

Lawrence McCrea

## Justification, Credibility and Truth: Sucaritamīśra on Kumāriḷa's Intrinsic Validity

It has long been recognized that the theory of intrinsic validity or *svataḥ prāmānya* (literally "validity from oneself/itself") represents the most important and distinctive contribution of Mīmāṃsā, and of the great seventh century Mīmāṃsaka Kumāriḷa in particular, to Indian *pramāṇa* theory. The Mīmāṃsā theory of intrinsic validity, and Kumāriḷa's version of it specifically, stood as an important and inescapable *pūrvapakṣa* to later Buddhist accounts of knowledge, forming one of the most powerful critiques of and ongoing challenges to the epistemological projects of the Buddhist logicians, as well as to their accounts of scriptural and religious authority. Now, what exactly Kumāriḷa meant by this key epistemological doctrine has been the subject of considerable controversy almost since it was first propounded in his "Critical Commentary in Verse" (Ślokavārttika). The three commentators on the relevant section of the Ślokavārttika whose works survive explain Kumāriḷa's position in markedly different ways, all of which can claim some support from Kumāriḷa's own brief and occasionally cryptic formulations. The views of two of these commentators – Umbeka (c. 700 AD) and Pārthasārathimīśra (c. 1050 AD) – have been investigated in some detail in several recent studies: a twenty-five year old but still very important article of John Taber's, "What Did Kumāriḷa Mean by *svataḥ prāmānya*?"<sup>1</sup>, as well as extensive discussions in Dan Arnold's "Intrinsic Validity Reconsidered"<sup>2</sup> and *Buddhists, Brahmins and Belief*.<sup>3</sup> Yet the views of the commentator Sucaritamīśra, who falls chronologically somewhere between Umbeka and Pārthasārathi, have been, by contrast, almost entirely overlooked.<sup>5</sup> What I would like to do here is to undertake a more serious examination of Sucaritamīśra's reading of Kumāriḷa's seminal discussion of intrinsic validity in the Ślokavārttika, and to suggest some reasons to believe that his interpreta-

---

<sup>1</sup> Taber 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Arnold 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Arnold 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Arnold's discussion draws heavily and builds heavily on that of Taber, as he himself acknowledges (Arnold 2001: 592 and 2005: 238), so it is neither coincidental nor surprising that he follows Taber in his general neglect of Sucarita's interpretation. For the chronology of the authors discussed here, see Kataoka 2011: II/105.

<sup>5</sup> Taber does not mention Sucaritamīśra at all; Arnold offers only a few stray comments on his views, in stark contrast to his extensive and critical treatments of the other two commentators.

tion of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* offers a more perspicacious exegesis of Kumārila's doctrine, as well as a reading of serious philosophical interest in its own right.

Both Taber's and Arnold's studies of Kumārila's doctrine, and of the relation between the two commentators they examine, are heavily influenced by the analysis of the latest of the commentators, Pārthasārathimīśra, and decisively favor his interpretation over that of Umbeka, the earlier commentator they both examine. This clear weighting of opinion in favor of the later commentator is no doubt at least partly attributable to the fact that their understanding of Umbeka's position is shaped by Pārthasārathi's own careful but also hostile analysis of his predecessor's views. Pārthasārathi's examination of the question of intrinsic validity is particularly helpful since, in addition to his commentary on the Ślokavārttika (which is in fact rather minimal, and not very ambitious theoretically), he produced an independent essay on the topic, the "Investigation of Intrinsic Validity" (Svataḥprāmāṇyanirūpaṇa), one of the chapters in his collection of short monographs, the Nyāyaratnamālā. In this work Pārthasārathi not only offers his own explanation of Kumārila's doctrine as he understands it, but provides a fairly detailed resume and critical analysis of his predecessors' views, in effect surveying the history of interpretation of the doctrine up to his own time. Hence he provides his own account of how exactly the views of the earlier commentators differ from his own, and why, from his perspective, they both prove insufficient on both philosophical and exegetical grounds. This makes his treatment of the question a natural starting point for a scholar aiming to find a way through the internal Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā debate on this issue, but also a somewhat dangerous guide, as Pārthasārathi clearly has his own theoretical axes to grind, and has a strong interest in presenting his predecessors' views as defective.

Given the seemingly close dependence of both Taber and Arnold on Pārthasārathi's account in their own analyses of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, however, it is somewhat surprising that they both overlook Sucaritamīśra as they do, since Pārthasārathimīśra himself was well aware of Sucaritamīśra's work, and devoted a substantial portion of his Svataḥprāmāṇyanirūpaṇa to examining and refuting his views, as we shall see. As a preliminary way into the debate, I too will start with Pārthasārathi's study, but I do want to suggest that his presentation of both Umbeka's and Sucarita's views, while generally accurate, is sometimes misleading or at least significantly incomplete in ways that bear considering.

Pārthasārathi's essay on *svataḥ prāmāṇya* begins by setting out three questions or variables that he uses to define his position in contrast to those of both Umbeka and Sucaritamīśra. To quote:<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Nyāyaratnamālā 48,4-7: *svataḥ sarvaprāmāṇānām ity ārabhya svataḥ prāmāṇyaṃ parataś cāprāmāṇyaṃ ācāryair nibaddham. tatra vyākhyātāro vivadante: svasabdah kim ātmavacanaḥ,*

Beginning with the statement “[Let it be understood that] the validity of all means of valid awareness is *intrinsic*,” (Ślokaṵārttika, Codanāśūtra 47a) the teacher Kumāriḷa has written that validity is intrinsic, and invalidity is extrinsic. Now the commentators have several disagreements about this. (1) Does the word “intrinsic” [literally “from itself”, *svataḥ*] have reference to the awareness itself, or to what belongs to it, [namely its own cause]? (2) Does validity actually *arise* intrinsically, or does it merely *appear* intrinsically? And, (3) does “validity” mean the awareness's having an object that corresponds to it, or its *causing one to determine* (*niścāyakatva*)<sup>7</sup> that its object corresponds to it? [emphasis mine]

To clarify – Question 1: Does the word *svataḥ* in *svataḥ prāmānya* mean “from itself”, i.e., emerging from or caused by the awareness itself, or “from its own”, i.e., from something belonging to the awareness? Question 2: Is it claimed that the validity of awareness actually *arises* “intrinsically”, i.e., on its own, or rather that it “*appears*”, i.e., is known or cognized, “intrinsically”, i.e., without dependence on anything other than itself? And, question 3: What actually do we mean by “validity” or *prāmānya* in any case? Is it the correspondence of our awareness to the actual state of affairs, i.e., something like “truth”, or is it rather the awareness's capacity to cause us to make this determination (*niścaya*), to convince us that a certain state of affairs exists in the world, i.e., something more like “justification”?

On these three questions Pārthasārathi sees partial disagreement, but also partial agreement, between himself and each of the earlier commentators. Pārthasārathi presents his own position on these three questions succinctly in a single verse as the opening gesture in his treatment of *svataḥ prāmānya*:<sup>8</sup>

In answer to these questions,

(1) The word “self”<sup>9</sup> refers to the awareness itself. (2) Validity *appears* intrinsically. And, (3) it is the fact that the object corresponds to its awareness that is called “validity”.

*ātmīyavacano vā, tathā prāmānyaṃ kiṃ svato bhavati kiṃ vā bhāti, tathā prāmānyaṃ nāma kiṃ arthataḥ tathā kiṃ vā tathābhūtarthaniścāyakatvam iti.*

<sup>7</sup> As we will see below, in criticizing the views of Sucaritamiśra (who characterizes *prāmānya* as “having the nature of a determination” [*niścayātmakatva*]), Pārthasārathi considers two possible interpretations of his own formulation here: We may take an awareness's “causing one to determine that its object corresponds to it” to mean either a capacity to cause one to determine that its object really corresponds to it (*tathābhūta*) – that is, to cause an accurate determination of the nature of its object – or as a mere capacity to cause one to determine an object as having a nature that corresponds to it (*tathābhūta*) – that is, to cause a determination that an object exists as it is represented in the awareness, regardless of whether or not this awareness may later be falsified by subsequent awareness. Pārthasārathi devotes most of his attention to the first of these positions, but I will argue below that it is the second that accurately represents Sucaritamiśra's real position. I have tried to retain Pārthasārathi's apparently intentional ambiguity in my translation here.

<sup>8</sup> Nyāyaratnamālā 48,8-10: *tatra ca – ātmavācī svaśabdo 'yaṃ svato bhāti pramāṇatā / arthasya ca tathābhāvaḥ prāmānyam abhidhīyate* //2//.

<sup>9</sup> That is, the morpheme *sva-* in *svataḥ*, literally “from itself”.

Now, Pārthasārathi's critique of Umbeka, and Taber's and Arnold's discussions as well, focus almost exclusively on the first two of these three questions, as these are the questions on which Pārthasārathi sees Umbeka's position as directly opposed to his own. The third question, regarding the actual nature of *prāmānya*, is one on which he professedly agrees with Umbeka: both take it that *prāmānya* refers to the actual truth of an awareness – its correspondence to or non-deviation from its purported object (in contrast to Sucarita, as we shall see).

Pārthasārathi's own summary of Umbeka's doctrine runs as follows:<sup>10</sup>

“Validity” is an awareness's non-deviation from its object – that is to say, its having an object that corresponds to itself. And this, for awarenesses, *arises* intrinsically. Here the word “self”<sup>11</sup> has reference to what *belongs* [to the awareness]; the fact that the awareness has an object that corresponds to itself arises from the awareness's own cause, that is to say not from [anything else such as] a “good quality” (*guṇa*) in its cause. By contrast, invalidity, i.e., the awareness's having a content that does correspond to its object, does not arise directly from the awareness's own cause, but from some defect belonging to that cause. Therefore it is said to be “extrinsic”. [emphasis mine]

So, Pārthasārathi's claim is that Umbeka answers questions 1 and 2 in a manner opposite to Pārthasārathi himself. In answer to question 2, Umbeka is said to take Kumārila's initial proclamation of the doctrine of intrinsic validity in verse 47 of the *codanā* section of the Ślokavārttika to refer to the actual arising or emergence of validity, while Pārthasārathi takes it to refer to the mere appearance of validity. Umbeka is said also, in answer to question 1, to hold that *prāmānya* arises not from the awareness itself, but from something belonging to it, namely its cause(s); the factors which cause the awareness also cause it to be valid, while Pārthasārathi takes the appearance of validity to arise from the awareness itself.

Umbeka's key statement of his own understanding of verse 47 confirms that Pārthasārathi's summary of his position on the key verse 47 is essentially correct (though, as I will argue below, significantly incomplete). To quote:<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Nyāyaratnamālā 48,11-15: *prāmānyam nāmārthavyabhicāritvaṃ tathābhūtārthaviśayatvaṃ iti yāvat. tac ca jñānānām svata eva jāyate. svaśabdo 'yam ātmīyavacanaḥ. svīyād eva kāraṇāt tathābhūtārthaviśayatvaṃ jñānasya jāyate. na guṇād iti yāvat. aprāmānyam tv ayathārthaviśayatvalakṣaṇam na svīyād eva kāraṇāj jāyate. api tarhi tadgatād dōṣād iti parata ity ucyate.*

<sup>11</sup> That is, the morpheme *sva-* in *svataḥ*, literally “from itself”.

<sup>12</sup> Ślokavārttikatātparyatīkā 53,22-26: *pratyakṣādīnām pramāṇānām anvayavyatirekābhyām arthāviśamvāditvaṃ prāmānyam avagamyate, na bodhakatvamātram. tathā hi – saty api bodhakatve yatrāviśamvāditvaṃ nāsti tatrāprāmānyam yathā śuktikāyām rajatajñānasya. vināpi bodhakatvaṃ yatrārthāviśamvāditvaṃ asti tatra prāmānyam yathāgnau dhūmasya. tasya jñānahetava evotpādakāḥ.*

The "validity" of valid awarenesses such as perception is understood to lie in their *not disagreeing with their objects* as determined by positive and negative concomitance, not in the mere fact that they cause one to be aware of something. That is to say: Even when there is the quality of making one aware, where there is no non-disagreement, there is invalidity, as of the awareness of silver when what one actually sees is mother-of-pearl. Where there is non-disagreement with the object, even without the quality of making one aware of anything, there is validity, as smoke has in relation to fire. And *it is the causes of an awareness that produce this non-deviation*. [emphasis mine]

So it does seem that Pārthasārathi is offering a basically sound summary, at least of the part of Umbeka's view he develops in his long comment on Codanāsūtra 47.

Pārthasārathi's critique of the view outlined here concentrates mainly on problems of doctrinal or exegetical consistency that will arise if one interprets verse 47 as Umbeka does. If Kumāriḷa refers here to the arising of real validity, it is hard to see how he can later say, as he does, that this validity is in some cases removed by our subsequent awareness of the contrary nature of the object, or of a defect in the cause of our awareness. As Kumāriḷa says in verse 53 of the same section:<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, the validity of an awareness obtains [intrinsically], simply by virtue of the fact that it is an awareness. It is removed due to a subsequent *awareness* that the object is different, or to an awareness of a defect which has arisen in its cause. [emphasis mine]

If what is being discussed here is the real arising of factual accuracy, this would make no sense. If an awareness is factually inaccurate (like the awareness of "silver" that arises on seeing a piece of mother-of-pearl), it is, Pārthasārathi insists, really invalid from the very beginning; on his own view it is only the appearance of validity that is predicated of awarenesses in verse 47, and it then would make sense for Kumāriḷa to claim that this appearance of validity is removed by a subsequent awareness that reveals the first to be incorrect.

Pārthasārathi also argues that Kumāriḷa's key argument against the rival view of extrinsic validity – that it would result in an infinite regress – would make no sense on Umbeka's account. If what Kumāriḷa is talking about is the actual production of real validity for an awareness, there would be no difficulty in saying that certain positive qualities or virtues need to be present in the cause if it is to produce accurate awareness. The fault of infinite regress Kumāriḷa raises against his opponent arises only if we are required to *know* that the causes

<sup>13</sup> Codanāsūtra 53 (ed. Sāmbaśiva Śāstrī 1926: 91-92 and Kataoka 2011: I/12f.; cf. Ślokaṅkārtikāṭparyāṭikā 57,1f. and Nyāyaratnamālā 48,32f.): *tasmād bodhātmakatvena prāptā buddheḥ pramāṇatā / arthānyathātvahetūtthadoṣajñānād apodyate //*.

of an awareness possess the requisite virtues before concluding that it validly represents its object: the awareness that reveals these virtues would itself need to be confirmed by an awareness that it too proceeded from a virtuous cause, which would require a further confirming awareness, and so on, *ad infinitum*. So, Pārthasārathi concludes, contrary to Umbeka, that, for his argument to remain coherent, Kumārila's verse 47 must be saying that we need to rely on no extrinsic factor for our awareness to *appear* as valid – that is, as true – to us. Several similar issues regarding the consistency of Kumārila's use of terms are raised against Umbeka's interpretation.<sup>14</sup>

But the most important line of criticism raised against Umbeka's interpretation by Taber and Arnold is not one explicitly raised by Pārthasārathi himself – the notion that, if we accept Umbeka's account, *prāmāṇya* might perhaps *arise* intrinsically, but could only be *known* extrinsically, by examining the causes of our awareness (since the validity of all really valid awarenesses is said to be produced by such causes only when they are free from defects). “Real validity”, i.e., truth, belongs only to those awarenesses which actually correspond to their objects. The validity of such awarenesses, on Umbeka's account, is attributable to the causes of the awareness itself, and requires nothing else. But how exactly do we know which awarenesses are produced by such causes, and therefore which possess validity? It is on this point that both Taber and Arnold focus in their challenges to Umbeka's reading of Kumārila.

As Taber (1992: 209) says:

Our confidence in the validity of a cognition would ..., it seems, still have to be established *extrinsically* by ascertaining that the circumstances that gave rise to it were normal. Validity may always *arise* intrinsically, but it will have to *be determined* extrinsically.

And, to quote Arnold (2005: 80):

Uṃveka's is a causal theory of justification in the respect that he believes that an episode of cognition is veridical (is a *pramāṇa*) just in case it has the right sort of causal connection to the fact on which it bears; and only having thus determined, simply by reference to its causes, that a cognition is veridical[,] is it to be credited with validity. But validity ends up being extraneous on this account, ...

But there is one very serious problem with this line of attack, namely that Umbeka himself explicitly and repeatedly disavows the position here ascribed to him – that we need to examine the causes of an awareness or undertake some other process of confirmation before concluding that an awareness is in fact valid.

<sup>14</sup> See Nyāyaratnamālā p. 48f.

For instance, in Umbeka's comment on verse 53 (the same verse Pārthasārathi tries to raise against him), we read as follows:<sup>15</sup>

Now, when there is an awareness of "silver", and just afterwards awareness of a defect in the cause of this awareness arises, there is no infinite regress, since such faults can be inferred from their effects. But in cases where no blocking awareness arises, one should not suspect the existence of any such defect. Kumāṛila himself will reject this notion when he says this [in verse 60] "But when awareness of a defect does not arise[, one should not suspect that there is one, in the absence of any valid means of awareness for this.]"

And, when Umbeka himself comments on this statement of Kumāṛila in verse 60, he makes just the same point again. He first introduces the view of a *pūrvapakṣin*, who tries to insinuate that all-encompassing doubt will arise if one accepts Kumāṛila's view:<sup>16</sup>

Opponent: But if this were so, because even determinate awareness is [sometimes] seen to deviate from its object, insofar as it is overturned by a subsequent awareness, one would always have the suspicion that this is so, and could have no confidence in it. Even if awareness of a defect does not arise now, it could arise at some later time or under other conditions.

With this doubt in mind Kumāṛila responds with this half verse: "But when awareness of a defect does not arise[, one should not suspect that there is one, in the absence of any valid means of awareness for this.]" This is the idea: When an awareness arises that does not conclusively determine anything, because it touches on two contradictory possibilities [i.e., a doubtful awareness], it is quite right that this should not be valid. But, when an awareness arises that conclusively causes one to determine that its object has a specific nature of the form "This is like this", and there is no blocking awareness or awareness of a defect in the cause, then a rational person (*vivekin*) should not have any suspicion that the object of this awareness might be otherwise than it appears simply because deviation is seen in some cases.

When we take into account his comments on verses 53 and 60, it is clear that Umbeka, just like Pārthasārathi, believes we are entitled to accept any aware-

<sup>15</sup> Śloka-vārttikātātparyāṭikā 57,15-17: *yatra tāvad rajatavijñāna utpanne saty anantaram doṣajñānam utpadyate, tatra tāvan nāsty evānavasthā, doṣānām kāryadvāreṇāvagamāt. yatra tu notpadyate bādhaḥ, tatra doṣāśaṅkā na kāryeti parihāram vakṣyati – doṣajñāne tv anutpanna ityādinā.*

<sup>16</sup> Śloka-vārttikātātparyāṭikā 59,13-19: *nanv evaṃ tarhi niścītasāyāpi vijñānasya bādhyamānatayā vyabhicārasāyāpi drṣṭatvād ity āśaṅkāyāṃ āśvāso na yuktaḥ. yatrāpy adhunā doṣajñānam notpadyate, tatrāpi kālāntarādīṣu kadācid utpadyata ity āśaṅkyāha – doṣajñāna ityārdhena. ayaṃ abhiprāyaḥ – yat tāvad ubhayakoṭīsaṃsparśitayānavadhāritaitāntikam vijñānam utpadyate, tasya yuktaṃ aprāmāṇyam. yat punar "idam ittham" iti vastutathātvanīścīyākam utpadyate, na tu bādha-kapratyayaḥ kāraṇadoṣajñānam vā, tatreyam āśaṅkā kvacid vyabhicāradarśanād "anyathā-bhāvaḥ syād" iti na yuktaḥ vivekinā kartum.*

ness as a *pramāṇa* – that is, as really true – as long as no specific grounds for doubt about it become apparent. We do not need to seek for such grounds, or undertake any other process of testing or verification, in order to conclude that it is valid or true. It is true that Umbeka takes a different exegetical approach in reaching this conclusion, deriving it not from verse 47, but from Kumārila’s remarks in several later verses. Still, it is unmistakable that, for him too, all awarenesses (even those that are really false) come packaged with an initial conviction that they are valid; a conviction a reasonable person will accept at face value, in the absence of evidence of falsity.

Once this crucial fact is recognized, Umbeka’s position on *svataḥ prāmāṇya* and Pārthasārathi’s look much closer to one another than either Taber’s or Arnold’s analysis (or Pārthasārathi’s analysis in the *Nyāyaratnamālā*, for that matter) would seem to suggest. Pārthasārathi contends that all cognitions really have initially apparent validity, while Umbeka ultimately takes the position that all cognitions initially appear to have real validity. In this way, they reach something very like the same conclusion by rather different interpretive routes. Taber may very well be right, indeed I think he is, to argue that Umbeka’s interpretation produces at times a strained exegesis of Kumārila’s words, especially in his reading of *svataḥ* in verse 47 as meaning “from its own [cause]”. But the notion that Umbeka renders Kumārila’s doctrine “trivial” (in Arnold’s term) by making our own awareness of the “intrinsically” existing validity in any case dependent on a process of causal verification is simply not a tenable reading of Umbeka’s text.

It is in Pārthasārathi and Umbeka’s unity in claiming that the word *pramāṇa* refers to the truth of an awareness – i.e., its actual correspondence to its purported object – that their position can most readily be differentiated from that of Sucaritamīśra. Recall the third of Pārthasārathi’s initial questions regarding intrinsic validity: “Does ‘validity’ mean the awareness’s having an object that corresponds to it, or its *causing one to determine* that its object corresponds to it?” (above, p. 101). It is with Sucarita in mind that Pārthasārathi includes this third question, as it is he who takes the second option on offer here – that a *pramāṇa* is simply an awareness, any awareness, that produces a determination of an object’s having a certain form.

Pārthasārathi summarizes Sucaritamīśra’s view as follows:<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Nyāyaratnamālā 50,16-19: *anadhigatatathābhūtārthaniścāyakatvaṃ prāmāṇyam. tac ca jñānānāṃ svata eva jāyate. svaśabdaś cāyam ātmavacanaḥ. jñānasvarūpād eva tathābhūtārthaniścayo jāyate. na guṇajñānāt saṃvādaññānād arthakriyājñānād vā. anavasthāprasaṅgāt. arthānyathātvaññānād arthānyathātvaññānād veti parata ity ucyate.*



“Validity” is an awareness's capacity to cause one to determine that it has an object that corresponds to it and has not been apprehended previously. And that arises for awarenesses only intrinsically. And here the word “self”<sup>18</sup> has reference to the awareness itself. It is due to the nature of the awareness itself that we determine that it has an object that corresponds to it. It is not due to awareness of virtues in its cause, awareness of its agreement with other awarenesses, or awareness of its pragmatic effectiveness (*arthakriyā*), because on any of these views we would have the problem of infinite regress.<sup>19</sup> The determination that the object is different than it appears to be, on the other hand, arises from something else – either from awareness of a defect in its cause, or from a subsequent awareness that the object is different – and hence is said to be “extrinsic”.

Again, if we turn to look at Sucarita's own commentary on the Slokavārttika, we see that Pārthasārathi's summary of his rival's position is at least basically accurate. To quote from his comment on verse 47:<sup>20</sup>

One certainly cannot say that the awareness fails to arise before such factors as awareness of positive qualities in the cause of one's awareness, or awareness of its agreement with other awarenesses. Nor, once it has arisen, does it appear as something doubtful. When a pot is in touch with our senses we don't think: “This may be a pot, or it may not.” Rather, a determinate awareness arises: “This is a pot.” It is for this reason that we see that all cognizers begin to act [on the basis of an awareness] immediately after the awareness arises. *Even someone who has erroneously cognized silver is seen to strive after some pragmatic effect, just like one who has correctly cognized silver.* And this mode of acting would not be possible for him if he were in doubt. *So, a determination arises. And what can “validity” be apart from this?* Even if such factors as agreement with other awarenesses, or awareness of positive qualities in the cause of one's awareness exist, this and this alone is the essence of validity; nothing more than this. [emphasis mine]

Pārthasārathi's critique of Sucaritamiśra's position falls into two parts, based on two significantly different interpretations of his view. He first argues on the assumption that “the capacity to cause one to determine that an awareness has an object that corresponds to it” (*tathābhūtārthaniścāyakatva*) means the capac-

<sup>18</sup> That is, the morpheme *sva-* in *svataḥ*, literally “from itself”.

<sup>19</sup> Because in each case the confirming awareness – of positive qualities in the cause, or of other agreeing awarenesses, or of the pragmatic effect produced by acting on the first awareness – would itself require further confirmation by additional awarenesses, creating an endless succession.

<sup>20</sup> Ślokavārttikakāśikā, p. 89: *na tāvad guṇajñānāt saṃvādajñānād vā prāḡ jñānaṃ na jāyate eva. na votpannam api saṃśayātmakam avabhāsate. na hi syād vā ghaṭo na vetīndriyasamnikṛṣṭaṃ ghaṭaṃ budhyāmahe, api tarhi ghaṭa evāyam iti niścayātmakam eva jñānam utpadyate. ata eva jñānotpatter anantaram eva sarvapramāṭīñāṃ vyavahārapravṛttir upalabhyate. bhrāntasaṃviditarajato 'pi samyagrajatabodha ivārthakriyāyai ghaṭamāno dr̥ṣyate. tad asya saṃśayānasya nopapannam. ato jāto niścayah. kim anyat prāmāṇyaṃ bhaviṣyati? saty api saṃvāde guṇajñāne vā tāvad eva prāmāṇyasya tattvaṃ nādhikam kiṃcid.*

ity to accurately and reliably determine such a correspondence, and takes this view to be flawed for the following reasons:<sup>21</sup>

On this view also<sup>22</sup> the claim is that validity arises intrinsically, not that one becomes aware of it intrinsically. And to this we offer the following response: If the awareness were itself the cause of the *arising* of its own validity, then one would have to say likewise that awareness of defects in the cause and blocking awareness are the cause of the arising of invalidity. But what then is this awareness whose invalidity arises from awareness of defects in the cause and blocking awareness? When one cognizes mother-of-pearl as “silver”, this awareness does not *become* invalid due to a blocking awareness or the like; it is invalid from the very beginning. “Invalidity” is *precisely determining an object that does not correspond to the awareness*. And that arises intrinsically from the invalid awareness itself; it does not depend on a blocking awareness or any other such thing. For an awareness does not begin by being valid and then *become* invalid due to a blocking awareness. Rather, the invalidity that existed from the beginning is made known by the blocking awareness.

[Opponent:] *But the determination that the object does not correspond to the awareness is precisely produced by the blocking awareness.*

This is true, but that is not what “invalidity” is. For the invalidity of the prior awareness is not the determination that its object does not correspond to it; rather, it is the fact that, in reality, the object does not correspond to it, or the fact that it causes one to determine the object to be one way when it is in fact different. [emphasis mine]

If we take it that “validity” correlates with actual truth, and that therefore the capacity of awareness referred to here consists not only in its causing us to determine that an object has a certain form, but in its doing so accurately, such that the determination in question will not subsequently be overturned, then one cannot say that this capacity belongs to an awareness initially and is sometimes later lost, due to the arising of a contrary awareness. The awareness must either really correspond or not correspond to its object all along, and it is only the appearance of correspondence that can be removed by a subsequent blocking awareness.

<sup>21</sup> Nyāyaratnamālā 50,20-29: *asminn api pakṣe svataḥ prāmāṇyaṃ jāyate, na tu jñāyata ity atredaṃ vaktavyam – yadi prāmāṇyasya janmani svayam eva kāraṇaṃ jñānaṃ tathā saty aprāmāṇyasyāpi janmany eva doṣajñānabādhakajñānayoḥ kāraṇatvaṃ vaktavyam. tatra kasyā-prāmāṇyaṃ kāraṇadoṣajñānād bādhakajñānād vā jāyate. na hi śuktau rajatajñānasya bādhakādijanyaṃ aprāmāṇyam. utpattāv eva tasyāpramāṇatvāt. atathābhūtārthanīścayo hy aprāmāṇyam. tac cāpramāṇajñānāt svata eva bhavatīti na tad bādhakajñānādikam apekṣate. na hy utpattau pramāṇaṃ sat paścād bādhakenāpramāṇīkriyate. api tūtpattāv eva bhūtam aprāmāṇyaṃ bādhakena khyāpyate. nanv arthasyānyathābhāvaniścayo bādhakenaiva janyate. satyam, na tu tad evāprāmāṇyam. na hy arthānyathābhāvaniścayaḥ pūrvajñānasyāprāmāṇyam. kiṃ tu vastuto 'rthasyānyathābhāvaḥ, anyathābhūte vā tathābhāvaniścāyakatvam.*

<sup>22</sup> That is, in addition to the view of Umbeka described just before.

But it is clear from the passage of Sucaritamīśra's commentary quoted above that the view Pārthasārathi is attacking here is not in fact his position. It is crucial here to consider particularly the familiar example of the awareness of silver subsequently falsified by the perception of the same object as mother-of-pearl. As we have seen, both Umbeka and Pārthasārathi very clearly take the position that this awareness is invalid, an *apramāṇa*, from its very inception. We may legitimately believe such an awareness to be accurate before counter-evidence appears, but the awareness is nevertheless inaccurate, and therefore really lacks *prāmāṇya*, all along. Sucarita, by contrast, makes it very clear that on his view, before the grounds for its falsification appear, the awareness of silver (in the case of mother-of-pearl) not only appears to be but actually is valid. It does not simply appear to be a *pramāṇa*, it really is a *pramāṇa*. The capacity to produce in us a definite determination that a thing is so is simply what *prāmāṇya* is. The supposedly unwanted consequence that Pārthasārathi tries to force onto the opponent here – that he would have to say that an awareness of silver pertaining to what later turns out to be mother-of-pearl starts initially has real *prāmāṇya* and subsequently loses it after the blocking awareness of mother-of-pearl arises – is something that Sucaritamīśra himself openly embraces. For him, the awareness of silver, until it is falsified by the subsequent blocking awareness, actually is a *pramāṇa*. For Sucaritamīśra, *prāmāṇya* simply is the capacity of an awareness to cause us to determine that something is the case, without regard for potential future falsification.

Pārthasārathi, perhaps aware of this tension between his presentation of the theory that *prāmāṇya* consists in the capacity to produce an accurate determination and Sucarita's own stated position, ends his discussion with a far briefer critique of the view that *prāmāṇya* consists in "mere capacity to cause a determination" (*niścāyakatvamātra*) – that is, without regard for subsequent falsification:<sup>23</sup>

If validity is merely the capacity to cause one to determine something,<sup>24</sup> then invalidity must be the absence of this. And it is your view that this absence is produced by a blocking awareness. But this is wrong. For the determination is not destroyed by the subsequent blocking awareness; it perishes of its own accord.

All awarenesses are momentary, passing away as soon as they arise, so, it is claimed, the determination produced by an awareness of, e.g., silver, cannot be destroyed by a subsequent awareness of the same object as, e.g., mother-of-

<sup>23</sup> Nyāyaratnamālā 51,2-4: *atha niścāyakatvamātraṃ prāmāṇyam, tadabhāvo 'prāmāṇyam, tac ca bādhakena kriyata iti matam. tad ayuktam. na hi bādhakena niścayasya vināśaḥ kriyate, tasya svata eva vinaśvaratvāt.*

<sup>24</sup> That is, regardless of whether the determination is accurate or inaccurate.

pearl, as this “determination” will already have perished in the moment of its occurrence. But it is hard to see how this critique can usefully be taken to undermine Sucarita’s position without undermining Pārthasārathi’s as well. Taken seriously, this view would seem to undermine all talk of one awareness “blocking” another (as the awareness to be “blocked”, being momentary, would necessarily perish before the blocking awareness could even arise). This would seem to be equally damaging to Pārthasārathi’s own notion that the initial appearance of validity pertaining intrinsically to all awareness is in some cases blocked by subsequent awareness of a defect; this appearance too is only momentary, and will have passed away before the blocking awareness can arise. It is hard therefore to take Pārthasārathi’s criticism of Sucarita on this point seriously. But this is the only argument he has to offer against the “mere capacity to cause a determination” theory. It seems that his opposition is rooted less in a principled objection than in a deep seated aversion to the notion that “validity” should amount to nothing more than mere convincingness. Like Umbeka, Pārthasārathi is very attached to the notion that we should read *prāmāṇya* very strongly as connoting nothing less than truth, and Sucarita’s casual ascription of it even to awarenesses later shown to be false may seem threatening to the very Vedic authority it is meant to underwrite.

Now one might argue that, pragmatically, Sucaritamiśra arrives at a position not so different from either Umbeka or Pārthasārathi. All three commentators agree on the basic “innocent until guilty” principle which appears to be the main thrust of Kumārila’s argument here – that it is reasonable to act on the assumption that any awareness that appears as clear and undoubtful on its face is accurate, unless and until grounds for its falsification become apparent, and that therefore one should discount random or unmotivated doubt about apparently accurate awareness. But the striking difference in the theory underlying this pragmatic outcome in Sucarita’s case is that he seems to have entirely dispensed with the notion of “truth”, as distinct from justification. There is no “real validity” underlying the initial conviction of accuracy that all non-doubtful awarenesses naturally carry. Or, perhaps more accurately, there is nothing but “real validity”. “Intrinsic validity”, the initial impression we have that a given awareness accurately represents its object, is the only kind of validity that there is or ever can be. Sucarita’s *prāmāṇya* – that is convincingness or “the quality of producing a determination” (*niścāyakatva*) – is purely phenomenological. There is no way an awareness can “appear” or “seem” to be a *pramāṇa* without really being one.

Both Umbeka and Pārthasārathi, by contrast, draw a firm distinction between the initial appearance of validity which entitles us to credit all as yet unfalsified cognitions as “true”, and “real validity”, the factual accuracy or non-deviation of our awareness from its object, which some awarenesses actually have, from

the beginning, whether we know it or not, and which some awarenesses do not have, from the beginning, again, whether we know it or not. In their somewhat different ways, each has to read Kumāriḷa as sometimes speaking of "real" validity and sometimes only of its appearance, even though Kumāriḷa consistently frames his discussion in terms of the single binary of *prāmāṇya* and *apramāṇya*. In this way, Sucarita's path exegetically seems much easier than either Umbeka's or Pārthasārathi's. He does not need to assume that when Kumāriḷa says that all awarenesses have *prāmāṇya* he really means that they only appear to have it, or that *prāmāṇya* in Kumāriḷa's text sometimes means "real validity" and other times only "apparent validity". The dual levels of "apparent" and "real" validity which Umbeka and Pārthasārathi both find themselves forced to deal with, but which have no explicit basis in the actual wording of Kumāriḷa's account of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, can be avoided, and we are left with a single binary, "justified" vs. "unjustified" awareness, which appears to track much better with Kumāriḷa's actual discussion. It is this – justification – which, on the *svataḥ prāmāṇya* view, all awarenesses initially share, but which some awarenesses then lose, extrinsically, due to a subsequent awareness which either directly contradicts them or reveals flaws in their causes.

Moreover, this justification, once lost, can sometimes be restored. As Kumāriḷa says himself in verses 59-61 of the section, a later awareness can falsify an earlier one,<sup>25</sup>

[59] only if no subsequent awareness of a defect or blocking awareness arises with respect to it. If such an awareness does arise, then the second awareness is falsified, and the first awareness is therefore valid, [60] since even there the validity is intrinsic, due to the absence of awareness of a defect. But when awareness of a defect does not arise, one should not suspect that there is one, in the absence of any valid means of awareness for this. [61] So, after the arising of three or four awarenesses, no further awareness is sought for; by this time, one or the other of them will partake of intrinsic validity.

So it is not necessarily the case that a given awareness, once falsified, is irrevocably and for evermore denied validity. Its initial intrinsic validity, once lost, may later be restored if the awareness that falsified it is itself falsified. The final verse here expresses an expectation that, in general, this back and forth between warring falsifiers will settle down – after "three or four" awarenesses – such that one or the other is left with a more or less stable validity. But there

<sup>25</sup> Ślokaṵārttika, Codanāsūtra 59-61 (ed. Sāmbaśiva Śāstrī 1926: 94-96 and Kataoka 2011: I/14f.): *tatra doṣāntarajñānaṃ bādhadhīr vā parā na cet / tadudbhūtau dvitīyasya mithyātvād āḍyamānatā //59// svata eva hi tatrāpi doṣajñānāt pramāṇatā / doṣajñāne tv anuṭpanne nāśaikā niṣpramāṇikā //60// evaṃ tricaturajñānajanmano nādhikā matiḥ / prārthyate tāvad evaikam svataḥ prāmāṇyam aśnute //61//.*

is never any guarantee of this; a new falsifying awareness may arise at any time.<sup>26</sup>

Because the potential for future falsification remains perpetually open-ended, there is no significant epistemic difference between an awareness we had in the past that was subsequently falsified, and an awareness we have now that has not so far been falsified but may be so in the future. Again, the account of the mother-of-pearl/silver example is crucial: when we see what we initially take to be a piece of silver, our awareness really is “valid”, as is any awareness for which no conditions of falsification are currently apparent. If we subsequently in our dealings with the supposed piece of silver have a “blocking awareness” that what we see is actually a piece of mother-of-pearl and not silver, this “blocking awareness” too is “valid” – i.e., currently unfalsified – and the validity of the earlier awareness of silver is therefore cancelled. The unfalsified awareness of mother-of-pearl we have now is certainly “valid” – it produces in us a conviction that its object is as it seems – but so was the earlier awareness that now stands as falsified at the time when grounds for its falsification had not yet appeared. Awarenesses then really cannot meaningfully be divided into the categories of “true” and “false”, but only into “valid” and “invalid” – which is to say, “not currently falsified” and “currently falsified”.

Moreover, this process of falsification seemingly cannot be thought even to gradually approach something like a “real truth”, as distinct from current unfalsifiedness. At the end of three, or four, or any number of stages of the kind of falsification and defalsification envisaged in verses 59-61 (quoted above), we are left simply with one or the other of the competing awarenesses “justified” – but justified in exactly the same way, and to exactly the same degree, that one’s initial, uncontradicted awareness was justified. No process of investigation or testing can ever produce more than this. And, because this process of falsification is neither final nor unidirectional – the awareness that falsifies one awareness may itself be falsified, and an already falsified awareness may be “defalsified” – “truth”, as distinct from current justification, cannot meaningfully function even as a “regulative ideal”, or a presumed end-point that one can assume one is gradually and asymptotically approaching as one’s knowledge is progressively refined.

<sup>26</sup> One could of course read the criterion “after the arising of three or four awarenesses” strictly as a claim that after the third or fourth awareness no further falsification is possible. But this seems highly dubious, both exegetically and philosophically. Counterexamples could easily be found, and Kumāriḷa always stresses that the epistemic status of initial and following cognitions are the same, and will later specifically attack the view that subsequent cognitions confirming an initial awareness have any added degree of validity (see Codanāsūtra 75-76). It seems virtually certain therefore that the indefinite “three or four” is meant as a rule of thumb, rather than an absolute limit to possible falsification.

## CONCLUSION

If we take it that Sucaritamīśra's reading of Kumāriḷa is on the whole closer to Kumāriḷa's position than either Umbeka's or Pārthasārathi's, what are the larger implications of this? Taber perceptively notes in his article (1992: 205a) that the Mīmāṃsā defense of the Veda through intrinsic validity "reflects a certain anti-fideism, even empiricism, at the heart of Mīmāṃsā", and, elsewhere goes so far as to describe this as "empiricism, verging on skepticism". It would seem that Sucarita's reading pushes this skeptical tendency to its limit. There is something almost Humean about his attitude. All awarenesses have the tendency to produce in us an initial conviction of their own truth; this is simply what awarenesses do.<sup>27</sup> We know that certain elements of our awareness have in the past been falsified by subsequent experience, and that it is in principle possible that any given element of our current awareness may at some time be similarly falsified, but we must accept them as valid, if we are to accept anything at all as valid. If we are to count anything at all as "knowledge", we can only do so on this rough and ready, empiricist, decidedly fallibilist basis. We must recognize that all our beliefs, however apparently stable and well-grounded, are liable to potential future falsification, but we cannot on the basis of this possibility refuse to credit our so far unfalsified awarenesses. Otherwise we will be faced with an incapacitating and all-encompassing doubt; the "blindness of the world" (*jagad-āndhya*), as the Mīmāṃsakas put it. We must simply accept things as much as possible at face value (including the claims of the Veda, of course), recognizing grounds for falsification where they arise, and hoping that after "three or four" stages of consideration of any particular object our impressions will settle into a more or less stable pattern, such that we can act on them more or less successfully, with more or less predictable results.

Let me close by suggesting one more potential parallel here. To me it seems that Sucarita leaves us with a picture of knowledge formation and development similar in certain key respects to Thomas Kuhn's account of the development of scientific knowledge. Kuhn (1996: 170-171) too argues that the way we reject certain views and adopt others can be and ought to be explained without reference to any accessible or imagined final "truth" on any of the questions scientific theories are expected to deal with:

---

<sup>27</sup> Compare, famously, David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part 4, Section 1 ("Of Skepticism with Respect to Reason"): "Nature, by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity, has determined us to judge, as well as to breathe and feel; nor can we any more forbear viewing certain objects in a stronger and fuller light, upon account of their customary connection with a present impression, than we can hinder ourselves from thinking as long as we are awake, or seeing the surrounding bodies, when we turn our eyes toward them in broad sunshine" (p. 183).

We may ... have to relinquish the notion, explicit or implicit, that changes of paradigm carry scientists and those who learn from them closer and closer to the truth.

We are all deeply accustomed to seeing science as the one enterprise that draws constantly nearer to some goal set by nature in advance. But need there be any such goal? Can we not account for both science's existence and its success in terms of evolution from the community's state of knowledge at any given time? Does it really help to imagine that there is some one full, objective, true account of nature and that the proper measure of scientific achievement is the extent to which it brings us closer to that ultimate goal?

Sucarita's epistemology, like Kuhn's, sets out ways in which we can progressively refine our world-picture, dismissing certain elements of our awareness when they appear to be contradicted or overturned by other, new awareness-elements, but without presupposing or anticipating any closure to this process. We may have good reason to believe as we do at any given time, but we may at any time in the future find ourselves called upon to abandon or revise any piece of our world-picture, large or small. We cannot anticipate this need in advance, and any attempt to do so would inevitably prove epistemically and pragmatically crippling. At each stage in this process we feel we have good reasons for discarding views that previously seemed to shape our awareness and guide our activity effectively, but there is no particular reason to believe that there is any endpoint to this process, or that the world picture we arrive at at any particular stage will be the final one. In the end, justification without truth may be the best that we can hope for, and all that we need.

### Bibliography

- Arnold 2001                      Dan Arnold, Intrinsic Validity Reconsidered: A Sympathetic Study of the Mīmāṃsaka Inversion of Buddhist Epistemology. *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 29 (2001) 589-675.
- Arnold 2005                      Id., *Buddhists, Brahmins, and Belief*. Epistemology in South Asian Philosophy of Religion. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
- Hume 1978                        David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Ed. by L.A. Selby-Bigge. Oxford: Clarendon Press, <sup>2</sup>1978.
- Kataoka 2011                    Kei Kataoka, *Kumārila on Truth, Omniscience, and Killing*. Part 1: A Critical Edition of *Mīmāṃsā-Ślokavārttika* ad 1.1.2 (*Codanāsūtra*) – Part 2: An Annotated Translation of *Mīmāṃsā-Ślokavārttika* ad 1.1.2 (*Codanāsūtra*). [*Beiträge zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens* 68]. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011.
- Kuhn 1996                        Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, <sup>3</sup>1996.



Nyāyaratnamālā	<i>Nyāyaratnamālā of Pārthasārathimīśra</i> with the Commentary of Rāmānujācārya Entitled the Nayakarātna. Ed. by K.S. Rāmaswami Śāstri. [ <i>Gaekwad's Oriental Series 75</i> ]. Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1937.
Sāmbaśiva Śāstrī 1926	K. Sāmbaśiva Śāstrī (ed.), <i>The Mīmāṃsāslokaṅkā</i> with the Commentary Kāśikā of Sucaritaśra. Volume I. [ <i>Trivandrum Sanskrit Series 90</i> ]. Trivandrum: Government Press, 1926.
Ślokaṅkā	Ślokaṅkā of Kumāṛila, in Sāmbaśiva Śāstrī 1926 and Kataoka 2011.
Ślokaṅkāśikā	Ślokaṅkāśikā of Sucaritaśra, in Sāmbaśiva Śāstrī 1926.
Ślokaṅkāṭparyāṅkā	<i>Ślokaṅkāṭparyāṅkā of Umveka Bhaṭṭa</i> . Ed. by S.K. Ramanatha Sastri. Revised by K. Kunjunni Raja and R. Thangaswamy. [ <i>Madras University Sanskrit Series 13</i> ]. Madras: University of Madras, 1971.
Taber 1992	John Taber, What Did Kumāṛila Mean by <i>svataḥ prāmāṇya</i> ? <i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i> 112 (1992) 204-221.

