in 1662, indicates just how overdetermined the shift in cultural consciousness was.³⁸

³⁶ On the first point see the reflections of Jacques Derrida, 'Languages and Institutions of Philosophy', *Recherches Sémiotiques/Semiotic Inquiry*, Vol. 4(2), 1984, pp. 91–154. When, as earlier noted, Descartes announced the need to start anew from first principles, he announced it in Latin (*a primis fundamentis denuo inchoandum, Meditationes I* [1641]), the text having been addressed to the Jesuits of the University of Paris. A French translation appeared in 1647.

³⁷ As Johan Heilborn points out, Galileo's work 'bears the traces of the old duality', the mathematical deductions being discussed in Latin, the experiments in Italian (Johan Heilbron, *The Rise of Social Theory*, Minneapolis, 1995, p. 28). We should recall, however, that vernacular political thought in Italy begins with Machiavelli in 1513, a text whose exact contemporaneity with Kṛṣṇadevarāya's *Āmuktamālyadā*, the Telugu work from late Vijayanagara that is centrally based on texts composed more than a thousand years earlier, serves to point up both the extent and the limits of the vernacular parallel.

³⁸ Recent work on the vernacularisation of natural science discourse in early modern Europe is found in the collection of essays edited by Roger Chartier and Pietro Corsi, *Sciences et langues en Europe*, Paris, 1996.

Neither sort of transformation occurred in India. The political institutionalisation of vernacularity in seventeenth-century Europe was the consequence of a kind of instrumentalisation wholly unfamiliar to Indian patterns of culture and power both over the very long term of pre-modernity and late into the vernacular epoch. Not only did this not take place in India, but on the contrary, seventeenth-century intellectuals actively reasserted the Sanskrit monopoly on intellectual (and not just literary) production in the teeth of the growing challenge of vernacularity. Although many domains of systematic thought—logic—epistemology—ontology (*nyāya*), text—hermeneutics (*mīmāṃsā*), moral philosophy (*dharmaśāstra*)—had been wholly impervious to vernacular penetration, this was not true in other disciplines. Grammatical studies in the vernacular on the vernacular, for example, had been undertaken from at least the ninth century onward (if only in Tamil, Kannada and Telugu). Well known are the hagiographies and systematic theology in Kannada prose developed among Vīraśaivas from the fifteenth century (and even earlier among Jains), the religious treatises in the Tamil-Sanskrit idiolect (*Manipravāla*) among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas. But even in Marathi we find evidence of early philosophical prose (the thirteenth-century *Vivekasindhu*), while in Braj, beginning in the seventeenth century, we encounter the occasional work on metaphysics in expository prose, in addition to an important body of writing on rhetoric and metrics.³⁹ And all this is to say nothing of the vast and dynamic production across the sub-continent of vernacular *kāvya* of every imaginable sort, vernacular textualisations of the practical arts (medicine and the like), and the presence of Persian and Arabic intellectual production in the greatest profusion.

In the face of all this literary-cultural change—perhaps precisely on account of it—and despite the fact that many of their number had contributed centrally to the vernacular revolution itself or had affiliated themselves with the new Persianate cultural order, Sanskrit intellectuals continued to reproduce a very archaic postulate about the inefficacy of non-Sanskrit language, now with a new tone of contentiousness. For the controversy over the communicative power of the vernacular was obviously not simply about language as such but about the status of competing knowledges and the identities of and relationships among communities. And it is one of the more significant disputes in which the new intellectuals played a role that may be thought to have been objectively new and audacious. Strikingly, it was some philosophers of Sanskrit grammar who most powerfully articulated this *nāvya* position, or rather—since it was against the new logicians, among others, that they argued—the newest of the *nāvya* positions.

The history of language-philosophical analysis of the signifying capacity (*śakti*) of vernacular words is a very long one, stretching back to the last centuries before the common era, when grammarians and hermeneutists had begun to raise questions about the practical and ideological status of linguistic correctness, about how

³⁹ Jasvant Singh, king of Jodhpur (fl. 1650), for example, and author of the well-known Braj (verse) treatise on rhetoric (the *Bhāṣābhūṣaṇ*), composed a *Siddhāntabodha* in Braj prose. See *Jasvant Singh Granthāvalī*, edited by Visvanathaprasad Misra, Varanasi, 1972, pp. 152 ff.

words transmit meaning, and related matters.⁴⁰ Yet it was only in the seventeenth century, so far as I can see, that some Sanskrit intellectuals were finally prepared to abandon the age-old notions about the vernacular capacity to signify only if somehow mediated by grammatically correct (that is, Sanskrit) language, even if while doing so they sometimes resorted to much earlier arguments (such as those made in the sixth century by Bhartṛhari), and continued to maintain an ancient allegiance to the moral value of grammatical discipline.⁴¹ The position against which these thinkers chiefly argue is that of the *navya naiyāyikas* starting with Gaṅgeśa himself. Here is how the seventeenth-century grammarian Kauṇḍa Bhaṭṭa sets out the problem:

How can verbal knowledge be obtained from vernacular language (*bhāṣāśabda*), since by definition there can exist in the vernacular neither primary nor secondary [topological] signification (*śaktilakṣaṇayor abhāvāt*) [the two mechanisms by which grammatically correct language produces meaning]? Some people respond on the basis of the general consensus [i.e., the entire earlier tradition] that such verbal knowledge is enabled by remembering the Sanskrit word [from which the vernacular word is thought to be corrupted]. The *navyas* respond by saying that, given the fact that those who have no knowledge of Sanskrit whatever nonetheless derive verbal knowledge [from vernacular communication], the knowledge must come from an ‘illusion’ of the presence of primary signification.⁴²

The response that Kauṇḍa gives to the *navyanyāya* position that he here summarises is, so far as I can see, dramatically new: ‘Vernacular language signifies in precisely the same way as Sanskrit. Such is the view of the grammarians, which we have set out fully in our *Bhūṣaṇa*.’ This larger treatise is the *Brhadvaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇa* (which exists in an abridged version as well, the *Sāra*), a commentary-cum-exposition of a work of his uncle Bhaṭṭoī Dīksita, the *Vaiyākaraṇamatonmajjana* (Rescuing the Drowned Doctrines of the Grammarians).⁴³ There are a number of important new (or newly clarified) arguments that Kauṇḍa offers here; we should note in particular

⁴⁰ This topic has been reconsidered recently by George Cardona, ‘Approaching the Vākyapadiya’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 119(1), 1999, especially pp. 99–120.

⁴¹ Bhartṛhari does not go precisely into the terms of the debate as they appear in later thinkers; see Cardona, ‘Approaching the Vākyapadiya’, p. 114, n. 151 (indeed, Cardona’s article seems to be largely an attempt to show that Bhartṛhari did not in fact hold the view of direct signification of dialectal language).

⁴² *Padārthadipikā*, p. 32. The position reproduced is that of the *Tattvacintāmaṇi*, Vol. 4, pt. 2, pp. 639–40 (cf. also Gerschheimer, *La théorie de la signification*, p. 64). Kauṇḍa Bhaṭṭa, for his part, repeatedly calls this the *navya* position elsewhere, e.g., *Vaiyākaraṇabhūṣaṇasāra* (edited with the *Prabhā* and *Darpaṇa* commentaries by Balakrishna Pancholi, Varanasi, 1969), p. 249.

⁴³ Also known as the *Vaiyākaraṇasiddhāntakārikā* (Poona, 1901). Did Bhaṭṭoī’s position evolve over time? In his *Śabdakaustubha* (edited by Gopal Sastri Nene and Mukund Sastri Puntamkar, Varanasi, 1991, p. 25) he reports as the position of ‘others’ the belief in the communicative efficacy of dialectal words; in *Vaiyākaraṇasiddhāntakārikā* he tersely states: ‘there is no distinction in communicative capacity’ (*vācakatvāviśeṣa*, vs. 37, p. 40).

his understanding that it is precisely Sanskrit's cosmopolitan presence that in the eyes of previous writers endowed it alone with the capacity of direct signification:

[According to the *navya naiyāyika*] signifying power is found only in Sanskrit. It cannot exist in vernacular words even though the putative communicative exchange in the vernacular may be identical to what is found in Sanskrit. This is so because the vernaculars vary across regions [whereas Sanskrit words are thought to be everywhere the same] However, given the absence of any decisive argument one way or the other, we must conclude that vernacular language too possesses the power of signifying directly. Nor would this lead to any lack of parsimony [i.e., the need to postulate multiple words—which is to say, multiple spellings of a single word—that all directly express the same meaning] since it is impossible to avoid attributing signifying power to Marathi (*mahārāṣṭrabhāṣā*) no less than Sanskrit. This is so because Marathi, too, remains self-identical in every single region. [*Sāra*: Like Sanskrit the vernacular of Maharashtra and all others are everywhere one and the same. (The *Prabhā* commentary adds: That is, all vernaculars produce meaning in one form only. None of them varies across regions, for when it does become truly transformed, it turns into another language.)] Thus, because there is no conclusive evidence for exclusion in the case of other languages, the rejection of signifying power with respect to any single one of the vernaculars is itself refuted. Indeed, even in the case of Sanskrit conclusive evidence for exclusion is absent. [*Sāra*: If by 'conclusive evidence' were meant acceptance by the learned everywhere that a given form is correct, then even in the case of Sanskrit there might be incorrect words, since the word *sāva* is used as a verb of motion among the Kambojas, and as a noun meaning corpse in *Āryāvarta*, according to the *Mahābhāṣya*.]

One might argue further that it is not the fact of a language's being Sanskrit or a vernacular that determines whether or not it has signifying power, but rather its orthographic stability, which [in the case of the vernaculars] is everywhere variable. But this would hardly differ from the case of Sanskrit synonyms: *ghaṭa* and *kalaśa* [are spelled differently but mean the exact same thing, 'pot']. Given this, the one [Sanskrit] cannot render the other [the vernacular] to be erroneously established [as having signifying power]. [*Sāra*: Moreover, (even if one were to agree that the vernaculars are marked by variation and argue that) it is orthography that defines a word as such (one could reply as follows): The variable orthography in the vernacular is like (the variability in Sanskrit) with respect to synonyms (that is, various spellings of a single-vernacular word all mean the same thing, just as various spellings in Sanskrit in the case of synonyms all mean the same thing); what is the difference between the two (i.e., that allows us to count the latter as correct and the former as incorrect)?] It is precisely for this reason [i.e., that non-Sanskrit language can have signifying power] that the *Kāvyaprakāśa* quotes a Prakrit verse to illustrate a case of aesthetic

implication of the expressed meaning [which demonstrates that other important authorities hold *śakti* to exist in *bhāṣā*].⁴⁴

It is the position represented by Kauṇḍa Bhaṭṭa, which would now in its own right be characterised as *navya*, that came under attack from the widely influential Varanasi intellectual Kamalākara Bhaṭṭa. Writing in perhaps the very decade in which the French Academy was founded, Kamalākara reiterates the old position in *Mimāṃsā* language philosophy (though tinged in fact with *navyanyāya*) when arguing that the very capacity of vernacular language to produce meaning is a pure illusion, since authentic meaning presupposes language that does not change—that is, Sanskrit:

The new intellectuals (*navya*) hold that [inherently expressive] words and sentences must exist in dialect, that is, in vernacular-language texts, as well as in [newly coined] technical terms and proper names, because these actually do communicate verbal knowledge. These men, however, fail to grasp the logic in the argument that ‘a multiplicity of [equally expressive] speech forms cannot be logically posited’ [*Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.26]. Nor do they understand that, by thereby rendering grammar itself irrelevant and accepting as valid words and meanings in use among the Mlechhas, they are destroying the Veda. There cannot exist in dialectal words such as *gāvya* [instead of Skt *gauh*, ‘cow’] the expressive power conferred by divine will, because these dialectal words have no stable form [whereas the words stamped by God’s will, i.e., Sanskrit words, are invariable] . . . In short, if direct signification is attributed to [a recently created] proper name one would have to attribute the power of signification to the sounds of seashells and bells. And by the same token, the vernacular can be said to possess real words only either by the illusion of their being expressive in themselves, or through the presence of the grammatically correct [Sanskrit] words that they suggest. Words are actually changeless-and-eternal, because the phonemes of which they are composed are such.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *Bṛhadvaiyākaranabhbhusāṇa*, pp. 218, 220; *Vaiyākaranabhbhusāṇasāra*, pp. 341–42 = Benares Sanskrit Series edition, pp. 248–49 (‘thus, because there is no conclusive evidence for exclusion in the case of [lit. with] other languages’—i.e., because just as in the case of Sanskrit, so in the case of the vernaculars the learned use one and the same form everywhere—‘the rejection of signifying power with respect to any single one [of the vernaculars] is itself refuted,’ *bhāṣāntarair vinigamanāvirahād naikatra śaktir iti parāstam*; ‘the one [Sanskrit] cannot render the other [the vernacular] to be erroneously established [as having signifying power],’ *naikenāparānyathāsiddhiḥ*). The Prakrit citation is from *Kāvyaprakāśa*, Chapter 2, vs. 6 (*māe gharavaaraṇam*). This notwithstanding, it is more likely that Kauṇḍa Bhaṭṭa held Māhārāṣṭri and Marathi as related, than that by *māhārāṣṭrabhbāṣā* he meant the Prakrit (which for a thousand years had been called Māhārāṣṭri). The presence of signifying power in non-Sanskrit is asserted by another *navya* grammarian of the preceding generation, Annam Bhaṭṭa (according to his subcommentary on the *Mahābhāṣya* cited in Harold G. Coward and K. Kunjuni Raja, *The Philosophy of the Grammarians*, Princeton, 1990, p. 237).

⁴⁵ *Mimāṃsākutuhala*, p. 77 (‘dialect’, *apabhramśa*; ‘vernacular-language texts’, *bhāṣāprabandha*; ‘proper names and technical terms’, *sanketaśabda*). By and large this is the

We must not lose sight of what is ultimately at stake in this seemingly narrow discussion—which is nothing less, I think, than the possibility of creating a national-popular intellectual class, of the sort toward which the *philosophes*, for example, gestured in the century following Descartes's choice. But it is also worth stressing that while, as Kamalākara himself declares, it is against the *navyas* he mounts this argument, there is nothing to be found anywhere in this intellectual history to suggest that, even for new scholars like Kauṇḍa, the rebirth of the *mārga* as a *desī* intellectual was not something excluded a priori from the realm of possibility by the kind of fundamental ideological precommitments expressed by Kamalākara. As far as we know, Kauṇḍa himself wrote not a single word of scholarly Marathi. And we even encounter the occasional defection from the vernacular. Anantadeva, for example, the Sanskrit writer on moral law mentioned earlier, was the great-great-grandson of Eknāth, the vernacular sage of Maharashtra (d. 1609).⁴⁶ In the eyes of Sanskrit intellectuals of whatever stripe, for thought to be systematic let alone true—thought on everything from polity to the expressive capacity of the vernacular (which in fact was never argued out in the vernacular)—was for thought to be *samskr̥ta*. All the rest was just poetry, if for some scarcely that.

I noted earlier that a crucial development in the intellectual modernity in western Europe was the rise of the royal academies and later secularised universities. What is additionally important about these institutions is the fact that, for the first time in centuries, knowledge could be produced outside the organisational framework of Christian theology (if still under the watchful eye of absolutist power). And here, not unparadoxically, European modernity seems to have been generated by moving closer to Indian pre-modernity (to adopt the prevailing idiom). A fact insufficiently emphasised in the scholarly literature is that intellectual freedom in pre-European India was virtually total. Institutional constraints or sanctions were as little known as compulsory dogma or censorship; the only censorship in India was failure of imagination, and the only dogma, uncritiqued tradition. The modernising of Europe through greater approximation to pre-modern India is true, too, in the more particular case of philosophy, if we accept the account of the rise of Western philosophy

dominant position across disciplines, from logic (see Mahādeva, *Nyāyakaustubha Śabdakhaṇḍa*, pp. 549 ff.) to literary criticism (*Alaṅkārakaustubha* of Kavikarnapūra [ca. 1600, Navadvip], pp. 30–31). Supporters of the new grammarians seem few and far between, though consider the following comments of Gāgā Bhaṭṭa in his commentary on the *Candrāloka* (p. 4). With regard to Mammata's by then ubiquitous definition of poetry as *nirdoṣā . . . vāk* or ‘faultless language’, Gāgā remarks: ‘Some people hold that, even though faultless usage is absent from vernacular verse and the like (*bhāṣāślokādau*) given the presence there of phonological and morphological solecisms and so on (*cyutasamskṛtitva-*), people still apply the word “literature” to it, and accordingly “faultlessness” should be taken not as a defining property (*viśeṣaṇa*) of literature but as a secondary property (*upalakṣana*).’

⁴⁶ See *Smṛtikaustubha*, vss. 15 (where Eknāth is called *śrīkr̥ṣṇabhaktimān*)–19. In this context it is worth recalling the legend that Eknāth was compelled by the Brahmins of Varanasi to destroy his Marathi *Bhāgavata* by throwing it in the Gaṅgā (*Bhaktililāmr̥ta*, Chapter 21: 30–202; 22:1–44).

as an academic discipline whereby its practitioners became 'institutionally-protected specialist[s] in esoteric disciplinary abstractions', both 'technically rigorous, and remote from the clear political and religious appeals of the lay-based philosophers whom they now displace'.⁴⁷ This is, I think, largely how the logicians, grammarians and other intellectuals of seventeenth-century India should be viewed.

Yet it is also beyond dispute that the social character of the modernity that would ultimately win in Europe, and perforce in colonial India, was of a very different sort from that of the new intellectuals. However else we may wish to characterise this, it was undoubtedly a national and a vernacular modernity. In the realm of knowledge production, it brought the intellectual into a new public sphere with its far broader market and with demands eventually posed against the absolutist state, but also into a new pedagogical sphere, where vernacular cultivation was a central concern.⁴⁸ And against this, the Sanskrit scholars of seventeenth-century India, and their successors up to the end of the eighteenth century (Thanjavur was taken by Wellesley in 1799; Varanasi was ceded to the British by the Nawab of Awadh in 1803), had few resources to deploy.

As for the pedagogical sphere, so far as we can tell from the thin data we possess, vernacular education in South Asia continued in the first instance to address practical needs (accountancy, clerical skills and the like); the formation of an intelligentsia remained the task of the Sanskrit *tol* and the Persian-Arabic *madrasa*. As for the public sphere, the new intellectuals did not and maybe could not confront Europe as a political problem. In part this may have been because they believed they had long ago solved the enigma of power, in part because no theory of the vernacular polity had ever been produced and thus no national intellectual formation had ever autonomously generated itself. Whether or not I am right about this, it is a fact that Sanskrit intellectuals never directly confronted colonialism, whether as a political or an epistemological order; virtually without exception they simply ignored it. All they appeared able or willing to do, with the most remarkable resources of thought and expression they had ever developed—of a sort that in some cases would hardly be matched before the symbolic metalanguages of late (or post) modernity—was to reinvigorate and sustain an old ecumenical cultural order in a much-changed world where no other option was available.

⁴⁷ Randall Collins, 'The Transformation of Philosophy', in J. Heilbron, L. Magnusson and B. Wittrock, eds, *The Rise of Social Sciences and the Formation of Modernity: Conceptual Change in Contexts, 1750–1850*, Boston/London, 1996, pp. 141–62. The quoted passages are found on pp. 152, 158.

⁴⁸ An account of the social transformation of the modern intellectual is offered in Heilbron, *The Rise of Social Theory*, esp. pp. 26–77. On the vernacular 'pedagogical revolution' in seventeenth-century France, see also Ann Blair, 'La persistance du latin comme langue de science à la fin de la Renaissance', in Chartier and Corsi, *Sciences et langues en Europe*, especially pp. 40 ff.