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HOW NOT TO NATURALIZE REASON: KANT AND PUTNAM

Ramesh Chandra Pradhan*

Abstract

This paper provides an analysis of the philosophical debate against the naturalization of reason; it dwells on transcendental idealism presented by Immanuel Kant and anti-naturalist argument by Hilary Putnam. The two philosophers criticize the efforts of naturalist philosophers like Hume and Quine to revert reason to empirical or causal events. The paper initially examines the way Kant perceives the reason as the origin of a priori, normative principles, which form the basis of epistemology, logic, and metaphysics of nature. Transcendental arguments presented by Kant demonstrate that reason is neither the creation of nature nor the result of sensory perception, as even nature itself can only be intelligible within the normative approach of the reason. This is followed by the discussion of the constraints of naturalism and why the issue of causation of perception cannot be used to explain how objects of experience are constituted by reason. Lastly, the paper sets the stage of a critical consideration of the naturalized epistemology of Quine and the reaction of Putnam who supports the transcendental position of reason in modern epistemology and logic.

Keywords: Naturalization of Reason, Transcendental Idealism, Naturalism, Normativity, Epistemology, Metaphysics of Nature.

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Introduction

The present paper examines the arguments for not naturalizing reason in the light of Kant's and Putnam's refutation of the naturalization of reason, as both these philosophers had laid down the principles under which the effort of the naturalist thinkers like Hume and Quine could be shown to be futile[1]. Both Kant[2] and Putnam[3] have a common agenda in opposing the naturalization of reason, and saving the latter from the threat of reductionism.

In this paper, I will bring out the Kantiantranscendental argumentsto showthat reason is not onlynot a natural entity, but also doesnot havea natural origin. These arguments are further strengthened by Putnam's anti-naturalist method of proving the transcendental status of reason in epistemology and logic.

I. REASON IN EPISTEMOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS: THEKANTIAN APPROACH

The rationalist thinkers from Descartes onwards have taken reason as the source of the *a priori* epistemic and logical principles, which provide the foundationsof epistemology and metaphysics. This iscarried onby Kant in making epistemology a normativediscipline and also in layingthe foundations of a rationalist metaphysics of nature[4]. Kant's project of critical philosophy, especially in the first *Critique*[5], is based on the transcendental notion of reason thatcan lay bare the *apriori* categories and principles which constitute the groundwork of the metaphysics of nature. This is followed by his project of the metaphysics of morals in his second *Critique*[6] on the grounds of the *apriori* principles of the practical reason. Thus the Kantian notion of transcendental reason has been the driving force behindhis opposition to the attemptto bring reason and its principles within the fold of nature.

What prompted Kantin bringing out the non-natural and non-empirical functions of reason are the following:

1. Reason as the faculty of normative principles in science, logic andmetaphysics is the constitutive source of the *a priori*principles, which cannot be reduced to the empirical and natural principles derived from experience.
2. Nature as the domain of events and processes is bound by the natural laws like the law of causality. However, the these lawsthemselves are not generalizations from experience as they are *a priori* in nature.
3. The epistemology and metaphysics of natureare based on the transcendental principles of reason, and sothey retaintheir non-natural character .

The most notable arguments in Kant's metaphysics of nature are that (1) nature is itself constituted by the categories and principles of understanding, and (2) that sense-experiences themselves are constituted by the categories, and are already in the "' logical space of concepts''[7]. Thus , nature is within the '' logical space of reasons''[8], to borrow McDowell's phrase.

Kant's anti-naturalist arguments hinge on the fact that reason borrows nothing from nature, andalso from our experiences of nature, owing to the fact that nature itself is metaphysically constituted by reason. What the theoretical reason accomplishes in the metaphysics of nature is accomplished bythe practicalreason in the metaphysics of morals. Both are part of the same anti-naturalist project.

I. REASON AND NATURE: THE LIMITS OF NATURALISM

The naturalists keep a metaphysical gap between nature and reason on the ground that the objects in the world are independent of the functions of our mind. The world impinges on our body thus generating sense-impressions, as Quine suggests[9]. This goes all the way to make the mind causally subject to the external objects. This

scenariois true of all empiricistaccounts ofthe mind-world causal interaction. This scenario is what Kant wanted to reverse in his Copernican Revolution in epistemology by suggesting that it is the mind which makes the objects what they are, and not the other way round. As Kant writes,

…. reason has insight only intothat which it produces after a plan of its own, and that it must not allowitself to be kept , as it were, in nature's leading-strings, but must itself show theway with the principles of judgment based upon fixed laws , constraining nature to give answer to questionsof nature's own determining[10].

Thus Kant reverses the way the nature- reason relationship was accepted by the naturalists, and thereby shows that reason normatively constitutes nature by its own principles *a priori*.

There are two important theses which follow from this:

1. Objects of nature cannotcausally determine reason and its functions, as the objects themselves are constituted by reason so far as they are only appearances, and not things-in-themselves.
2. Nature as a whole asthe domain of appearances or the phenomena is bound by the laws, including the causal law, which are due to the ''insight'' of reason into nature constraining the latter to responds to reason's laws.

Both these theses are central to Kant's idealist metaphysics of nature as he conceives it from the transcendental point of view. Transcendental Idealism was aneffective answer to the naturalist construal of the world, which led to Humes's undermining our secure knowledge of the world of nature.

I. KANT'S TRSCENEDENTAL IDEALISM:RETRIEVING THE WORLD

Hume's naturalism did not save the world from skepticism in spite of his psychological analysis of causality and the

psychological necessity of causal law[11]. The worldremained in the limbo without having the rational intelligibility that science demands. Kant brought the world or nature back into the foldof rationalintelligibility by providing the laws of nature a secure place in the domain of reason. Reason provided the space within which nature got its rationalorder, andthus remained safe from the collapse of its rational intelligibility.

Transcendental idealism didnot make the world empirically dependent on the mind as Berkeley[12] argued, following Hume, as that would havedeepened theepistemological crisis Kant wanted to avoid. Kant made the world normatively dependent on reason, though, empirically, it remained independent of the latter. The world -constitution that takes place within the domain of reason is transcendental and normative, because the world gets back its rational intelligibility[13] through reason, which was denied by Hume and other naturalists following him. It was no small gain in terms of the metaphysics of nature, and not in terms of normative epistemology alone.

Transcendental idealism is a project within the metaphysics of nature based on the principles of reason without denying the validityof empirical realism. Kant had no intention to make the world go the Hegelian way[14] either, because he did not give up the noumenalworld, and so did retain the empirical gap between mind and the world.But, forhim, the normative determination of the world is more important than its empirical independence. The domain of reason and its principlesallowsthe limited scope to the world to make causal impact on the mind only to be filtered through reason, as the sense-intuitions are subjected to thenormative determination. The resulting world of appearances remains within the bounds of reason and its laws.

II. QUINES'S NATURALISM: PUTNAM'S RESPONSE

Quine's naturalism follows more or less Hume's so far as the natural origin of knowledge is concerned. His famous essay '' Epistemology Naturalized''[15] is a landmark development in this direction. Quine considered epistemology as a part of psychology, andhence of natural science[16]thus eliminating the classical epistemology as '' first philosophy''. Quine writes:

Epistemology , or something like it, simply falls into place as a chapter of psychology and hence of natural science. It studies a natural phenomenon, viz. a physical human subject. This human subject is accorded a certain experimentally controlled input—certain patterns of irradiation in assorted frequencies, for instance—in the fullness of time the subject delivers as outputa descriptionof the three-dimensional external world and its history[17] . This shows how epistemology is naturalized as part of the project of eliminating the epistemology which searched for the foundations of knowledge in the classical Kantian sense.

Quine's naturalist project throwsoverboard, not only the idea of the foundations of knowledge, but also thevery notionof truth and justification, which are part of the classical definition of knowledge. His attack on the analytic-synthetic distinction in epistemology, andsemantics, and, aboveall, onthe idea of reason as the source of knowledge opened the gateway to hisbehaviorist analysisof knowledge, andof the knowing and thinking subject Human knowledge is reduced to the inputs and outputs of the stimulus-response process. Thuswe arein no better position than Hume's as regards the status of the the world, which isreconstructed fromthe empirical data[18]. Quine doesnot wantto get us out of the ''Humean predicament''[19] regarding the world, because, according to him, it is the human predicament any way.

Putnam has responded to Quine'snaturalism inepistemology by characterizing it as a case of anaturalistic elimination[20] of normativity in epistemology, i.e., of the downgrading of such concepts as truth, justification, rational acceptability, etc. He has shown that the very notions of reason and rationality are missing from Quine's epistemological vocabulary. This is due to Quine's overemphasis on the natural growth of knowledge as a matter of response to the stimuli from the external world[21]. This involves the rejection of any role for reason inthe knowledgeprocess, asknowledge takes a Darwinian turn rather than a Kantian Copernican turn in Quine's naturalized epistemology.

Quine's naturalismis eliminative so far as the normative notions of rationality and intentionality are concerned. Quine is not only anti-Kantian, but also anti-transcendental inhis conceptionof knowledge . Not only in epistemology, butalso in semantics[22] he has no place for intentional notions such as meaning, reference, etc., which invoke the notionof mind, directly or indirectly. Such being the case, there is no doubt that Quine casts doubt on such epistemological notions as truth, justification, rational acceptability, etc. which philosophers often use in making assessments of knowledge-claims. Putnam writes:

If one abandons the notions of justification, rational acceptability, warrantedassertibility, rightassertibility, and the like, completely, then 'true' goes as well, except as a mere device for 'semantic ascent[23].

The notions mentioned hereare normative and reason-based, because suchnotions like ''rightness'', ''warranted'', '' acceptability'', 'true'', etc. demand norms to be setup for their operation. Needless to saythat Quine[24] has no place for them in his behaviorist vocabulary.

III. REASON AND NORMATIVITY RESTORED

Putnam, following Kant and other rationalist thinkers, bring back reason and norms into the vocabulary of epistemology and philosophy in general[25]. Putnam , like Kant, arguesthat rational arguments and reasoning are a part of the growth of scientific knowledge, and so there are bound to be rational norms or principles in the operations ofthe mind in its interaction with the world. The relation of the mind with the world isrational, rather than causal in the physicalist sense[26], because there is no way our mind can act on the world in the absence of its categories and rationalprinciples , that is, in the absence of our rational thinking that is normatively structured. If we cast doubt on the normative nature of thinking we have, we are bound toface the elimination of thinking itself. In Putnam's words:

But if all notions of rightness, both epistemic and ((metaphysically) realist are eliminated, then what are our thoughts but mere subvocalizations? The elimination of the normative is attempted mental suicide[27] .

The attemptby anyeliminationist orreductionist todeny normativity is bound toraise doubt about our ability to think and formulate our thoughts into theories, which are the bedrock of any rational understanding of the world. For this reason, it is necessary to recognize that '' as thinkers we are committed to there being some kind of truth, some kind of correctness, which is substantial and not merely ''disquotational''. That means that there is no eliminating the normative''[28] .

The fact that norms are rational and not natural isthe main argument provided by Putnam to show that anyattempt to eliminate the normative, or to reduce it to something non-normative, is self-defeating. The nature of the normative needs to be explainedin order to see the merit of Putnam's argument. The following are the features of the normativity in epistemology and metaphysics:

1. The norms or principles of reason which govern our thought and knowledge are*a priori* in nature and so are derived from reason.

2. If these principles were derived from empiricalexperience, they would be bound to be contingent, and so would be unable to explain how thought and knowledge are possible.

3. The transcendental derivation of these norms from reasonhave to be accepted for the reasonthat there is no way we can prove the necessity of these norms.

4. The norms concerning truth, rightness ,correctness, etc. of beliefs cannot be within the belief-system, but must transcend it asbeing the presuppositions of the beliefs.

It follows from the above considerationsthat normativity and rationality arethe indispensable features of our scientific and metaphysical thinking, because in their absence, we cease to think at all, according to Putnam, and sowe cannot ground science and knowledge in general onrational grounds, as Kant suggests. This conclusion applies to all domains of thought wherever the question of normativityarises, as reason plays its constitutive as well as regulative role in all domains of thought[29] .

IV. REASON : IMMANENT AND TRANSCENDENT

Kant had raised the question of the transcendental origin of the rational principles of both the metaphysics of nature and the metaphysics of morals. His effort to make reason transcendent to the domainof the empirical experience ofnature is well known ;that was the only way hecould save both scientific knowledge and the world itself from the skeptical attack. His entre critical philosophy was to show that, unless reason plays its rolein critically examining all principlesof thought and knowledge, there can be no possibility of science and metaphysics of nature.

But the question is: Did he recognize the immanent role of reason inthe actual formation of knowledge of the world? The answer is, yes, because there is no way Kant would have madereason withdraw from the phenomenalworld, as the latter itself ispenetrated by, or imbuedwith, reason. Reason, as both theoretical and practical, is immanent, because it constitutes nature, and the moral life, respectively. Nature is constituted by reason, andso reason is immanent throughout the known world. Kant has made nature fall within the domain of reason as the domain of the immanent rational principles.

Putnam in a different way from Kant's has come to a similar conclusion by declaring reason to be both immanent and transcendent. As Putnam says:

Reason, in this sense, is both immanent (not to be found outside of concrete language games and institutions) and transcendent (a regulative idea that we use to criticize the conduct of *all* activities and institutions)[30] .

Putnam thus argues that reason plays both a constitutive role within language and thought, and at the same time it plays a regulative rolein criticallyevaluating all activities in thought and language. In this it is both immanent and transcendent in its role with regard to thought and language.

The concept of the transcendent reason might raise suspicion whether such a reason is not too metaphysical to bear scientificvalidity, in view of the fact that scienceand scientificmetaphysics canbe carried on without invoking the transcendent reason in Kant's sense. But this suspicion is unfounded, because the metaphysics of nature, as shown by Kant, needs a transcendent reason to show the limits of scientific knowledge itself. Had reason been confined to scientific knowledge asthe immanent scientific reason, it would not have risen above to it

to critically evaluate it and demarcate its boundary. The regulative use of reason would have been eliminated thus jeopardizing n the very possibility of the metaphysics of nature.

Putnam has made this clear in the light of the developments in science and metaphysics in which reason is directly involved. Without reason andthe activity of reasoning, we can not onlynot think, but also cannot doanything, as our actions are no less rationally guided than our thoughts. This explains why Putnam makes reason immanent to our language and thought. It is evidentthat even our use of language is guided by norms as Wittgenstein[31] has shown in his concept of language use or language game. Putnam argues in the same veinthat our linguistic and conceptual activitiesare norm-guided

Kant has been emphatic on the immanent character of reason when he demonstrates howthe *apriori* concepts of reason areactive, notonly inour knowledgeof theworld, butalso in our moral actions[32]. That moral actions are based on the moral law legislated by practical reason[33] is well known in Kant's moral philosophy . This shows the Kantiandefenceof the immanent involvement of reason, not only in our theoreticallife, but also in our practical life. Kant was concerned with the reason-based conceptual activities as much as with the reason guided human actions. The immanent nature of reason does not deny its transcendental nature, becausereason goes beyond its own involvement in thought and action for evaluating those thoughts and actions. This is possible as reason can distance itself from thoughts and actions involved in time and history. Putnam puts this Kantian insight in a wider perspective in the following passage:

If reason is both transcendent and immanent , then philosophy as culture-bound reflection and argument about eternal questions, is both in time and eternity. We don't have an Archimedean point; we

always speak the language of a time and place; but its rightness and wrongness of what we say is not just for a time and place[34] .

Because of the universal presence of reason in all our activities, philosophy is culture-bound in space and time, while, at the same time, ittranscends the limits of space, time and history.Philosophy is both historical andahistorical at the same time.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

What Kant and Putnam have taught us is that philosophy cannot be the possession of a culture or a historical epoch, since it has universal and ahistorical significance. It is because philosophy addresses eternal questions which are not time-bound; these questions need solutions that go beyond the boundary of time and place.

In their opposition to naturalism and other cognate doctrines like empiricism, positivism, ad materialism, Kant and Putnam have given a transcendental turn to philosophy in different ways. While Kant hasmade nature turn towards reason forits intelligible order, Putnam hasmade theworld turn to reason to get its conceptual coherence. Thus, both the philosophers have successfully implemented the Copernican Revolutionin philosophy, which has led to great achievements in the history of philosophy.

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THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS: SOME DEBATES AND DIMENSIONS

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Abstract

The world is experiencing the most significant ever environmental crisis that is endangering the stability of the ecosystems and existence of life on the Earth. Environmental philosophers and environmental thinkers tend to argue that religion, in terms of its stories, images, and moral structures, is a determining factor in our nature towards nature. One of the most impactful theses proposed by Lynn White contains the historical explanations of why the religious world-views justified human dominance over nature and why it could possibly contain the origins of ecological imbalance and the keys to its solutions. With religious traditions critically reviewing their cosmologies and practices in reaction to the collapse of the environment, a new discourse is surfacing which aims to re-read ancient wisdom to apply it to new ecological crisis. Making of a new cosmology based on the knowledge of evolution and spiritual morals are necessary to redefine humanity in the relationship of a mutually enriching relationship between humans and the Earth, according to this paper. It is possible to establish a sustainable future on a dying planet by re-inventing the world-views and re-instituting religious environmental ethics.

Keywords: Environmental Crisis, Religion and Ecology, Lynn White, Worldviews, Cosmology.

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Introduction

We live in such a period where the human community is searching for new and sustaining relationships with the earth amidst an environmental crisis that threatens the existence of all life forms on the planet. While scientists, economists, and policymakers are debating the particular causes and solutions of this crisis, the facts of widespread destruction are causing alarm in many quarters. Indeed, from some perspectives, the future of human life itself appears threatened. If current trends continue, we will not exist. Thus, "We Are Killing Our World," "The world that provides our evolutionary and ecological context is in serious trouble, trouble of a kind that demands our urgent attention. By formulating adequate plans for dealing with these large-scale environmental crises, we will be laying the foundation for peace and prosperity in the future; by ignoring them, drifting while attending to what may seem more urgent, personal priorities, we are courting disaster." So, the stark question remains, "Are humans a viable species on an endangered planet?" The challenges are formidable and well-documented. The solutions, however, are more elusive and complex. This crisis has also economic, political, and social dimensions that require more detailed debates and analysis.

Reframing worldviews on Environmental Crisis:

Many philosophers think that environmental crisis is not only the result of certain economic, political, and social factors but also a moral and spiritual crisis which, if addressed, will require broader philosophical and religious understandings of ourselves as creatures of nature embedded in life cycles and dependent on ecosystems. Religions, thus, need to be re-examined in light of the current environmental crisis. This is because religions help shape our attitudes toward nature in conscious and unconscious ways.

Religions provide essential interpretive stories of who we are, what nature is, where we have come from, and where we are going. This comprises a worldview of a society. Religions also suggest how we should treat other humans and how we should relate to nature. These values make up the ethical orientation of a society. Religions thus generate worldviews and ethics which underlie fundamental attitudes and values of different cultures and societies. The history of ecological change still needs to be updated so that we know little about what happened or the results. For Lynn White,

"What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny - that is, by religion."1

According to White people's role in the environment depends upon how they see themselves concerning nature. For him, human beings' exploitative and dominative attitude over nature has explicated many ecological crises, which Medieval Latin Christianity followed. The only way to respond to the ecological crisis is to reject this dominative way of looking at nature: "Nature is to serve the purpose of humanity". White's conclusion impelled the scientists and the environmentalists to make a debate that religion can be blamed for the ecological crisis. Thus, from White's above explanation, it seems that religion is the historical root of the environmental crisis and the solution to it.

In our attempt to reorient ourselves concerning the Earth, it has become apparent that we have lost our appreciation for the intricate nature of matter and materiality. Our feeling of alienation in the modern period has extended beyond the human community and its patterns of material exchanges to our interaction with nature itself. Especially in technologically sophisticated urban societies,

we have become removed from recognizing our dependence on nature. We no longer know who we are as earthly beings; we no longer see the Earth as sacred. We have become wild in our interactions with the natural world. In other words, we cannot value the life and beauty of nature because we are locked in our egocentric perspectives and shortsighted needs. Thus, we need a new cosmology, cultural coding, and motivating energy to overcome this deprivation. The magnitude of destructive industrial processes is so great that we must initiate a radical rethinking of the myth of progress and humanity's role in the evolutionary process. Evolution is a new story of the universe and a vast cosmological perspective that will resituate human meaning and direction in the context of four and a half billion years of Earth's history.

For many thinkers, an essential component of the current environmental crisis is spiritual and ethical.2 Here, the world's religions may have a role to play in cooperation with other individuals, institutions, and initiatives that have been engaged with environmental issues for a considerable time. Despite their lateness in addressing the crisis, religions are beginning to respond remarkably and creatively. They are not only rethinking their theologies but are also reorienting their sustainable practices and long-term environmental commitments. In so doing, the very nature of religion and of ethics is being challenged and changed. This is true because re-examining other worldviews created by religious beliefs and practices may be critical to recovering sufficiently comprehensive cosmologies, broad conceptual frameworks, and practical environmental ethics for the twenty-first century. The religious traditions are critical in helping to reimagine the viable conditions and long-range strategies for fostering mutually enhancing human-earth relations. All traditional societies that have succeeded in managing resources well, over time, have done it in

part through the religious or ritual representation of resource management.

There is an expanding and growing dialogue about the role of world religions as moral forces in stemming the environmental crisis. Major methodological issues are involved in utilizing traditional philosophical and religious ideas for contemporary concerns. There are also compelling reasons to support such efforts, however modest they may be. In all their complexity and variety, the world's religions remain one of the principal resources for symbolic ideas, spiritual inspiration, and ethical principles. Indeed, despite their limitations, historically, they have provided comprehensive cosmologies for interpretive direction, moral foundations for social cohesion, spiritual guidance for cultural expression, and ritual celebrations for a meaningful life.

Religion and Environment: The Debates

Why are we interested in religion and the environment? This is for two reasons3:

- First, humanity now faces an enormous challenge to its continued existence, a challenge it has created itself.
- Second, responding to this challenge alters every aspect of religious life: theology, institutional self-definition, the everyday conduct of religious people, and ritual.

Along with these, there are serious questions, the answers to which are deeply in doubt. The environmental crisis has several, by now familiar, frightening dimensions. We have pumped into the air, water, and Earth a Global climate change, species extinction, wildness loss, and trillions of pounds of toxic chemicals. Future prospects of genetic engineering and nanotechnology loom devastatingly larger than present and past consequences of other

"miracle" developments such as nuclear engineering/armaments, uncounted tons of as yet undisposable long-term poisons, massive contamination sites around nuclear labs, etc. One simple fact may help focus attention if someone has become numb to these generalities. What does such a dreadful reality mean to religious people in particular? It means something to all of us simply as human beings. Insofar as Christians or Hindus have bodies of their own and love their children, this should galvanize immediate and drastic action. Nevertheless, there are religious reasons,4 which are as follows.

- First, due to our religious identity, we think the world is not a collection of inert material for human use but a gift of a loving God. The world is a "creation" - an act of generosity. The world is ours only temporarily - it still belongs to God. Is this any way to treat the gift of the Master of the Universe?
- Second, specific religious practices are called into doubt. Can the Jews sanctify wine if they know it contains poisonous pesticide residues?
- Third, all religions share one fundamental belief: they have some privileged knowledge of what God wants and how a person should act. What happens to this theological and moral self-confidence when, for example, a fourth grader in a religious school asks: "Why have you let this happen?" How much respect can religious teachers demand from a younger generation of future faithful members when the older generation seems to have failed miserably?
- Fourth, religions must ask themselves the embarrassing question of how they could have been so dumb about all this for so long. It was, after all, not the leading religious authorities or theologians who noticed that modern industrial

practices had some real problems. It was freelance mystics and nature lovers, the occasional believer with no institutional influence, who raised questions about what humanity was doing to nature and what that might signify in terms of humanity's treatment of itself.

Because of all these reasons, the environmental crisis is not just a crisis for our health care system, economy, politics, and recreation, but for religion. Over the last twenty years, religions have risen to this challenge. A vibrant, worldwide movement of religious environmentalism now exists, which means that religions, even as they were and in some ways continue to be part of the problem, have become part of the solution for human liberation.

Environmental ethics found in the world religions:

Although Western philosophers have considered humans' relationship with nature since immemorial, environmental ethics as a systematic discipline has emerged only in recent decades. Problems such as resource conservation and toxic waste disposal were examined in light of responsibilities to future humans. To reflect on environmental morality is to consider how we should act so far as we affect things surrounding us. Although the term' environment' encompasses humanly made or artefactual things and spaces surrounding us, generally, the 'environment' of concern is the natural environment. This is not to say that the humanly made-environment is inconsequential from the point of view of ethics. Instead, an environmental ethic focuses on the natural environment, in contrast to the artefactual environment, because the former is more fundamentally a condition for the flourishing a great variety of human and non-human beings. Recently, environmental ethics has taken other new forms, from ecofeminism and the study of environmental racism, which connect environmental exploitation to

forms of human oppression, to virtue ethics, which relates appreciation of the natural world to the morals of human character, to pragmatic pluralism, which acknowledges incommensurable values and the insights of competing theories in a search for practical policy formation.5

Recently, the role of our cultural and spiritual heritages in environmental protection and sustainable development was ignored by international bodies, national governments, policy planners, and even environmentalists. Many fear that bringing religion into the environmental movement will threaten objectivity, scientific investigation, professionalism, or democratic values. Nevertheless, these must be preserved to include the spiritual dimension in environmental protection. That dimension, if introduced in the process of environmental policy planning, administration, education, and law, could help create a self-consciously moral society that would put conservation and respect for God's creation first and relegate individualism, materialism, and our modern desire to dominate nature in a subordinate place.

For many people, when challenges such as the environmental crisis are raised concerning religion in the contemporary world, there frequently arises a sense of loss or nostalgia for earlier, seemingly less complicated eras when the constant questioning of religious beliefs and practices was not so apparent. This is, no doubt, something of a reified reading of history. There is, however, a decidedly anxious tone to the questioning and soul-searching that appears to haunt many contemporary religious groups as they seek to find their particular role during rapid technological change and dominant secular values. One of the most significant remaining challenges to contemporary religions is how to respond to the environmental crisis, a crisis that many believe has been responsible

for because of the enormous destruction made by unrestrained materialism, secularization, and industrialization in contemporary societies, especially in societies arising in or influenced by the modern West. Indeed, the very division of religion from secular life may significantly cause the crisis.6

As mentioned earlier, Lynn White cited religion's negative role in the crisis. White has suggested that the emphasis in Judaism and Christianity on the transcendence of God above nature and the dominion of humans over nature has led to a devaluing of the natural world and subsequent destruction of its resources for utilitarian ends.7 While the particulars of this argument have been vehemently debated, it is increasingly clear that the environmental crisis and its perpetuation due to industrialization, secularization, and ethical indifference present a severe challenge to the world's religions. This is especially true because many of these religions have traditionally been concerned with the path of personal salvation, which frequently emphasized otherworldly goals and rejected this world as corrupt.

Thus, how to become accustomed to religious teachings to this task of revaluing nature to prevent its destruction marks a significant new phase in religious thought. If the human is to continue as a viable species on an increasingly degraded planet, what is necessary is a comprehensive reevaluation of human-earth relations. In addition to significant economic and political changes, this will require examining worldviews and ethics among the world's religions that differ from those that have captured the imagination of contemporary industrialized societies that regard nature primarily as a commodity to be utilized. It should be noted that when we search for adequate resources for formulating

environmental ethics, each religious tradition has positive and negative features.

The worldviews associated with the Western Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam has created a dominantly human-focused morality. Because these worldviews are essentially anthropocentric, the natural world, including plants and animals, is considered secondary importance. A strong sense of the transcendence of God above nature reinforces this. On the other hand, there are rich resources for rethinking views of nature in the Hindu tradition. In Hinduism, although there is a significant emphasis on performing one's *dharma,* or duty, in the world, there is also a strong position towards *mokṣa,* or liberation, from the world of suffering or *samsāra.* To heal this suffering and alienation through spiritual discipline and meditation, one turns away from the world *(pṛkrti)* to a timeless world of spirit *(puruṣa)*8

Nevertheless, at the same time, numerous traditions in Hinduism affirm particular rivers, mountains, or forests as sacred. Moreover, in the concept of *lilā,* the creative play of God, Hindu philosophy engages the world as a creative manifestation of the divine. This same tension between withdrawal from the world and affirmation of it is present in Buddhism also. Certain *Theravada* schools of Buddhism emphasize meditating from the transient world of suffering *(samsāra)* to seek release in *nirvāṇa.*9 In recent years, socially engaged Buddhism has protected the environment in Asia and other subcontinents.

The difficulty at present is that, for the most part, we have developed in the world's religions specific ethical prohibitions regarding homicide and restraints concerning genocide and suicide, but none for biocide or genocide. We must explore such comprehensive cosmological perspectives and communitarian

environmental ethics as the most compelling context for motivating change regarding the natural world's destruction. How to chart possible paths towards mutually enhancing human-earth relations remains one of the most significant challenges to the world's religions. It is with some encouragement, however, that we note the growing calls for the world's religions to participate in these efforts towards a more sustainable planetary future. There have been various appeals from environmental groups and from scientists and parliamentarians for religious leaders to respond to the environmental crisis. For example, in 1990, the Joint Appeal in Religion and Science was released, highlighting the urgency of collaboration around the issue of the destruction of the environment. In 1992, the *Union of Concerned Scientists* issued the statement *Warning to Humanity*, signed by more than 1,000 scientists from 70 countries, including 105 Nobel laureates, regarding the gravity of the environmental crisis. They specifically cited the need for new ethics toward the Earth.10

Religion and Environmental Crisis: Some Dimensions

In 1986, Eugene Hargrove edited a volume titled *Religion and Environmental Crisis.* In 1991, Charlene Spretnak explored this topic in her book *States of Grace: The Recovery of Meaning in the Post-Modern Age.* Her subtitle states her constructivist project clearly: "Reclaiming the Core Teachings and Practices of the Great Wisdom Traditions for the Well-Being of the Earth Community." In 1992, Steven Rockefeller and John Elder edited a book based on a conference at Middlebury College titled *Spirit and Nature: Why the Environment Is a Religious Issue.* In the same year, Peter Marshall published *Nature's Web: Rethinking Our Place on Earth,* drawing on the resources of the world's traditions. An edited volume titled *Worldviews and Ecology,* compiled in 1993, contains articles

reflecting on views of nature from the world's religions and from contemporary philosophies, such as process thought and deep ecology.

Similarly, in 1994, J. Baird Callicott published *Earth's Insights*, which examines the intellectual resources of the world's religions for a more comprehensive global environmental ethics. This expands on his 1989 volumes, *Nature in Asian Traditions of Thought* and *In Defense of the Land Ethic*. In 1995, David Kinsley published *Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in a Cross-Cultural Perspective,* drawing on traditional religions and contemporary movements, such as deep ecology and eco-spirituality. Several volumes of religious responses to a particular topic or theme have also been published. For example, J. Ronald Engel and Joan Gibb Engel compiled a monograph in 1990 titled *Ethics of Environment and Development: Global Challenge, International Response* and in 1995, Harold Coward edited the volume *Population, Consumption, and the Environment: Religious and Secular Responses*. Roger Gottlieb edited a practical sourcebook, *This Sacred Earth:Religion, Nature, and Environment.*

Keeping these dialogues in mind, one may say that any debate on religion and environmental crises is intended to expand the discussion already underway in certain circles and to invite further collaboration on a topic of common concern because it is thought that the fate of the Earth is a religious responsibility.11 To broaden and deepen the reflective basis for mutual collaboration is also an underlying aim. While some might see this as a diversion from pressing scientific or policy issues, we entered the arena of reflection and debate with humility and conviction. In the field of the study of world religions, this is a timely challenge for scholars of religion to respond as engaged intellectuals with deepening

creative reflection. Let us hope there will be simply a beginning of further study of conceptual and symbolic resources, methodological concerns, and practical directions for meeting environmental crises from religious perspectives.

What does religion bring?

Religions have distinct institutional, cultural, and moral resources that promise to make critical and very particular contributions to environmentalism, contributions which, in many cases, will be unlikely to come from other sources. Religion is a powerful motivator in an environmental context.12 However, it is often plagued by the phenomenon of "everyone knows about it, but no one does anything. Thus, a religious motivation can push people to act when other considerations - including economic and health motives - do not. As we can see, people will sometimes heed religious calls when they do not listen to anything else. There are important resources from what might be called the "culture" of religion: values and practices that are not necessarily limited to faith traditions but are most widely present in them. For example, religious practices stress the need to confront life's most challenging aspects, including deficiencies in one's moral character. These practices are essential because, in a sense, the most significant environmental problems are not present on the usual list of climate change, pollution, species loss, etc. The worst threats are the human habits of avoidance and denial. Above all, our inability and unwillingness to face the truth keeps the environmental crisis in play.

In some ways, religion - emphasizing otherworldly and after-death realities - is a prime example of socially passive escapism. In Buddhism, there is a traditional training where someone can be emotionally present to distressing realities. This is a capacity of

which anyone who studies environmental issues needs a great deal. Thus, religious culture is a repository of values that stress that there is more to life than accumulation. A secularized and globalized world assumes that the goal of life is money, glamour, pleasure and power. Religious values include human liberation, contemplation, quiet enjoyment of family love, and focused study of spiritual texts. These kinds of activities are more reliable sources of human happiness. If environmentalism is to achieve the genuinely global level of support it needs, it cannot simply be the political movement whose catchwords are "No", "Do not," and "Stop." It must offer alternative forms of life that provide an actual state of happiness and liberation and prospects of human fulfillment. Religious stewardship should involve no more consumption but a modest attitude towards environmental crisis.

If we go through Hinduism, we can find that this religious cult seeks to identify and evaluate the distinctive ecological attitudes, values and practices of human beings by making clear their links to intellectual and ethical thought within scripture, ritual, myth, symbols, cosmology, and sacrament and so on. It describes and analyzes the commonalities within and among Indian civilization concerning ecology. It articulates a desirable mode of human presence with the Earth, highlights the means of respecting nature, and shows how best can be achieved beyond materialism. It shows the plurality by raising conscious awareness and multiple perspectives regarding nature and the human-earth relationship. In doing so, Hinduism helps us to formulate global environmental ethics by individuals, theologians, environmental philosophers and groups, scientists, politicians, economists, industrialists, and different government and nongovernmental social organizations. The complexity of environmental crisis requires interdisciplinary approaches like science, economics, politics, health, public policy,

religion and spirituality. As the human community struggles to formulate different attitudes towards nature and to articulate a more comprehensive conception of ethics embracing species and ecosystems, Hindu philosophy is necessary, though the only contributing part of this multidisciplinary approach.13

What we need is to identify our concerns as embedded in our perspectival limits at the same time as we seek common ground. In describing various attitudes towards nature as mentioned in world religions, we can critically understand the complexity, context, and framework in which religions articulate such views. Based on the various attitudes, we can develop an ecological/environmental paradigm and strategy based on the concept of *Vasudheiva Kutuṁbakam* (*Maha Upaniṣad* -VI. 71- 73). It means every entity and organism is a part of one large extended family presided over by the eternal mother earth. This concept relates to our consciousness towards the environment, which can be considered an ethics of environmental stewardship. Let me end with the following with a particular reference to *Atharva Veda*.

विश्वस्वं□ मातरमोषधीनां ध्रुवां भूमिं पृथिवीं धर्मणा धृताम्।
शिवां स्योनामनु चरेम विश्वहा ॥12.1.17॥

Let the *Mother Earth* be stable and broad upon which the best of Medicinal plants grow. Let us serve the Motherland, *The Mother Earth* who bestow us with means of material pleasure which are full of Knowledge, Bravery, Truth, Love and other good qualities. - *Atharva Veda* 12.1.17.

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HOW TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN WORDS AND DEEDS?

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Abstract

In our social, professional, political and religious lives, it is an often-experienced problem that there are gaps between words and deeds. Roughly speaking, it is in one way or another the problem of insincere promises which inherently retains 'the gap' that morally bothers us the most. The answer we invite for the question "How to bridge the gap between words and deeds?" is in connection to this very gap between words and deeds that becomes morally significant in every sphere of our life. What I would try to find in this paper is precisely a clue, if possible, to bridge 'the gap' by concluding that the illocutionary act of self-promise leaves no gap between words and deeds. In the process of doing so, I would look into Wittgenstein's concept of 'language-game' and more importantly, the speech act theories of Austin and Searle.

Keywords: Promise, Self-promise, language-game, Illocutionary act, Austin, Searle and Wittgenstein

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Introduction

I do not answer the titled question, if the answer is expected to be a miracle-making *mantra* that removes the gap between words and deeds. It is a huge thing, and no less than a miracle, if this world suddenly becomes a world minus that gap. But, if such a world is logically possible, we may proceed to find the means to translate it to actuality. In philosophy of language, in later Wittgenstein, Austin and Searle, we find that there is a sense in which language and action become inseparable. Of course, our titled question is not asking, "How to do things with words?", rather, it asks, "How to do things in accordance with our words?" However, the two questions are not completely delinked from each other. Through this paper, to answer the titled question, which is closely linked to "How to do things in accordance with our words?", I propose that we may get a valuable answer from the philosophy of language of Wittgenstein, Austin and Searle.

In saying "I promise that I will meet you tomorrow" I make a promise to meet you tomorrow. Here, the saying constitutes the doing (of a promise), and there is no gap between the saying and doing. In this sense of 'no gap' between the saying and doing, we find all illocutionary acts- the act of requesting, warning, giving order, declaring, appointing, thanking, congratulating and so on- exhibit that there is no gap between the saying and doing. We find that in appropriate contexts, the very sayings like "I request…", "I warn …", "I order…", "I declare …", "I appoint …", "I thank …", "I congratulate …" constitute the respective acts of making a request, warning, issuing an order, making a declaration, appointing, thanking and congratulating. Unlike these (illocutionary) acts, the perlocutionary acts; e.g., the act of persuading, convincing, pleasing and irritating, are not performed *in* saying something but *by* saying something. The 'by' is used in the

instrumental sense. That is, for example, when the saying "You are very beautiful" becomes a means to the end of pleasing the addressee, the speaker is performing the act of pleasing by (instrumental sense) what he said. This is not the sense in which one may understand that a promise has been performed by saying "I promise to do it". The speaker does not say "I am pleasing you' when she/he tries to please the audience. The very sayings like "You are beautiful", "You are a fool", "You can do it", "I know, you are a selfish, inhuman, idiot" does not constitute the act of pleasing, displeasing, persuading and irritating, respectively. The saying is a means to produce an effect on the audience and, accordingly, a perlocutionary act becomes successful only when the effect is produced by means of the saying. I succeed in convincing you of a point only when you become convinced of that point by what I say in the process of convincing you. To the extent that what I say in that process is not, or not just, "I am convincing you", but certain sentences relevant to establish the point, there is a gap between what I am saying and what I am doing. What I am doing is, I am convincing you; but I am not saying or not just saying "I am convincing you". However, insofar as I am performing the act of convincing you by means of saying certain things, the saying is not completely dissociated or disconnected from the doing. Here the doing is a process in which the saying takes place whereas in case of illocutionary acts the saying constitutes the doing. This very difference between the two kinds of acts is the basis of our observation of 'no gap' between saying and doing with respect to the illocutionary acts and 'some gap' between saying and doing with respect to the perlocutionary acts.

There is a 'huge gap' between words and deeds insofar as 'language is a metaphor' in the sense that 'words stand for what they are not'; like "Elephant", "Fire", "Water", "Courageous", "Eating", "Running" and "Jumping" are not really elephant, fire,

water, courageous, eating, running and jumping, respectively. The words stand for what they mean parallel to say, for example, a walking encyclopaedia stands for John's vast knowledge about a variety of subjects in the sentence "John is a walking encyclopaedia". We welcome this gap between words and what the words stand for because it is crucial for the possibility of linguistic communication and transferring of knowledge from generation to generation through speech/writing.

In our social relationships, the gap between words and deeds is easily observed when promises are not kept. For example, when my friend promised to visit my house today but he did not. Similarly, in professional lives, when we promise to be cent percent sincere and honest but somehow fail to be so; in the field of politics, the gap is quite visible when the political leaders assure us of bringing about certain significant favourable changes for us but do not sincerely intend to do so. All insincere promises inherently retain 'the gap' that concerns us the most. How do we stop this gap? This very gap between words and deeds is of utmost moral concern and visible in every sphere of our life. I do not think that we can stop the gap; perhaps, we may aim at the bridging of the gap by an attempt to find norms, reasons, rules or conditions analogous to those of illocutionary acts which display 'no gap' between words and deeds. Before entering into the illocutionary acts, let us begin with Wittgenstein's 'Language-game' which may provide a strong ground for the validity of illocutionary acts.

Language-game:

In Philosophical Investigations, section 23, (PI: 23), Wittgenstein's examples of language-game include the language game of orders as well as of obeying or disobeying orders, the language game of describing what appears as well as that of describing what we find as a result of certain careful observation;

and, also, the language-game of constructing a thing in accordance to a description or drawing. The language-game of speculating about events, the language-game of forming a hypothesis and that of testing a hypothesis, the language-game of presenting results of experiment in tables and diagrams as well as that of making up a story and reading one. His examples include the language game of cracking a joke and of telling a joke; the language-game of acting in a play, singing round, guessing riddle, also, it counts the act of solving a problem in applied arithmetic to be a language-game, the translating of one language to another too is a language-game. The last line of that list of examples states that the act of requesting, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying are also different language-games. Akin to a game (e.g., chess), every language-game is associated with activities or, rather, rule-governed activities.

Wittgenstein emphasises 'that the speaking of language is part of an activity or of a form of life' (PI: 23). Not only that there are a variety of language-games, but also countless kinds of language-games. The language–game of asking a question in order to know something one does not know is different from that of asking a question in order to test the knowledge of the audience; and both are different from the language-game of asking a question that amounts to be a description of one's uncertainty (See PI: 24). Even the language-game of describing a point's position by means of its coordinates is different from description of a facial expression, again, both being different from that of sensation of touch and all these are different from the description of a mood.

Some of the language-games are 'as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing'. They are, for example, 'Giving orders, asking questions, telling stories, having a chat' (PI: 25). Animals do not play these language-games; at least, not in a manner that they run, eat, drink and sleep. For Wittgenstein,

'they simply do not talk' (PI:25) and even if they could speak, we do not understand them. "If a lion could talk, we wouldn't be able to understand it" (PI: p. 235). It does not use language in the sense that the use of our language is inseparable from the various activities connected to use of language. If one does not participate in the human form of life, one cannot mean or understand what human beings do. The lion does not participate in the human form of life, it does not mean or understand as much as plants, machines and stones do not. As a matter of fact, if we come across a human being who has not participated in the human form of life and is always kept somewhere in the darkness of a world without language, we find her/him strange. On the contrary, we find the Mickey Mouse cartoon so entertaining. A tree does not cry but a cartoon-tree with tears in its eyes and appropriate facial expression does.

What is essential to a language-game? In PI: 65, Wittgenstein raises this question and answers, 'no one thing in common in virtue of which we use the same word [language-game] for all'. The answer has been explained in PI: 66 in terms of the examples of different games and, then, in PI 67, Wittgenstein introduces the concept of 'family resemblance'. In both, games and family members, 'we see various resemblances among their respective members', 'a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing' (PI: 66). The disjunction of properties/features of all the games cannot become the defining feature of a game, Wittgenstein counts that to be 'playing with a word' and compares it with the defining of thread as "There is something that runs through the whole thread; namely, the continuous overlapping of those fibres" (PI: 67).

Can we define 'game' as an activity having no instrumental value and enjoyed by both the players and audience? No. Because,

by this definition most of the actual games are not games. Moreover, we are not interested in any such prescription of what a game should or ought to be, we need to see whatever is available with games actually played. A prescription of an ideal game can be countered by another conflicting prescription. Thus, we come to the thesis that game cannot be defined and yet we use the word 'game'. We can use 'language' as well as 'game' even if we have not found the essence of either.

Most of the games are actually played in accordance with their rules. In a sense, the rules are constitutive rules. Unlike the rule that we should wash our hands before we take food, the rule that a bishop moves diagonally in chess cannot be violated. Its violation amounts to the playing of a game other than chess, whereas one can eat even if one does not wash one's hands. This constitutive status of these rules can be found in language-games. For example, the language-game of declaring an event open requires that the speaker must be in possession of that power to declare. If one lacks that power or authority, one cannot play that language-game. Also, in this language-game, the world fits the words; the university becomes closed when, for example, the Vice Chancellor declares "The University is closed".

Consistent with Wittgenstein's private language argument, we find the language-game of 'pain' as an explanation of how sensations are not private. In accordance with the language-game of 'pain', one cannot doubt that one is in pain, if he/she is actually in pain. With the presumption that, for any proposition, if it does not make sense to apply the concept of doubt, then it does not make sense to apply the concept of 'knowledge', "I know that I am in pain" is meaningless as much as "I doubt that I am in pain". Accordingly, it is meaningless to assert that I alone know that I am in pain, nobody else knows it. In Wittgenstein's words, "It can't be

said of me at all (except perhaps as a joke) that I know I'm in pain" (PI: 246). On the other hand, sensations are called private if 'only I can know whether I am really in pain; another person can surmise it' (PI: 246). Wittgenstein compares "Sensations are private" to "One plays patience by oneself" (PI: 248).

Lyotard, in his *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, has chosen Language games as his general methodological approach. For him, 'language-games are the minimum relations required for society to exist' (p. 15). He explains that the status of sender, addressee and referent varies as the language-games vary. For example, in a denotative language-game, the speaker describes something about a referent and the audience has the option of giving consent or dissent. Whereas, in a declarative language- game, the audience does not have any such option of giving consent or dissent; even the referent's status changes so as to fit into the words ("The University is open") instead of the words fitting to the world ("The University is sick")[Examples from Lyotard (1984, pp. 9-10)]. On the ground that the varying language-games give rise to varying positions, status and power to sender, addressee and referent, Leotard says that no one is entirely powerless. "A self does not amount to much, but no self is an island; … Young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, a person is always located in the ``nodal points" of specific communication circuits, however tiny these may be. …one is always located at a post through which various kinds of messages pass. No one, not even the least privileged among us, is ever entirely powerless" (p. 15).

Speech Acts:

Now let us switch on to Speech acts. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words?* and Searle's *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* are two major texts on speech acts. Austin

makes the distinction between locutionary acts, illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts after coining the term 'speech acts'. Of course, he has drawn the distinction between constatives and performatives (e.g. The distinction between "Snow is white" and "I request you to open the windows") in order to establish that we do things with words when we utter performatives; the function of language is not confined to description of the facts of this world. However, he refuted the constative-performative distinction and put the two under one umbrella, namely, speech acts. Austin did this to establish that, not in some cases, all cases of use of language are cases of doing things with words. For the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary are the three different dimensions of speech act: the act *of* saying something, the act performed *in* saying something and the act performed *by* saying something.

Searle has refuted Austin's locutionary-illocutionary distinction, arguing that illocutionary acts are the minimal units of linguistic communication. His refutation succeeds to the extent that there is no force-neutral meaning. That is, meaning is meaning with an illocutionary force. For example, "Close the door!" could mean "I request you to close the door" and, hence, with a force of request the speaker asks the audience to close the door. Also, could mean "I order you to close the door!" and thereby the speaker asks with a force of order that the hearer closes the door. Of course, what is explicitly said, namely, "Close the door!", differs from what is actually meant. In fact, often we mean more than what we say. That does not mean that it cannot be said. Searle upholds the Principle of Expressibility: Whatever can be meant can be said (Searle, 1969, p.20). For any speaker S, for any meaning X, if S means X, then 'it is possible that there is some expression E such that E is an exact expression of X'. This principle denies the possibility of private language. If a private language is possible, it is possible to mean something which cannot be expressed. Private language is a case of

'non-expressibility'. I think Kannetzky Frank (2001) rightly asserts that the two- the principle of expressibility and Private Language- contradict each other. I think Wittgenstein's argument for the impossibility or, rather, the implausibility of private language owes to the idea that every case for a private language is a clear-cut case for the failure of communication.

Although Searle has refuted Austin's locutionary-illocutionary distinction, like Austin, he accepts that the saying constitutes the doing when we perform illocutionary acts. For example, when I perform the act of making a promise, my saying of "I promise that I will come back" is not different from the promise I made. That is why, referring to the same saying, one can describe that I have made a promise to come back, and not that I made a promise over and above my saying so. Similar things happen with respect to my saying of "I thank you for your help", it is not different from my act of thanking you. My saying of "I congratulate you for your win" is not different from my act of congratulating you. When in a naming ceremony, the speaker with appropriate authority says, "I name this boy Arjun", his saying constitutes the act of naming. (I remember Lyotard's citing of this ritual of naming as an instance of language-game's significance in our life; one becomes a referent of a language-game even before one's birth.) Well, what all the above examples of saying and doing suggest is that, in all the instances of illocutionary acts, there is no gap between words and deeds; the words constitute the deeds. If the said deeds are interpreted as the expressions of certain values (corresponding to promise, thanking, greeting, naming) then the fact-value distinction can be challenged.

Illocutionary acts, like language, are taught and learnt. If we can uphold that moral acts are primarily acts of making a promise to oneself, and hence moral acts are primarily illocutionary acts; teaching and learning of morality and moral actions can be upheld.

As a result, we can strongly subscribe to the idea that morality can be taught. If morality can be taught, not just the way we are teaching moral philosophy but the way that it is to be practised, we can bridge the gap between words and deeds with respect to moral actions. Now, before finding how moral acts are primarily acts of making a promise to oneself, we may briefly state Searle's proffered conditions of making a sincere non-defective promise.

In accordance to the normal input and output condition, saying of "I promise that …" is to be in a normal situation of communication; not under threat or duress, not in a play or dream, not by a drunk or mad person, nor is it uttered before someone who cannot hear or understand it. The second condition emphasises that the speaker means something, not the sentence itself. The sentence "I promise that …" does not make a promise, the speaker makes the promise. The next condition requires that the speaker S predicates a future act A of S. What I promise to do, I will do that in future. I cannot make a promise with respect to my past actions. Also, I cannot make a promise on behalf of others and say, "I promise that he will do A". Of course, I can make a promise in saying "I promise that I will compel him to do A". And, in saying, "I promise, I had done A", a promise has not been carried out but an act of asserting with an emphasis or assurance. Similarly, in saying "I had promised to do A", S does not make a promise, S describes that S had made a promise to do A.

The fourth condition requires that S cannot make a promise to hurt the hearer. The audience prefers S's doing A to S's not doing A; and S too believes that the audience prefers in the said way. Accordingly, I cannot promise, "I promise that I will put you into a big trouble", "I promise that I will kill you", "I promise that I will help him even if you wish that I put him into trouble" and so on which can be taken as cases of warning, threat or annoying. The

fifth condition states that it is not obvious to both S and H that S will do A in the normal course of events. S cannot rightly say "I promise that I will take my lunch today", if S and A know that normally S does not skip lunch. The sixth condition, namely, the sincerity condition, states that S intends to do A. If this condition has not been satisfied, the promise becomes an insincere promise. The distinction between a sincere and insincere promise is that in the former case, S intends to do A, whereas, in the latter case, S does not intend to do A, in uttering "I promise that I will do A".

The seventh condition, called the essential condition, distinguishes the act of making a promise from all other acts. It says that the speaker S intends that the utterance of T places S under an obligation to do A. The eighth condition is associated with the belief produced in the hearer H. The belief is that the sincerity condition and the essential condition are obtained. That is, H believes that S intends to do A and that S intends that the utterance of T places S under an obligation to do A. Let us call this belief B. Then the 8th condition can be stated as: S intends that the utterance of T will produce in H the belief that B, and the B will be produced in a Gricean way: that S intends (a) H believes that B, (b) H recognizes that S intends H to believe that B, (c) H believes that B partly because H satisfies (b). However, unlike Grice, Searle does not define meaning in terms of utterer's intentions and puts due importance on rules and conventions. Therefore, for him, satisfaction of (b) is achieved through the conventional association between the syntactic and semantic rules of T and the belief B. The ninth condition states that the semantic rules of the dialect spoken by S and H are such that T is correctly and sincerely uttered if and only if all the eight conditions are satisfied.

Self-Promise:

When I make a promise to myself I play the role of a speaker as well as of a hearer and the medium is not speech but thought. The reality of a self-promise may be a debatable issue and Allen Habib's

thesis titled *The Authority Theory of Promises* is not only an interesting defence of the reality of self-promises but also a noteworthy presentation of the opponents. For my purpose, I assert that the reality of the self-promise is not questionable if the logic of the illocutionary act of making a sincere promise remains intact in the self-promises. That is, when all the above cited conditions of making a sincere non-defective promise are satisfied, it is a promise; no matter what the medium (thought, speech, writing, non-verbal gestures or signals) of expression of that promise. However, the point to be emphasised here is that, when we play the game of making a promise, although we do that in accordance with the logic of making a promise, we do not enumerate and try to follow one after another the conditions of making a sincere non-defective promise. Because, the act of making a promise has already been a part of our natural history. Or, at least, we are so well trained in making promises and have played it so many times that, in normal circumstances, we do not verify if we have correctly followed the rules of making a promise. It is analogous to the fact that when the players of a football match play the game of football in accordance with the rules of football, they do not verify if they are correctly following the rules.

We may consider a moral act to be a voluntary act such that at some point of time the subject promises to himself or herself that he or she will do that act always in all normal circumstances of life. One's making a promise to oneself that one will speak the truth, love one's neighbour, help the poor, have compassion towards the suffering of all animals, be honest in one's duty at the office one holds, never steal the belongings of other, and practice nonviolence in one's life and so on are initially required in order to carry out the respective moral acts. The act of making a promise is inevitably present in every instance of moral act. A morally good act, insofar as it is a practicable act of a human subject, the human subject can

promise to carry out that morally good act. Accordingly, corresponding to a morally good act there can be the illocutionary act of making a promise to do that act.

If the gap between words and deeds is the gap between a promise made and the promise being broken, then, the gap is described as an insincere promise. Accordingly, our titled question turns out to be: How to remove insincere promises? A straightforward answer, following Searle's proffered conditions of making a sincere non-defective promise, may be this: Do not allow the violation of sincerity condition. If a subject makes a promise, she must intend to do what she promises to do. Analogous to the Truth condition of knowledge (If S knows that p then it is true that p), we may have the Sincerity condition: If S promises to do A, then, S intends to do A. In other words, there is no chance of an insincere promise as much as there is no chance of a false knowledge. But is it the way that promises are made? Is it impossible on the part of a subject to break her promise? Of course, one may go for a moral prescription that promises ought to be kept. But it is false that every promise is kept.

On the one hand we observe that, whenever there is a gap between words and deeds, between what we say we ought to do and what we actually do, the gap may be reduced by a moral initiative taken by the subject in terms of a promise, by making a promise to oneself to carry out the chosen moral deed. On the other hand, we find that the gap we want to remove does exist even with respect to someone's making a promise and hence may be with the promise undertaken for the required initiative. This is paradoxical: You need a promise to close the gap but a promise can be insincere and create the gap.

To get rid of the paradoxical situation, we may go for something other than the said moral initiative in terms of promise or

we may explain how a promise to oneself does not get that gap. But there are two challengeable consequences corresponding to the two alternatives. If every public promise is susceptible to that gap, even if not actually incurring that gap and, at the same time, every private act of making a promise to oneself is not so susceptible, then, the logic of making a promise before others is different from that of making a promise to oneself. This seems to be unacceptable if thinking is taken to be a medium through which we perform a thought act and speech as that through which we perform a speech act and, to specify more, one is a thought act of making a promise, the other is a speech act of making a promise. After all, why should it always be the case that the thought act of making a promise to oneself must be a sincere promise; and the public speech act of making a promise may become insincere? Secondly, a proposal of other means in place of a moral initiative to reduce the gap is challengeable on the following ground. If there are factors (like the unexpected natural calamities or something for which the subject is not responsible) which create the gap but the subject is not blameworthy for the gap, the gap is not a matter of our worry; and if the gap is of any moral concern for us and, accordingly, the gap creator is blameworthy, we need an initiative from the concerned subject to overcome the gap she created, if she really wishes to overcome the gap. After all, resolutions are promises made by one to oneself. The gaps we create by not doing what we, not only ought to do, but also, say that we ought to and will do, can be reduced if we resolve to do that. If we resolve to do act A, we have promised ourselves to do A.

When we promise to ourselves to do A, we create an obligation to ourselves to do A. Of course, as a mere promise, the satisfaction of sincerity condition may not be obtained and it is possible that the promise happens to be an insincere promise; no attempt is made in this case to bridge the gap. A case of insincere promise to oneself is

not a case of genuine resolution. In other words, the self-promise that we need to bridge the gap between words and deeds cannot be an insincere promise. What is the point of making a promise to oneself when one intends that she will not do A? An insincere promise to others makes sense, not an insincere promise to oneself. It makes sense to say that she will not do A for me although she said to me that she will do A for me; it is of no sense to say that I will not do A for me although I said to myself that I will do A for me. When I resolve to do A, my resolution prevents me from the intending of not doing A. It amounts to a kind of contradiction if one makes a resolution to do A and, at the same time, intends to not do A. I think we need to be convinced that the absence of self-promises to perform morally good actions leaves the gap between words and deeds open. If there are no self-promises, and there is a gap between one's words and deeds, then one cannot make an attempt to bridge that gap. After all, a repair of broken promises is best accomplished by self-promises. If I promise to help you but fail to help you, I can help you if I somehow resolve to do so, that is, if I somehow promise to myself that I must help you. My self-promise (that I must help you) prevents me from making it an insincere promise (that I must help you) because, in the context of this self-promise, I cannot intend that I need not help you. The context is that of a resolution undertaken by the speaker to carry out an action that she has promised but failed to do. In other words, it is a context of repairing the broken promise by an initiative taken by the speaker through self-promise; a context of bridging the gap one creates between words and deeds.[2]

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PHILOSOPHICAL COUNSELLING: NEITHER PHILOSOPHICAL NOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

Philosophical Counselling (PC) has emerged as a practice seeking to apply philosophical reflection to solve personal life problems, presenting itself as a non-clinical alternative to psychotherapy and as a socially relevant form of philosophy. This paper argues that PC, by attempting to merge philosophy and counselling, achieves neither. From the standpoint of philosophy, PC lacks conceptual rigor, argumentative discipline, and theoretical coherence; from the standpoint of counselling, it lacks clinical competence, ethical safeguards, and professional accountability. Using a stakeholder-based framework involving the philosopher-counsellor, the client, and the regulator, the paper demonstrates that PC is conceptually confused and professionally untenable. It commits a prescriptive fallacy akin to G. E. Moore's naturalistic fallacy, a Russellian paradox in its dual identity, and a Rylean category mistake in conflating theoretical and therapeutic domains. PC is therefore a misnomer—an intellectually incoherent hybrid that neither philosophizes rigorously nor counsels responsibly. The philosopher's task is not to counsel but to philosophize.

Keywords: Philosophical Counselling, Stakeholder Analysis, Prescriptive Fallacy, Category Mistake, Russellian Paradox, Professional Legitimacy, Conceptual Rigor, Ethical Accountability.

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1. Introduction

Philosophy has traditionally been regarded by its practitioners as the foundational discipline—the "mother of all sciences"—providing the conceptual frameworks, epistemological grounding, and normative orientation from which both the sciences and the humanities historically derived their legitimacy and direction. Yet, in the contemporary academic and professional milieu, philosophy's relevance to public and personal life has been increasingly called into question, and its institutional role often appears diminished or peripheral (Nussbaum, 2010; Russell, 1946). In the face of this perceived marginalization, Philosophical Counselling (PC) has emerged over recent decades as an attempt to reassert philosophy's practical significance by applying philosophical reasoning to the problems of individual existence. Proponents of PC present it as a non-clinical alternative to psychotherapy and as a socially engaged form of philosophy, arguing that philosophy is not merely a speculative discipline but also a therapeutic praxis that can offer clarity, orientation, and existential meaning to individuals navigating the complexities of modern life (Lahav, 1995).[2]

At a superficial level, this attempt to reanimate philosophy's practical vocation appears both appealing and historically continuous with ancient traditions that conceived philosophy as an art of living. However, such plausibility conceals a profound conceptual tension. The transformation of philosophy into a form of counselling entails a reconfiguration of its disciplinary identity, creating methodological and institutional contradictions between two distinct and arguably incompatible, domains. Philosophy, in its disciplinary essence, is an inquiry grounded in conceptual analysis,

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logical argumentation, and critical reflection. Counselling, by contrast, constitutes a professionalized therapeutic practice, requiring specialized clinical training, adherence to ethical standards, and regulation by professional bodies. When philosophy is reconstructed as counselling, the resultant hybrid practice is neither a legitimate extension of philosophical inquiry nor a credible therapeutic enterprise; it becomes a category-defying construct lacking coherence within both domains.

This incoherence is not merely theoretical but becomes evident upon logical examination. PC appears to commit what might be termed a prescriptive fallacy, structurally analogous to G. E. Moore's naturalistic fallacy, by illegitimately deriving therapeutic prescriptions from philosophical analysis. Furthermore, it is ensnared in a Russellian liar-type paradox, insofar as it must simultaneously claim to be both philosophy and counselling while negating the defining criteria of each. Most critically, PC embodies a Rylean category mistake: it conflates the logical types of philosophical reflection and therapeutic practice by treating philosophy as a form of clinical intervention and counselling as a mode of conceptual inquiry. These logical and categorical confusions are not abstract puzzles but manifest concretely in practice, as revealed through the stakeholder analysis undertaken in this paper. The analysis demonstrates that PC, far from bridging the divide between philosophy and therapy, exposes the epistemic and professional fault lines between them. Consequently, PC emerges as not merely conceptually incoherent but also methodologically unstable, professionally untenable, and, in some instances, ethically problematic.

1. What Counts as Philosophy

Any critical assessment of Philosophical Counselling (PC) must begin with a rigorous understanding of what constitutes philosophy as an academic and professional discipline. The defining

feature of philosophy lies in its critical orientation—its systematic interrogation of presuppositions, insistence on justification, and rational adjudication among competing claims (Russell, 1946; Grayling, 1999). Whether articulated through the analytic tradition's concern for conceptual precision and logical validity or the continental tradition's interpretative and contextual critique, philosophy remains grounded in the discipline of reasoned argument rather than appeals to authority, intuition, or emotion (Audi, 2015). Its distinctive autonomy rests on methodological tools such as dialectical reasoning, conceptual analysis, and reflective equilibrium. While philosophy engages other fields through interdisciplinary dialogue, it remains "undisciplined" only in the sense that it subjects all domains to rational scrutiny, not in its own methodological standards (Putnam, 1994). Thus, philosophy is not a repository of doctrines but a method of disciplined inquiry, characterized by argumentation, clarity, coherence, and conceptual rigor (Rescher, 2001; Nussbaum, 2010).

The philosopher's vocation, therefore, is to clarify, distinguish, and critique—to dispel conceptual confusion and expose fallacies through rational analysis. As Strawson (1992) observes, philosophy's primary business is to make distinctions that dissolve intellectual obscurities. For a practice to claim the title of philosophy, it must preserve epistemic responsibility: privileging argument over assertion, explanation over persuasion, and critique over consolation.

Philosophy, understood as a systematic, rigorous, and critical reflection upon the fundamental questions of existence, knowledge, value, reason, and language, distinguishes itself from empirical disciplines precisely by its concern with the conceptual presuppositions underlying all domains of inquiry—scientific, moral, or aesthetic (Russell, 1997). It is a self-reflexive enterprise,

testing the very conditions of intelligibility that other fields take for granted. Its methods—ranging from conceptual analysis that seeks necessary and sufficient conditions, to dialectical critique in the Socratic elenchus, to formal logic, phenomenological description, and thought experiments—are unified by their demand for public justification. Philosophical reasoning, unlike private reflection or subjective intuition, is bound by the criterion of rationality: reasons must be articulated clearly, examined impersonally, and exposed to collective rational scrutiny. In this sense, philosophy is not a mode of private therapy but a public exercise in rational accountability—an intellectual vocation that resists both dogmatism and sentimentality.

2. What Constitutes Counselling

A systematic evaluation of Philosophical Counselling (PC) must equally begin with a clear understanding of what constitutes counselling as a distinct professional and therapeutic discipline. Counselling is properly defined as a structured, professional relationship designed to assist individuals in understanding, managing, and resolving personal, psychological, emotional, or behavioral difficulties through guided interaction with a trained practitioner (Corey, 2017). Unlike informal advice, mentorship, or conversational exchange, counselling functions within an institutionalized and evidence-based framework, governed by established ethical standards and professional regulations (ACA, 2014; BACP, 2018). Drawing from a range of theoretical traditions—psychodynamic, humanistic, cognitive-behavioral, and integrative—counselling maintains a client-cantered and goal-oriented character, emphasizing measurable change, adaptation, and personal growth. Its professional status rests on formal qualifications, licensing, and accountability structures that ensure competence, ethical integrity, and the efficacy of therapeutic intervention. The counselling encounter is therefore not a casual

dialogue but a structured engagement oriented toward therapeutic outcomes, conducted within a framework of clinical responsibility.

The counselling process involves systematic stages of assessment, intervention, and evaluation, guided by empirically validated methods (Egan, 2013). Its knowledge base is interdisciplinary, drawing substantively from psychology, psychiatry, neuroscience, and behavioral sciences to inform models of mental health, cognition, and relational dynamics. Even those therapeutic forms that engage directly with existential or philosophical questions—such as existential psychotherapy (Yalom, 1980)—remain firmly embedded within the psychotherapeutic paradigm, adhering to clinical protocols and therapeutic ethics. The American Counselling Association defines counselling as "a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals" (ACA, 2014, p. 2). This definition encapsulates three central features of counselling: it is (a) relational in form, (b) goal-directed in structure, and (c) therapeutic in purpose. In his client-cantered model, Carl Rogers (1951) emphasized empathy, authenticity, and unconditional positive regard as foundational to facilitating client self-understanding and growth. Counselling, therefore, is inherently therapeutic—its aim is restorative and developmental, directed toward enhancing psychological functioning, emotional resilience, and overall well-being.

Counselling practices are differentiated according to their contexts and client needs. Academic counselling assists students in improving study habits, managing learning difficulties, and making career decisions. Mental health counselling addresses clinical issues such as anxiety, depression, or trauma. Family and marital counselling intervenes in interpersonal conflicts and communication breakdowns. Crisis counselling provides immediate psychological

support in the wake of loss, disaster, or other emergencies. Despite this diversity, all forms of counselling share a pragmatic orientation: they seek to restore functioning, promote adaptation, and support the client's capacity to cope. The objective is therapeutic efficacy, not the articulation of a worldview or the pursuit of speculative inquiry.

The major functions of counselling may be classified as supportive, preventive, and developmental (Gladding, 2018). The supportive function provides empathy and guidance to help clients manage grief, stress, or crisis. The preventive function equips individuals with coping strategies to avert future dysfunction or maladaptive patterns. The developmental function fosters personal growth, self-awareness, and the acquisition of adaptive life skills. These dimensions together establish counselling as a client-cantered and outcome-driven profession. Central to counselling's legitimacy is its professional regulation: ethical codes and institutional oversight prescribe standards of competence, confidentiality, informed consent, and boundary management. Such regulation underscores the practical, interpersonal, and duty-bound nature of counselling. It is, fundamentally, a professional service governed by therapeutic responsibility—not a speculative enterprise guided by the norms of conceptual inquiry.

3. What is Philosophical Counselling

Philosophical Counselling (PC) has emerged since the 1980s as a distinctive movement seeking to apply philosophical insights, arguments, and methods to the problems of individual life. Originating with Gerd Achenbach in Germany, the movement positions itself as a non-clinical alternative to psychotherapy and as an effort to revive philosophy as a way of life in the Socratic tradition (Achenbach, 1995; Marinoff, 1999). At its core, PC defines itself as a professional practice in which trained

philosophers engage clients in dialogue to explore, clarify, and interpret personal or existential difficulties by drawing upon philosophical concepts and traditions. Distinguishing itself from psychotherapy, which interprets distress through diagnostic and pathological frameworks, PC claims to emphasize rational reflection, conceptual analysis, and meaning-making. The Association for Philosophical Practice (APP) succinctly characterizes this approach as "helping people to think through their problems philosophically," thereby underscoring its non-medical and dialogical orientation (Raabe, 2001).

The defining feature of PC lies in its hybrid identity. It seeks to retain philosophy's intellectual rigor while simultaneously addressing the practical needs of individuals in distress. Advocates describe it as a form of applied philosophy, analogous to applied ethics, in which philosophical theories and methods are mobilized to engage concrete human concerns (Marinoff, 2002). Unlike academic philosophy, which often remains abstract and disciplinary, PC is intentionally conversational, dialogical, and person-cantered. Yet this very hybridity generates tension. When PC leans too far toward therapy, it risks abandoning the analytic and critical standards that define philosophy; when it leans toward theory, it forfeits the empathic and outcome-oriented structure that defines counselling. The instability of this balance—between the conceptual and the therapeutic—constitutes a central question in determining whether PC can avoid the logical and methodological fallacies that attend its hybrid claims.

Proponents of PC attribute to it an expansive scope, claiming that it can address a broad spectrum of human difficulties, including existential crises, ethical conflicts, value dilemmas, relationship problems, workplace distress, and the search for purpose or meaning (Lahav, 2001). Unlike psychotherapy, which is limited to

clinically recognized disorders, PC purports to address the philosophical dimensions embedded in everyday life questions: "What is justice in my workplace?", "What is the meaning of my suffering?", or "How should I balance freedom with responsibility in my relationships?" Such inclusivity is presented as the distinctive virtue of PC—its refusal to reduce human problems to medical categories. Yet this very expansiveness risks conceptual overreach, conflating the philosophical with the therapeutic and stretching the meaning of both beyond their coherent boundaries.

The methodology of PC is dialogical and eclectic, rooted in the Socratic model of inquiry through questioning, clarification, and reflection. Philosophical counsellors employ a diverse range of intellectual tools, including logical analysis, thought experiments, phenomenological description, and cross-cultural comparison (Raabe, 2001; Lahav, 2006). Some practitioners draw predominantly from Western philosophical traditions such as Stoicism and existentialism, while others incorporate non-Western frameworks including Buddhism, Vedānta, and Daoism. The method is typically non-directive: the counsellor does not impose answers but facilitates self-reflection in the client. However, unlike philosophy proper, the aim is not the universal justification of claims but their personal application, and unlike counselling proper, the process lacks the structured procedures of assessment, diagnosis, and measurable therapeutic outcomes. What PC celebrates as methodological flexibility may thus conceal a deeper conceptual ambiguity—its inability to define clear epistemic and procedural boundaries.

Advocates delineate five major functions of PC: (1) clarification—helping clients disentangle conceptual confusions; (2) orientation—providing philosophical perspectives on life's challenges; (3) dialogue—engaging clients in reflective discussion;

(4) empowerment—enabling more thoughtful decision-making; and (5) existential support—addressing questions of value, meaning, and purpose (Marinoff, 1999; Lahav, 2006). These functions are said to distinguish PC from psychotherapy, which seeks healing, and from academic philosophy, which pursues theoretical understanding. PC, therefore, presents itself as a "third space" between these two domains. Yet, closer examination reveals that each of these functions is conceptually unstable. Clarification risks degenerating into oversimplification; orientation can lapse into prescriptive moralizing; dialogue may lack the ethical safeguards of therapy; empowerment may conflate rational deliberation with psychological healing; and existential support often mirrors pastoral or spiritual counselling more than philosophical reasoning.

Consequently, although PC presents itself as a novel synthesis of philosophy and counselling, its self-definition, nature, scope, method, and functions collectively expose deep conceptual inconsistencies. In its effort to merge two incommensurable disciplines, PC risks producing a practice that belongs fully to neither. This dual allegiance gives rise to what may be described as three interconnected intellectual errors: a prescriptive fallacy (analogous to Moore's naturalistic fallacy, whereby descriptive philosophical insights are illegitimately converted into prescriptive therapeutic interventions); a Russellian paradox (the counsellor who purports to be non-therapeutic yet functions as a therapist, akin to a set that both includes and excludes itself); and a Rylean category mistake (the conflation of philosophy's theoretical category with counselling's practical domain). These errors, far from being abstract logical curiosities, reveal the structural incoherence of PC as both theory and practice—a problem that becomes more evident when examined through a stakeholder-based analysis in subsequent sections.

4. Stakeholder-Based Analysis of Philosophical Counselling

A productive way to illuminate the conceptual fragilities inherent in Philosophical Counselling (PC) is through a stakeholder analysis. Broadly understood, stakeholder analysis is a methodological framework for examining a practice or institution by identifying its principal agents, mapping their respective roles, expectations, and responsibilities, and assessing how these intersect or conflict (Freeman, 1984). When this analytical lens is applied to PC, three primary stakeholders emerge: the philosopher-counsellor, the client, and the regulator. Each occupies a distinctive position within the structure of the practice, yet each encounters contradictions that render PC unstable both as philosophy and as counselling.

For the philosopher-counsellor, the assumed role is to translate philosophical knowledge and methods into practical engagement with individual concerns. The expectations attached to this role are twofold: first, to reassert the contemporary relevance of philosophy, and second, to establish a professional identity independent of psychology and psychiatry (Achenbach, 1984; Marinoff, 1999). However, this role is inherently compromised by the expectations of the other stakeholders. Clients anticipate therapeutic benefit, while regulators—where present—demand professional accountability and safety. In attempting to reconcile these competing demands, the philosopher-counsellor encounters what may be termed a prescriptive dilemma, structurally analogous to G. E. Moore's naturalistic fallacy (Moore, 1903). The counsellor's discourse frequently shifts from descriptive or analytic propositions—such as "anger is a judgment"—to prescriptive injunctions—such as "one ought not to be angry." This movement from analysis to advice undermines the philosophical integrity of the exchange. If the counsellor refrains from prescription, clients perceive the session as

abstract and unhelpful; if the counsellor prescribes, they abandon philosophical neutrality and enter the therapeutic domain. Thus, the prescriptive dilemma is internal to the philosopher-counsellor's role and symptomatic of PC's structural incoherence.

The client approaches PC with the expectation of achieving clarity, understanding, and perhaps relief from existential confusion or emotional distress (Lahav, 1995). The client's role is that of a participant in reflective dialogue, and their responsibility is to engage sincerely and rationally with the philosophical process. Yet this engagement is complicated by two interrelated conditions: the philosophical presuppositions of the counsellor and the absence of regulatory oversight. Clients are thereby exposed to a category mistake, in Ryle's (1949) sense, by approaching philosophy as if it were a therapeutic discipline and expecting outcomes that philosophy cannot, by its nature, deliver. A client grieving a loss, for instance, may anticipate emotional healing but instead receives a Stoic reinterpretation of grief as a "false judgment." The misalignment between the client's psychological expectations and the counsellor's conceptual reframing exposes a fundamental categorical confusion at the core of PC. Moreover, PC presents the client with a paradox of autonomy: while it promises liberation through rational self-examination, the counsellor's philosophical orientation—be it Stoic, existentialist, or Buddhist—inevitably shapes the trajectory of the dialogue, subtly directing the client's thought and thereby constraining the very autonomy the process purports to promote.

The regulator represents the third stakeholder, responsible for ensuring public safety, professional accountability, and institutional legitimacy. Regulators are tasked with protecting clients from harm, preventing malpractice, and sustaining public trust. Their obligation is to establish ethical, legal, or institutional mechanisms that

safeguard participants. Yet, in the context of PC, regulators encounter a structural double-bind. To regulate PC would require the imposition of clinical and procedural standards that would transform it into a form of psychotherapy; to refrain from regulation, however, leaves the practice unmonitored, informal, and potentially unsafe (Schuster, 1999). This predicament exemplifies a Russellian paradox (Russell, 1908): PC must simultaneously be counselling (to qualify for regulation) and not be counselling (to preserve its philosophical autonomy). The regulator, therefore, cannot classify PC without negating one of its essential claims.

Viewed through stakeholder analysis, the conceptual and structural incoherence of PC become sharply apparent. The philosopher-counsellor is ensnared in the prescriptive dilemma, oscillating between analytic reflection and therapeutic prescription; the client is trapped in a category mistake, misperceiving philosophy as therapy and experiencing confusion or dissatisfaction; and the regulator is caught in a Russellian paradox, unable to define or oversee the practice without undermining its own rationale. Collectively, these contradictions demonstrate that PC fails to meet the epistemic, ethical, and institutional requirements necessary for coherence as either a philosophical enterprise or a counselling profession. Its internal structure collapses under the weight of its own inconsistencies, revealing PC as an unstable and conceptually untenable hybrid.

5. Why Philosophical Counselling Is Not Philosophical

Philosophical Counselling (PC), despite its self-designation, fails to satisfy the fundamental criteria that define professional philosophy. Its conceptual and methodological weaknesses reveal an erosion of philosophical rigor, coherence, and autonomy (Rescher, 2001; Nussbaum, 2010). When examined across stakeholder dimensions, it becomes evident that PC neither upholds

the epistemic standards of philosophical inquiry nor preserves the disciplinary integrity that philosophy demands as a rational and self-critical enterprise.

From the standpoint of the philosopher-counsellor, PC engenders a deep professional and intellectual identity crisis. The practitioner occupies an indeterminate position between philosopher and therapist, without the epistemic accountability of the former or the clinical competence of the latter. This hybridity results in a blurred intellectual mandate, where the counsellor's authority derives not from philosophical argumentation but from performative persuasion. The absence of a shared methodological framework—no canonical procedures of reasoning, no criteria for conceptual adequacy, and no established protocols of philosophical praxis—generates a condition of methodological relativism and eclecticism (Lahav, 2001; Raabe, 2001). Each practitioner constructs their own interpretive style, drawing selectively from Stoicism, Existentialism, or Phenomenology, without systematic justification. This unanchored eclecticism undermines the epistemic integrity of philosophical discourse, which traditionally relies on intersubjective standards of validity and logical justification.

Moreover, the form of dialogue employed in PC is frequently misrepresented as Socratic. In reality, it often degenerates into a personalized catechism aimed at comfort rather than inquiry. The genuine Socratic elenchus was not therapeutic but interrogative—its objective was truth, not solace (Brickhouse & Smith, 2000). In contrast, the philosophical counsellor is incentivized to maintain rapport and avoid conflict to sustain client satisfaction. Consequently, dialectical rigor is replaced by empathic conversation, and the tension between reason and affect—the driving force of philosophical discovery—is dissolved in favour of psychological appeasement. The counsellor, in seeking to help,

inadvertently abandons philosophy's defining vocation: to question and problematize rather than to console or persuade.

From the client's perspective, the philosophical substance of PC is equally tenuous. Clients typically enter counselling with existential confusion, emotional distress, or practical dilemmas—not with epistemological puzzles or metaphysical inquiries. Lacking philosophical training, they are ill-equipped to assess the validity, coherence, or argumentative structure of the counsellor's reasoning. This asymmetry of competence transforms the encounter into a pseudo-philosophical situation:philosophical vocabulary is invoked, but the operative method is neither analytical nor dialectical. The result is a form of rhetorical persuasion or narrative re-description rather than sustained conceptual analysis (Nussbaum, 1999). If, hypothetically, the client possessed philosophical sophistication sufficient to engage in critical argument, the session would cease to be counselling and would instead resemble a seminar or tutorial, collapsing the very distinction that PC seeks to maintain between dialogue and instruction.

Institutional observers—particularly academic philosophers—have therefore expressed persistent skepticism toward PC. By conflating disciplined philosophical inquiry with loosely structured self-help, PC dilutes the epistemic seriousness of philosophy and misrepresents its vocation (Russell, 1946). The transformation of philosophy into a quasi-therapeutic practice suggests, misleadingly, that philosophers are qualified to address emotional or moral crises in ways analogous to psychotherapists. Yet philosophers, however insightful, are neither trained clinicians nor bound by the ethical codes governing therapeutic professions (Raabe, 2001). This professional overreach risks both intellectual misrepresentation—by distorting the aims and methods of philosophy—and emotional harm—by engaging with vulnerabilities for which the counsellor lacks psychological expertise.

PC replaces critical dialogue with conversational therapy, argument with suggestion, and conceptual rigor with personal resonance. Its procedures may employ philosophical language, but its operational logic is not philosophical inquiry. The discipline of philosophy, as a rational and self-corrective pursuit, depends on logical consistency, conceptual precision, and argumentative depth—standards that PC neither upholds nor aspires to. Thus, PC remains philosophy in name but not in method, an imitation that gestures toward philosophy while forsaking its essential rational vocation.

6. Why Philosophical Counselling Is Not Counselling

Philosophical Counselling (PC) fails to satisfy the institutional, ethical, and therapeutic criteria that define counselling as a regulated professional practice. Its inadequacy is not incidental but systemic, rooted in its structural refusal to comply with the procedural safeguards and epistemic accountability required in therapeutic contexts. In attempting to appropriate the institutional vocabulary of counselling—such as "clients," "sessions," and "counsellors"—while rejecting its professional obligations, PC exposes itself as an unregulated practice that lacks legitimacy in any clinical, ethical, or institutional sense.

From the standpoint of the philosopher-counsellor, the deficiency begins with the absence of formal training in psychology, psychotherapy, or clinical diagnostics. Most philosophical counsellors are trained in philosophy, not in the psychodynamics of behaviour, cognitive assessment, or trauma-informed practice (Corey, 2017). Consequently, they are unequipped to recognize or respond to the emotional, cognitive, or behavioral complexities that clients frequently present. The distinction between philosophical and psychological problems, though rhetorically emphasized by PC practitioners, is empirically

and conceptually porous. Existential anguish may conceal clinical depression; moral guilt may mask obsessive-compulsive tendencies; and reflections on meaninglessness may stem from neurochemical imbalances. Without clinical training, the counsellor cannot reliably discern when philosophical dialogue is insufficient and medical intervention is necessary. This epistemic blindness risks both underestimating clinical severity and overstepping professional competence.

Equally problematic is PC's ethical vacuum. Unlike psychotherapy, which is governed by codified ethical standards such as those of the American Counselling Association (ACA, 2014) or the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP, 2018), philosophical counselling lacks a robust regulatory framework ensuring client safety, confidentiality, informed consent, and appropriate referral. The philosophical counsellor effectively self-authorizes expertise, asserting authority without institutional vetting, licensure, or peer accountability. The use of the term "counsellor" without formal credentials is not merely terminological inflation—it is ethically misleading and professionally irresponsible. By adopting the external appearance of counselling while disavowing its regulatory structure, PC blurs the distinction between professional legitimacy and intellectual enthusiasm, leaving clients without institutional recourse in cases of harm or misconduct.

From the client's perspective, this institutional and ethical indeterminacy translates into significant risk. Clients frequently approach PC seeking relief, resolution, or therapeutic containment, assuming they are entering a regulated and accountable professional space. However, PC offers none of the guarantees or procedural safeguards associated with legitimate counselling: no duty of care, no evidence-based intervention, no structured evaluation of

progress, and no therapeutic outcome protocols (Egan, 2013). Sessions may thus devolve into open-ended philosophical debates or speculative discussions, which, though intellectually stimulating, fail to provide emotional closure or psychological stabilization. For clients experiencing acute distress, such open-endedness can be confusing, frustrating, or even re-traumatizing. Moreover, when counsellors invoke specific philosophical doctrines—such as Stoic resignation, existential acceptance, or Buddhist detachment—these ideas may be uncritically accepted by clients in vulnerable states, undermining the very autonomy PC claims to promote. What begins as "philosophical reflection" risks devolving into unexamined doctrinal persuasion under the guise of rational dialogue.

From the standpoint of institutional observers and professional bodies, PC's position is further undermined by its lack of integration into any recognized therapeutic infrastructure. The title "counsellor" is typically protected by law or professional codes, signifying adherence to rigorous training, supervision, and accountability (ACA, 2014). PC practitioners, however, neither undergo accredited training nor participate in regulated supervision or outcome evaluation. They operate entirely outside healthcare systems, insurance frameworks, or institutional review structures (Raabe, 2001). This creates what may be called a credibility gap: PC adopts the form and vocabulary of counselling while evading its ethical and procedural responsibilities. The result is a practice that imitates therapy without its regulatory backbone, thus positioning itself ambiguously between the professional and the amateur, the responsible and the experimental.

A comparison with existential therapy further clarifies this disjunction. Existential therapy, though grounded in philosophical themes, is conducted within a clinical context under ethical oversight, ensuring that existential reflection occurs within the

bounds of therapeutic competence (Yalom, 1980). PC, by contrast, appropriates existential discourse while rejecting the clinical and ethical infrastructure that legitimizes it. It thus presents itself as therapeutic without possessing any therapeutic legitimacy, collapsing the distinction between philosophical contemplation and psychological care.

PC commits a professional category-mistake: it treats philosophical dialogue—a cognitive and discursive activity—as if it were a form of counselling—a therapeutic and affective intervention. The result is a practice that lacks both the intellectual rigor of philosophy and the ethical discipline of counselling. What remains is an unregulated hybrid that gestures toward therapy while operating outside its moral and institutional safeguards.

7. Counter-Arguments and Responses

Proponents of Philosophical Counselling (PC) often respond to criticisms by arguing that the practice represents a legitimate reorientation of philosophy toward its original Socratic and Hellenistic roots. They claim that philosophy has historically functioned as a form of spiritual or moral guidance, not merely as abstract theorizing, and that PC revives this neglected dimension of philosophy as a "way of life" (Hadot, 1995; Nussbaum, 1999). On this view, the philosopher's role is not confined to the academy but extends into the practical realm of human flourishing, where philosophical reflection can offer existential insight and moral direction. According to Marinoff (1999), philosophy's therapeutic function was always implicit in its historical mission, from the Stoics' emphasis on rational self-governance to Aristotle's conception of eudaimonia as a life guided by reason. PC, he argues, simply operationalizes these insights for contemporary individuals who seek meaning and coherence amid the moral and psychological dislocations of modernity.

However, this historical appeal is more rhetorical than analytic. The fact that certain ancient philosophers practiced moral guidance does not entail that philosophy as a discipline is or should be identified with therapy. The ancient philosophical schools operated within their own metaphysical, epistemic, and ethical frameworks, not as professionalized therapeutic services. To transpose these frameworks into modern individual counselling contexts without the corresponding institutional and epistemic structures is to engage in a form of anachronism. As Hadot (2002) himself clarifies, philosophy as a way of life was inseparable from a shared cosmology and communal mode of existence—conditions that modern PC cannot reproduce. Thus, invoking the ancients does not legitimize PC as a contemporary profession but rather highlights the incommensurability between ancient spiritual exercises and modern therapeutic practices.

A second line of defense holds that PC does not claim to replace psychotherapy but rather complements it by addressing questions of meaning and value that lie beyond the scope of empirical psychology (Raabe, 2001; Lahav, 2006). On this view, PC and psychotherapy are distinct but complementary modes of care: the former engages the normative and conceptual dimensions of human existence, while the latter focuses on emotional and behavioral regulation. The philosophical counsellor, according to this argument, does not diagnose or treat but facilitates reflective dialogue that empowers clients to think critically about their beliefs, choices, and values.

This argument underestimates the complexity of professional boundaries and the ethical obligations inherent in any form of human service. The moment a philosopher assumes the role of counsellor in a setting where individuals seek help for distress, dependency, or confusion, the encounter becomes therapeutic in nature, whether or not it is labelled as such (Corey, 2017).

Consequently, the philosophical counsellor cannot evade the responsibilities that accompany therapeutic roles, including the obligation to protect clients from harm, to maintain confidentiality, and to operate within a framework of professional accountability (ACA, 2014; BACP, 2018). To assert that philosophical dialogue can occur in a therapeutic context without being therapy is conceptually incoherent and ethically hazardous. Furthermore, the purported complementarity between PC and psychotherapy collapses when one considers that psychotherapy already includes existential and philosophical dimensions—most notably in existential analysis and humanistic counselling (Yalom, 1980)—but does so with clinical training, ethical safeguards, and empirical validation. PC, lacking such foundations, cannot claim parity or complementarity without falling into contradiction.

A third defense suggests that PC's value lies not in its institutional legitimacy but in its democratization of philosophical reflection. Advocates maintain that PC provides accessible spaces for ordinary individuals to engage in philosophical inquiry outside the elitism of academia (Lahav, 1995; Marinoff, 2002). By emphasizing lived experience and dialogical openness, PC purportedly restores philosophy to its humanistic and participatory roots. From this perspective, even if PC lacks the formal structure of a profession, it contributes to public intellectual life by encouraging reflection, dialogue, and ethical awareness.

While this argument gestures toward an admirable ideal, it conflates philosophical democratization with professional practice. Philosophy has always welcomed public participation, but democratization cannot substitute for the disciplinary and ethical standards that protect participants in contexts of vulnerability. The moment philosophical dialogue is offered as guidance for life crises, it crosses into therapeutic territory, demanding accountability.

Moreover, PC's claim to accessibility is undermined by its dependence on the counsellor's philosophical presuppositions, which are rarely interrogated by clients. In this respect, PC reproduces the same asymmetries of authority it claims to resist, substituting academic hierarchy with therapeutic hierarchy.

8. Conclusion

Philosophical Counselling (PC) emerges, at first sight, as an ambitious attempt to restore philosophy's social relevance by presenting it as a therapeutic and life-guiding practice. Yet the analysis undertaken in this paper shows that PC commits a series of conceptual confusions and logical missteps. By conflating the aims of philosophy with the aims of counselling, it not only produces a prescriptive fallacy—attempting to derive therapeutic ought from descriptive conceptual work—but also generates paradoxes akin to Russell's liar paradox, wherein the philosopher-counsellor simultaneously claims epistemic authority while denying therapeutic responsibility. Added to this is Ryle's notion of the category-mistake: PC misplaces philosophy into the domain of therapy, where its methods and goals do not belong. The result is a practice that is unprofessional, unhelpful, impractical, and, at times, unethical. It lacks the methodological rigor expected of philosophy and the clinical accountability required of counselling. In trying to be both, it fails to be either.

The dialectical examination of PC's major defense further confirms this failure. Appeals to ancient philosophy as a way of life rest on anachronistic readings of classical traditions; claims of complementarity with psychotherapy dissolve under the weight of professional and ethical contradictions; and the rhetoric of philosophical democratization mistakes accessibility for legitimacy. PC's conceptual hybridity—its refusal to acknowledge the categorical difference between philosophical reflection and

therapeutic practice—ultimately exposes its own internal incoherence. Philosophy and counselling operate within different epistemic, institutional, and ethical orders; their forced synthesis results not in enrichment but in confusion.

A deeper metaphor helps illuminate this failure. Philosophy was once hailed as the mother of all disciplines, nurturing fields like science, psychology, and politics into independent domains. In the modern academic landscape, however, philosophy has become the neglected mother, overshadowed by the very disciplines it gave birth to. Philosophical Counselling proposes to rehabilitate philosophy by turning it into a father figure—a "daddy" who counsels, directs, and commands authority. But here too it falters, for the role of counsellor does not sit comfortably with the role of philosopher. Instead of regaining dignity, philosophy is recast as a failed or disobeyed father: self-styled as authoritative, yet neither recognized by professional counsellors nor respected by philosophers themselves.

The lesson, then, is clear. Philosophy's task is not to play the surrogate parent of other disciplines—whether as the neglected mother or the failed father—but to remain philosophy: rigorous, critical, self-reflective, and dedicated to the conceptual clarification of life and thought. The philosopher's vocation is not to counsel but to philosophize. To reclaim its relevance, philosophy need not mimic the therapeutic; rather, it must deepen its own intellectual integrity. Only then can it serve as the reflective conscience of all inquiry, not by offering comfort, but by illuminating the limits and possibilities of understanding itself.

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IS DHARMA A RELIGIOUS CONCEPT? AN ANALYTIC INQUIRY

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Abstract

This paper undertakes an analytic and philosophical inquiry into the question: Is Dharma a religious concept? It argues that the common translation of Dharma as "religion" is a conceptual and linguistic error inherited from colonial and theological frameworks. Drawing upon classical Sanskrit sources, such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Manusmriti and Bhagavad-Gita, along with analytic philosophers such as Gilbert Ryle, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and W.V.O. Quine, the paper demonstrates that Dharma belongs to a different logical and ontological order than "religion." Whereas religion is a system of belief grounded in revelation, Dharma is a universal law of being that sustains cosmic and moral harmony. The analysis extends to modern political and legal contexts, showing how the misclassification of Dharma as religion has distorted the understanding of Indian secularism, constitutional morality, and national identity. The paper concludes that Dharma is not a religion but the moral architecture of existence, an integrative principle uniting ontology, epistemology, and ethics, and providing a foundation for global peace, justice, and civilizational renewal.

Keywords:

Dharma, Religion, Analytical Philosophy, Indian Secularism, Ontological Ethics, Viksit Bharat.

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Introduction

Dharma occupies a central place in the Indian civilisation. It appears in our scriptures, in social thought, and in daily life. It is among the most profound and yet most misunderstood concepts when translated into English as "religion." In common usage, Dharma is often taken to mean religion, as if both were the same. This is not only a mistake of language. It changes how we read Indian philosophy, how we think about ethics, and how we understand the spirit of our national life.

Today societies across the world are divided by religious identities and belief systems. In such a time we must ask with care whether Dharma is a religious idea or something deeper and more universal. The answer has wide consequences. If Dharma is reduced to religion, it becomes a matter of private belief and group boundaries. If Dharma is understood as the law of order and righteousness that sustains all life, it becomes a ground for universal ethics and human harmony. The question that confronts us is whether Dharma a religious concept? It is therefore not a small academic issue. It concerns the future direction of human civilisation.

The tendency to equate Dharma with religion intensified during the colonial period, when Western scholars, missionaries, and administrators who were shaped by Judeo-Christian and Marxist intellectual traditions interpreted Indian concepts through their own ideological lenses. They tried to explain Indian ideas with their own theological words such as faith, church, conversion, and religion. These words do not fit the Indian context. When they came across *Sanatana Dharma*, they translated it as Hindu Religion. This looked convenient for administration and for missionary work, but it produced a deep misunderstanding. The Sanskrit word *Dharma* comes from the root *dhr*, which means to hold or to sustain.[1] It

points to the principle that maintains the order of the cosmos, society, and moral life. The word "religion" derived from the Latin word *religare* meaning "to bind" or "to reconnect." [2] It points to personal faith, worship of a deity, and organised belief. Dharma speaks of an impersonal and universal law of harmony. Religion speaks of a system of belief and practice centred on a personal God. These belong to different worlds of thought and language. Even today, this colonial interpretation continues to influence education, law, and public discourse. It narrows the Indian vision into the frame of Western theology and feeds the wrong view that Dharma is only another religion.

This paper tries to clear this confusion by careful analysis. Using classical sources and tools of modern philosophy, it asks whether Dharma can rightly be called a religious concept. It explains the meanings of Dharma and religion, traces their historical and linguistic roots, and places each in its proper logical category. It then studies the ontological, epistemological, and ethical sides of Dharma, and sets them against the theological and institutional features of religion. The method of the paper is analytic, not polemical. It uses concepts from Indian reasoning and from contemporary analytic philosophy to detect category mistakes, to clarify terms, and to show that Dharma is a universal principle of order and right living, not a sectarian creed. In this way the paper seeks to present India's civilizational ethos with accuracy and to show its value for present global ethics.

Dharma in the Classical Sources

In the Indian philosophical tradition, Dharma is the central principle that upholds both individual and collective life. It is not only a moral rule or a religious duty, but the very foundation of the

order that sustains the universe and society. The great classical texts of India such as the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagavad Gita, and Dharmashastras give many insights into the meaning and purpose of Dharma.

The Ramayana describes Dharma as the source of prosperity, happiness, and universal stability:

Dharmāt arthaḥ prabhavati dharmāt prabhavate sukham |
Dharmeṇa labhate sarvaṃ dharma sāram idaṃ jagat || [3]

Meaning: From Dharma arises prosperity; from Dharma comes happiness; through Dharma everything is attained. The whole universe rests upon Dharma.

This verse shows that Dharma is the force which brings both material well-being (*artha*) and spiritual happiness (*sukha*). Without Dharma there can be neither personal progress nor social harmony.

The Mahabharata gives a philosophical explanation of Dharma:

Dhāraṇād dharmam ity āhur dharmo dhārayati prajāḥ |
Yaḥ syād dhāraṇa-saṃyuktaḥ sa dharma iti niścayaḥ || [4]

Meaning: Dharma is called so because it upholds the world. That which sustains and supports all beings is truly Dharma.

Here Dharma is not seen as belief or worship. It is the sustaining power of existence itself, the law that holds together the physical, moral, and spiritual aspects of life.

The Bhagavad Gita explains that Dharma is expressed through the right performance of one's own duties:

Sve sve karmaṇy abhirataḥ saṃsiddhiṃ labhate naraḥ |
Sva-karma-nirataḥ siddhiṃ yathā vindati tac chṛṇu || [5]

Meaning: Each person attains perfection by performing his own duty. Hear how one who is devoted to his own work attains perfection.

This shows that Dharma is not fixed or dogmatic. It is dynamic and functional. It guides right action according to one's role in the greater cosmic order (ṛta). Dharma is not blind obedience but intelligent alignment with the universal rhythm.

The Manu Smriti describes the moral qualities that form the essence of Dharma:

Dhṛtiḥ kṣamā damo 'steyaṃ śaucam indriya-nigrahaḥ |
Dhīr vidyā satyam akrodho daśakaṃ dharma-lakṣaṇam || [6]

Meaning: Patience, forgiveness, self-control, non-stealing, purity, restraint of the senses, wisdom, knowledge, truthfulness, and absence of anger are the ten characteristics of Dharma.

These ten qualities are universal and timeless, and they are not tied to any specific religious beliefs or rituals.

Another verse from the Manu Smriti teaches that truth itself is the essence of Dharma:

Satyaṃ brūyāt priyaṃ brūyān na brūyāt satyam apriyam |
Priyaṃ ca nānṛtaṃ brūyād eṣa dharmaḥ sanātanaḥ || [7]

Meaning: One should speak what is true and pleasant. One should not speak what is true but harsh, nor what is pleasant but false. This is the eternal Dharma.

This verse teaches that Dharma is truth spoken with care and compassion. One should be gentle in speech, but truth must never be sacrificed to please anyone. Truth lies at the core of Sanatana Dharma.

Sri Shankaracharya, in his *Bhāṣya* on the Bhagavad Gita, gives a deep and comprehensive definition of Dharma:

Jagataḥ sthiti-kāraṇaṃ prāṇināṃ sākṣād abhyudaya-niḥśreyasa-hetuḥ yaḥ sa dharmaḥ. [8]

Meaning: That which is the cause of the world's stability and the direct means for the prosperity (*abhyudaya*) and ultimate liberation (*niḥśreyasa*) of all living beings, that is Dharma.

Sri Shankaracharya`s definition shows that Dharma is the sustaining law of existence as well as the guiding path of life. It unites the ethical, social, and spiritual dimensions of human endeavour. Dharma is at once the foundation that supports the universe and the discipline that directs human action. It keeps harmony between the material and the spiritual, ensuring that true progress is always rooted in righteousness, order, and the common good.

Religion in the Classical Sources of Judaism

Judaism is the monotheistic religion of the Jewish people. In the Judaic tradition, religion is founded on the divine covenant (*berit*) made between the ninety-nine-year-old Abraham and his descendants with Yahweh, the one God of Israel. Circumcision serves as the sign of this covenant between Yahweh, Abraham, and his lineage [9]. In Judaism, God (Yahweh) alone is to be worshipped, and none other[10]. Yahweh promises blessings to those who keep the covenant and obey His commands, and grave punishment to those who disobey [11.] Judaism encourages non-Jewish to enter the covenant community through circumcision and obedience to the commandments of Yahweh, the God of Israel[12]. Thus, Judaism is a religion based on a sacred covenant with the God of Israel, which cannot be broken. It also involves a specific ritual that marks one's inclusion in this divine community. In this sense, religion in the Judaic model is deeply scriptural and communal, it is not merely a

matter of personal faith but a shared participation in the historical relationship between God and His chosen people. Hence, in Judaism, religion is not a form of general spirituality but a well-defined communal identity grounded in divine election and moral responsibility.

Religion in the Classical Sources of Christianity

Christianity is a monotheistic religion founded on the teachings of Jesus Christ, who began his ministry at about thirty years of age [13], and on the faith and practices that arose from his message. The central belief of Christianity is that "Jesus Christ is the only Son of God" [14] and that "Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through him"[15]. According to Bible, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."[16] Thus, conversion to Christianity is not viewed as optional but as an essential command of the New Testament, as expressed in chapter Matthew[17], where Jesus instructs his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations." This mission is reiterated in the words of Pope John Paul during his visit to India in 1999. He prayed that "The first millennium saw the cross planted in soil of Europe, the second in America and Africa. May the third Christian Millennium witness a great harvest of faith on this vast and vital continent" [18].

The early Church Fathers and medieval theologians elaborated on this scriptural foundation. St. Augustine, in his The City of God, describes true religion as the worship of the one true God and the practice of justice inspired by divine love. He distinguishes religio vera (true religion) from false forms of worship grounded in idolatry or human pride [19]. Later, St. Thomas Aquinas systematized this idea in his Summa Theologiae, defining religion as "the virtue by which man renders to God the worship and service due to Him as Creator." [20.] For Aquinas, religion is a moral virtue, a habit of

giving God His due through prayer, sacrifice and righteous living. It is subordinate to faith and charity but gives visible expression to them. Hence, in Christian thought religion becomes both theological (rooted in revelation) and ethical (expressed through virtue). It unites belief, worship and moral life into one unified path toward salvation.

Religion in the Classical Sources of Islam

Islam (meaning "surrender" to Allah) is a monotheistic religion founded by Prophet Muhammad when he was about forty years of age, in 610 A.D. The first and most fundamental pillar of Islam, the *Shahada*, declares: "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah."[21.] The Quran distinguishes the Muslim community from others and guides believers regarding their relations with followers of other faiths [22]. It also emphasises that the only acceptable faith before Allah is Islam [23].

In Quran, it is stated that believers may pray for the guidance of idolaters but not for forgiveness in the case of persistent idolatry, as associating partners with God (*shirk*) is considered an unforgivable sin if not repented of [24].Further, Quran instruct Muslims to strive and struggle (jihad) until resistance to faith ends and people acknowledge the sovereignty of Allah.[25] Within Islamic theology, this striving is understood as a duty to uphold the truth of God's message.

Islam encourages conversion into the faith; however, conversion away from Islam is regarded as apostasy (*ridda*), a grave sin in traditional jurisprudence, historically punishable by death [26]. All three Abrahamic religions: Jewish, Christian and Islam believe in exclusive monotheism, Scriptural injunctions and conversion. By contrast Indian concept of Dharma is contrastingly different.

Semantic distortion and Faulty Indology

When European scholars began studying India during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they approached it from within a Judeo-Christian intellectual framework. Their understanding of "religion" had been formed by long theological traditions of the Church and the Bible. For them, religion meant belief in a personal God, revealed scripture, ordained clergy, organised worship, and a community of believers distinct from non-believers.

Naturally, when these scholars encountered Sanskrit terms such as *Dharma*, *Veda*, or *Sanātana Dharma*, they interpreted them through their own categories. They assumed that Dharma was equivalent to "the Hindu religion," the Vedas were "scriptures" comparable to the Bible, and Indian sages were "priests." This was not a neutral act of translation; it was a conceptual imposition, an attempt to fit Indian categories into the familiar grammar of Western theology.

The early British Orientalists, Sir William Jones, H. H. Wilson, Max Muller, and Monier Williams played a decisive role in shaping what later came to be called "Hinduism." Their intellectual tools and assumptions were deeply influenced by Judeo-Biblical thought.

Max Muller, while editing the Sacred Books of the East series, repeatedly referred to Sanātana Dharma as the "Hindu Religion" and argued that, like Christianity, it possessed "sacred books" and "founders."[27]. In doing so, he converted a philosophical and civilizational tradition into a system of faith comparable to the Abrahamic religions.

Similarly, Monier Williams, described Hinduism as "a religion"[28]. By doing so, he implied that it belonged to the same conceptual class as Christianity or Islam. James Mill, in his *History of British India* and later T. W. Rhys Davids, used the category of

"religion" for classifying Indian philosophical systems for both colonial administration and missionary comparison.[29,30] Through such classification, India's diverse but philosophically same schools of philosophy were grouped Orthodox (*Astika*) and Unorthodox (*Nastika*) Darshanas [31]. This simplification served more an imperial strategy to divide than intellectual convenience. Many of these early Indologists were not merely linguists or historians; they were also missionaries and theologians with underlying motive of religious conversion. Bishop George Cotton and Alexander Duff, for instance, regarded Dharma as a false religion in need of correction through Christianity. William Paton writes that "Duff was essentially a man of spiritual ambition, and he had come to India intending to assail the very system of Hinduism itself." And "Duff believed he saw the way to weaken and, in the end, destroy Hinduism itself. As he put it himself, he wanted to prepare a mine which should one day explode beneath the very citadel of Hinduism." **32**

In the Preface to *Brahmanism and Hinduism*, Monier-Williams explicitly declared that his work was intended 'to be in the hands of every missionary and every inquirer among the natives of India whose faith in their own religion has been sapped by our secular education,' [33]

Such works, though academically impressive, were written with a conversionist purpose. They portrayed Indian spirituality as confused polytheism or moral relativism, ignoring the profound philosophical depth of Dharma as the cosmic and ethical order. The result was what philosopher Wilhelm Halbfass later termed a "hermeneutical distortion", a translation not merely of words, but of entire worldviews, he stated " European interpretations of India are not simply translations of Indian words and ideas; they are reinterpretations that involve a transformation of the Indian

concepts into the framework of European thought. Such interpretations are, to a large extent, hermeneutical distortions." and again he writes "The encounter between India and Europe is not only a meeting of two traditions but a process of mutual interpretation that has often been one-sided and distorted by the dominance of the European conceptual scheme." [34]. The Western scholar thus became both interpreter and judge, and the Indian tradition was reshaped in his image.

Similarly, in the twentieth century, Marxist historians and sociologists such as D. D. Kosambi, A. R. Desai, and Irfan Habib approached India through the framework of historical materialism. For them, religion was not a universal spiritual principle but an ideological instrument created by material conditions and social power relations. Within this framework, Dharma ceases to be a principle of universal order or ethical harmony; it becomes part of a superstructure resting upon an economic base. The spiritual dimension is dismissed as ideology, and moral law becomes a reflection of class interest. Thus, the Marxist interpretation, though critical of colonial biases, commits a similar reduction, it translates philosophy into sociology and metaphysics into materialism, without grasping that Dharma operates at the metaphysical and ethical levels beyond class struggle.

The Analytic Problem

The analytical philosopher Gilbert Ryle famously described a category mistake as assigning a concept to a logical category to which it does not belong.[35] From the standpoint of analytical philosophy, the confusion between Dharma and Religion arises from a category mistake. The two belong to different conceptual orders. Saying Dharma is a religion is like saying mathematics is a belief system or calling "gravity" a "faith." Translating Dharma as religion commits precisely this kind of error. Religion, as

understood in Western philosophy and theology, is theological and institutional, whereas Dharma is ontological and ethical. It operates at the level of universal law rather than sectarian belief.

From a Rylean perspective, the confusion between Dharma and Religion is a category mistake. To call Dharma a religion is like calling "justice" a building or "mathematics" a faith. Dharma operates at the level of cosmic order and moral principle; Religion operates at the level of personal belief and social institution.

Wittgenstein and the Grammar of Concepts

Ludwig Wittgenstein in his Philosophical Investigations, observed that "the meaning of a word is its use in the language." [36] Every philosophical term, he argued, belongs to a language game, a network of practices, forms of life, and implicit rules that give words their sense.

Applying this insight, the term Religion belongs to the Western theological language game, in which key concepts such as "faith," "salvation," "revelation," and "God" derive their meaning from a history rooted in Judeo-Christian experience. By contrast, Dharma belongs to the Sanskrit cosmological-ethical language game, where meaning arises from concepts such as ṛta (order), *dharma* (Duty) *karma* (action), and *mokṣa* (liberation).

Quine and the Indeterminacy of Translation

The American philosopher W. V. O. Quine, in Word and Object**,** argued that translation between languages built upon different conceptual schemes is indeterminate, there is no single, correct mapping of meanings from one to another. He maintained that words gain their sense not from dictionary equivalence but from their place within a broader web of beliefs that constitutes a language community's conceptual framework. He argued that translation between languages with different conceptual schemes is

often indeterminate, there is no single, correct mapping of meanings from one to another. Words derive their sense not from dictionary equivalence but from the web of beliefs within which they function.[38]

Applying Quine's thesis, the translation of Dharma as "religion" is a paradigmatic case of indeterminacy. In Sanskrit, *Dharma* interlocks with *ṛta*, *dharma*, karma, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*. In English, religion connects with faith, salvation, sin, and church. The two webs of belief are structurally non-isomorphic. To translate Dharma as "religion" is not to translate but to transform, it forcibly recasts a rational-ethical law into a creedal-theological concept.

As Wilhelm Halbfass notes, such translations "do not merely convey meaning; they impose the structure of the translator's culture upon the translated term." [38.] The outcome, in the Indian case, was the Westernization of the Indic vocabulary of thought, leading to phrases like "Hindu Religion" or "Indian Religions," which are absent in the Sanskrit sources[39].

Philosophical Implications

The philosophical implications of distinguishing Dharma from religion are threefold:

1. Ontological: Dharma is the law of being, self-existent and eternal.
2. Epistemological: It is knowable through reason, experience, and revelation harmonised.
3. Ethical: It governs conduct through harmony, not obedience.

In this synthesis, Dharma unites *satya* (truth), *ṛta* (law), and *śreyas* (goodness) into one integral reality. Religion, by contrast, separates belief from knowledge and morality from metaphysics. Understanding this difference is not merely academic, it is

civilizational. It allows us to interpret India's spiritual heritage not as a "religion" among others, but as a philosophical vision of life grounded in the order of existence itself.

Implications for Indian Secularism

The colonial translation of *Sanātana Dharma* as "Hindu religion" did not remain a linguistic misunderstanding; it produced enduring legal and political consequences. Under the influence of colonial amnesia and a myopic vision the comprehensive, all-embracing, and universal world view of Dharma was replaced with narrower and dogmatic concept of religion. The Constitution of India, was drafted under strong Western influence and framework, adopted the idea of "freedom of religion." In doing so, it ironically replaced the indigenous idea of freedom of Dharma with that of religious liberty. Article 25 of the Indian Constitution guarantees "freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise, and propagate religion." Yet the very framing of this article presupposes that Indian traditions are religions in the Abrahamic sense, centred on belief, worship, and conversion.

Western secularism arose from the conflict between the Church and the State, aiming to separate religious authority from political power. India, however, never had a "Church." Here, spiritual authority and political rule functioned separately but shared a common moral foundation in Dharma. Therefore, the Indian idea of secularism is not Sarva-Dharma-Sambhāva (because Dharma is one, not many), but Sarva-Pantha or Matha-Sambhāva (equal respect for all religions)

In ancient Indian thought, governance was never secular in the Western sense of being separate from ethics or spirituality. The king was not a priest but a *Dharmika Rājā*, one who ruled according to *Rājadharma*, the moral law of governance. The ruler was expected

to uphold justice even at personal cost, seeing his power as a trust for the welfare of all beings. A shining example of this ideal is *Manu Neethi Cholan*, the legendary Chola king renowned for his uncompromising commitment to justice. It is said that when a cow rang the royal bell seeking justice for her calf killed under the wheels of the prince's chariot, the king, to uphold Dharma, ordered the same punishment upon his own son. This tale, cherished in Tamil tradition, symbolises the supreme principle that *Rājadharma* stands above personal attachment, and that true sovereignty lies in moral integrity.

The State was never "religious" but always Dharmic, rooted in righteousness, impartiality, and the welfare of all beings (*sarvabhūta-hita*). The ideal ruler was one who embodied compassion and justice without discrimination. The story of *Sibi Rāja* beautifully illustrates this spirit. When a dove sought refuge in his lap, pursued by a hawk, the king offered his own flesh to the bird of prey to protect the life of the weaker creature. This act of supreme self-sacrifice became a timeless symbol of *Rājadharma*, the readiness to give oneself for the protection of the innocent and the preservation of Dharma.

Thus, when the modern Indian Constitution replaced this Dharmic model with a Western concept of "secularism," it preserved the vocabulary of neutrality but not its civilisational meaning. What was once moral and social became "religious.

The "religious" classification of Dharma has Fragmented Indian civilizational unity, Articles 26 to 30 of the Indian constitution play a vital role in fragmenting the society. Article 26 guarantees freedom to manage religious affairs (to Non-Hindus). Article 27 exempted Non-Hindus from paying taxes. Article 28. (1) states that No religious instruction shall be provided in any educational institution wholly maintained out of State funds

whereas it empowered institutions under minority status to impart religious instructions. The Article 30 guarantees all minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice, making any law providing for the compulsory acquisition of any property of an educational. institution established and administered by a minority. These divisive policies and privileges extended to minority groups, along with non-governmental control allured the Dharmic sects to distance themselves from Hinduism. Hindu sects to escape from the clutches of government control and enjoy the privileges granted to minority groups started appealing the courts to declare themselves as non-Hindus. Arya Samaj to request the Delhi High Court to accord the status of a minority religion [40]. Ramakrishna Mission itself petitioned the Calcutta High Court in 1980 to get Ramakrishnaism recognized as a non-Hindu religion. Brahmo Samaj initially aimed to reform Hindu society and rituals, it later evolved into a distinct religious community with its own beliefs and practices [41]. In the year 2000, the Akhila Bharatha Veerashaiva Mahasabha in Karnataka started a campaign for recognition of "Veerashaivas or Lingayats" as a non-Hindu religion, arguing that their monotheistic beliefs and distinct religious practices set them apart from mainstream Hinduism [42].

Conclusion

This inquiry began with a simple yet profound question, Is Dharma a religious concept? Behind this question lay centuries of misunderstanding. The confusion was not merely linguistic or cultural; it was ontological, born of an attempt to understand a universal law of being through the narrow lens of belief.

Analytical philosophy helped clarify this error. Ryle exposed the logical misplacement, Wittgenstein pointed to the misuse of linguistic grammar, and Quine revealed the indeterminacy of

translation. Yet the true corrective lies in Indian philosophy, which recognises that Dharma belongs to the domain of being and becoming, it is ṛta, and dharma that sustains existence. Religion, by contrast, belongs to the domain of belief and identity. When Dharma is confined within religion, its universality is lost; when restored to its rightful place, it becomes the invisible foundation upon which justice, peace, and progress stand.

The task today is not to reject modernity but to harmonize it with the Dharmic vision, where knowledge, ethics, and governance form a single continuum. A Dharmic Bharat is not a religious state but a moral civilisation, guided by truth, compassion, and conscience.

In an age marked by ecological imbalance, ideological extremism, and moral exhaustion, humanity stands in need of what India has long cherished, a law of harmony that transcends sect and creed. Globally, Dharma offers what the modern world seeks: a universal ethic rooted in reality, not dogma.

For the unity of Dharmic traditions, cultural cohesion, and universal well-being, it is imperative to restore Dharma to its rightful, uncontaminated place. It offers spirituality without sectarianism and morality without coercion. When nations act in the spirit of Dharma, peace arises naturally, as truth in action. When humanity once again lives by Dharma, peace will cease to be a dream and become the natural order of existence.

It is upon that eternal Dharma that a *Viksit Bharat*, an enlightened, strong, and compassionate India must rise once again to guide the world toward peaceful and harmonious living, reclaiming her rightful place as the *Vishwa guru* (World Teacher), not through power, but leading humanity through wisdom and spreading the light of peace.

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A SYSTEMATIC ANALYSIS OF *TARKA* IN THE *NYĀYA* COGNITIVE FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

This paper examines the crucial role of tarka (hypothetical argument) within the epistemological framework of the Nyāya philosophical school of thought, arguing that it is one of the mechanisms that makes their theory of parataḥprāmāṇya (extrinsic validity of knowledge) a robust structure. The *Nyāya*claim that the validity of a cognition is not self-evident and that necessitates an external process for confirmation, especially when confronted with doubt and erroneous cognitions. This analysis posits how tarka plays the validator role in that process. The paper will systematically differentiate the cognitive states of *saṃśaya*(doubt) as thecognition having contradictory substitution, *bhrama*(error) as a state of misapprehension, and *tarka* as the active, procedural resolution for dispelling specific doubts (*vyabhicārasaṃkā*). Sketching on recent scholarship that illustrates tarka as a "cognitive validator" and a form of "reflective analysis," this paper will systematically demonstrate how tarka functions as a logical tool of falsification, consolidating a thesis by revealing the absurdity of its key entrant. Ultimately, the paper argues that the Nyāya model of tarka remains highly relevant, providing a sophisticated framework for critical thinking and scientific reasoning.

Keywords: Nyāya Philosophy, *Tarka*, A priori, A posteriori, Content and Form

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Introduction

How do we become certain of what we know? While many philosophical traditions assume that truth is an intrinsic property of a valid cognition, the *Nyāya*school of classical Indian philosophy offers a compellingly counter-intuitive alternative. The *Naiyāyikas* champion the doctrine of *parataḥprāmāṇya*, the view that the validity (*prāmāṇya*) of any piece of knowledge must be ascertained extrinsically (*parataḥ*), through a subsequent cognitive act. This position immediately raises a critical question: if knowledge is not self-validating, what is the mechanism that provides this external confirmation and moves the cognisorfrom a state of uncertainty to one of firm conviction? This paper argues that the answer lies in a nuanced understanding of *tarka*, a form of hypothetical or counterfactual reasoning. *Tarka* is not an independent source of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) but rather its indispensable assistant—an auxiliary cognitive tool (*anugrāhaka*) whose primary function is to dispel the doubts that obstruct the path to certainty. While scholars have long analysedtarka, this paper will focus specifically on how its function makes the theory of extrinsic validity coherent. We will demonstrate that tarka is not designed to combat a general, abstract *scepticism*, but to resolve specific, counterfactual, situational doubts that arise in the course of knowledge acquisition.

Building on the process, the analysis will proceed in three parts. First, it will establish a clear conceptual distinction between three crucial cognitive states: *saṃśaya*(doubt), the state of cognitive uncertainty that necessitates extrinsic validation; *bhrama/viparyaya* (error), the state of possibility for acquiring certainty-*tarka*, can also be known as the active, dynamic process of resolving doubt. Second, it will provide clear overview of *Nyāya* methodology to understand the dynamism of *Nyāya* philosophy and how within the methodological structure tarka plays a pivotal role. Third, drawing

on the work of recent scholars like Guha, who frames tarka as a "cognitive validator," and Kang, who identifies its essence as "reflective analysis," we will analysehow *tarka* operates pragmatically to strengthen a claim by invalidating its most relevant alternative. Finally, the paper will explore the contemporary significance of the *tarka* model, suggesting its relevance for modern theories of critical thinking and scientific reasoning. Let us first very briefly understand how *Nyāya* conceptualize the nature of *saṃśaya* (doubt)and *viparyaya*(error).

The Nature of *Saṃśaya* (doubt) and *Viparyaya* (illusion) following *Nyāya*

When a person used to say that "I have doubt about it", it means that the person does not agree with the nature of something, only because he has some knowledge about it. That is why if somebody used to say about the nature of the same particular as otherwise, then one has doubt about the real nature of that particular. But the specialty about doubt is that it seeks to arrive at a true cognition about the concerned particular. Following *Nyāya-sūtra*(1.1.23) define *saṃśaya* (doubt) as - *samānanekadharmaupapattivipratipattirupadhvanupalabdhavyavasthātascaviśeṣāpekṣavimarśasaṁśaya*, (Chattopadhyaya & Gangopadhyaya, 1967, p.92) that is, doubt isthe contradictory cognition about the same objects which is determined by the recognition of distinct characteristics of each of these, i.e. the object has common features, unique characteristics, conflicting judgments about the same object, irregularity of the apprehension, irregularity of the non-apprehension (Ibid., p.92).On the other hand, illusion is the distortion of an object. In other words, it is misrepresentation of an object and completely reverse to the valid cognition of an object. For instance, in 'the apprehension of snake in a rope' the knowledge of snake in a rope is completely invalid to acquire true cognition

about what the person intends to acquire. Therefore, illusion is the representation of a particular which does not belong to it the way it has to acquire. Hence, the difference between doubt and illusion is that doubt helps to arrive at a certain conclusion of a particular object, but illusion cannot help acquire any kind of true cognition of a fact. On the other hand, doubt is the positive method of acquiring true cognition of something, whereas *viparyaya* or illusion gives us completely false knowledge about something.

A Gateway to *Nyāya* Methodology

Nyāya is derived from the root √*ni*, which means "to lead" or "to guide." Thus, *Nyāya* refers to the study that leads to right knowledge. The word *Nyāya* also conveys the sense of what is right or just. Therefore, one may say that *Nyāya* is the science of reasoning or true knowledge. According to Sinha and *Vidyābhūṣaṇa*, "*Nyāya*, signifying logic, is therefore etymologically identical with *nigamana*, the conclusion of a syllogism" (Jha, 2005) It is also known as *hetu-vidyā* or *hetu-śāstra*, meaning the science of causes, and as *anvīkṣikī*[1], the science of inquiry, or *pramāṇa-śāstra*, the science of valid knowledge. In other words, *Vātsyāyana* defined the nature of *Nyāya* in his *Bhāṣya* as follows:

"*Nyāya* is the examination of an object with the help of the instruments of valid knowledge (*pramāṇas*). The inference which is not contradicted by perception and scripture is called *anvīkṣā*, that is, the 'knowing over again' (*anu*—after + *īkṣā*—seeing) of that which is already known through perception and scripture. This branch of knowledge is called *Ānvīkṣikī* or *Nyāya-vidyā* or *Nyāya-śāstra*, because it is propagated for the discussion of *anvīkṣā*. The perception that is contradicted by either perception or scripture is pseudo-*Nyāya*." (Chattopadhyaya &Gangopadhyaya, 1967, p. 13)

Thus, *Nyāya*is concerned with correct thinking, and its methodological task is to acquire valid knowledge through proper

reasoning. For this reason, *Nyāya* is also called *tarka-śāstra*, the science of reasoning. It is often used synonymously with syllogism and is therefore considered the science of inference. *Nyāya* philosophy follows a logical structure of analysis for attaining true cognition, which involves three stages: *Uddeśya* (enunciation), *Lakṣaṇa* (definition), and *Parīkṣā* (examination). *Uddeśya* presupposes the desire to cognise a particular object, referring to each object to be analysed by name. This stage is primary and necessary because no discussion will proceed without marking the subject of controversy. *Lakṣaṇa*, or the definition, is the statement possessing distinctive qualities which belongs only to the thing defined and to none else. Through distinguishing features, the knower assesses whether the object is relevant or necessary. According to Uddyotkara, the definition is for demarcating a particular object from another object. He further asserts that every true definition must mention the distinguishing feature (*lakṣaṇa*) of the object to be defined (*lakṣya*) and every true definition must be free from three defects: *avyāpti* (being too narrow), *ativyāpti* (being too wide) and asambhab (impossibility). *Parīkṣā* involves critical evaluation through which one arrives at a categorical judgement about the true nature of an object. *Parīkṣā* or examination is the ascertainment of a definition. The examination is done with the help of *pramāṇas* and *tarka*. This stage is crucial, as the examination leads to the establishment of knowledge that others can share and follow.

Diving deep into the Nyaya dialectical reasoning, the paper will further bring the *Naiyāyikas*' three forms of debate (*kathā*), that is, *vāda*, *jalpa* and *vitandā*, in the beginning to provide a clear outset of dialectical debate. In addition, the study will provide a detailed discussion on *Tarka* as an auxiliary to *pramāṇa* (instrument of valid knowledge) to strengthen the *Nyāya* position of dialectic. Let us

first understand the three forms of debate (*kathā*), how they proceed through cleverer and structured (tantrayukti) debates and argumentation between rivals. *Kathā* is a dialogue between the propagator and the refuter.

Vatsyayana in his commentary on *Nyāya-sūtra* 1.2.1, emphasises that katha is divided into two kinds of debates: *vāda* (the good-*sandhayasambhasa*) on the one hand and *jalpa* and vitanda (*vigrahasambhasa*) on the other hand. Vada is an honest, peaceful, and good-natured debate between two people with the same merits, both parties intending to explore the multidimensionality of the subject matter and provide judgment on what is true to the subject matter. Depending on the spirit, it may be viewed as a candid, friendly discussion or a debate, 'let's be seated and discuss'. Following *Nyāya-sūtra* 1.2.1, *vādaḥ* has defined as – "*pramāṇa-tarka-sādhana-upālambhaḥsiddhānta-aviruddhaḥpañcā-avayava-upapannapakṣa-pratipakṣa-parigrahaḥvādaḥ*" (Ibid, p. 127). *Vāda* is (the form of debate in which the two contestants) 'upholds the thesis and antithesis' (*pakṣa-pratipakṣa-parigrahaḥ*) by substantiation (*sādhana*) and refutation (*upālambha*) with the help of *pramāṇa*-s and *tarka*, 'without being contradicted by proved doctrine' (*siddhāntaaviruddhaḥ*) and 'employing the five inference components' (*pañcā*-avayava-upapanna) (Ibid., p. 127).

Unlike in *vāda*, the purpose of *jalpa* is not to ascertain the truth, but to establish one's own view, defeating the opponent. Precisely, we may consider the aim of *jalpa* to be to make the opponent accept defeat. In *Nyāya-sūtra* 1.2.2 *Jalpa* is defined as- "*yathokta-upapannaḥchala-jāti-nigrahasthāna-sādhana-upalambhaḥjalpaḥ*" (Ibid., p. 127). *Jalpa* is a form of debate 'characterised by all the features as previously said' (yathokta-*upapannaḥ*) (i.e. by all the features mentioned in the previous *sutra* defining *vāda*), where substantiation and refutation are affected through *chala-jāti* and (all

the forms of) *nigrahasthāna* (*chala-jāti-nigrahasthāna-sādhana-upalambhaḥ*) -(over and above) (Ibid., p. 130). In *jalpa*, everyone's target is to win the debate by fair or foul means. What is at stake here is that everyone is holding their school of thought, and by any means, they need to protect the prestige and honour of their school.

Vitandā or cavil is the worst type of argument or squabbling that descends to the level of quarrel and trickery. This type of argument is known as a destructive form of argument, where the sole aim is not just to defeat the opponent, but also to demolish and humiliate them. *Vitaṇḍā* has been defined in *Nyāya-sūtra* 1.2.3 as – "*sah-pratipakṣa-sthāpana-hīnaḥvitaṇḍā*" (Ibid., p. 132) – 'this (i.e. *jalpa* mentioned in the previous *sutra*) becomes *vitandā* when the 'opponent has no care for establishing any thesis of his own' (*pratipakṣa-sthāpana-hīnaḥ*)' (Ibid., p. 132).

Significance of the Role of Tarka in Kathā

The *Nyāya-sūtra* outlines the three forms of debate (kathā) in which *tarka* is applied in various ways. The goal of *vāda* is to find truth (tattvajñāna), and tarka is explicitly enumerated as a tool for substantiation and refutation (*sādhana* and *upālambha*) along with*pramāṇa*.In this case, *tarka* played the role of an *anugrāhaka* (auxiliary), assisting both sides to get rid of their doubts and come to a sound conclusion. However, the debate known as *jalpa* and *vitandā* where the goal shifts from truth to victory in a more adversarial manner. In *jalpa*, *tarka* is used to show how an opponent's arguments become wrong through *aniṣṭaprasaṅga* (imposing an absurdity) and eventually forcing them into a *nigrahasthāna* (point of defeat).Finally, in *vitandā*, the *vaitaṇḍika*, who does not seek to establish a positive thesis, relies on *tarka,* and the role played by tarkais purely destructive so that one side canundermine the proponent's position. Thus, *tarka* is the versatile

and indispensable tool of reasoning that drives all three forms of *Nyāya* dialectic, whether the aim is truth-seeking or competitive refutation.

Defining the Nature of Tarka

Nyāya-sūtra-1.1.40, defines *tarka* as *avijñāta-tattveharthekāraṇopapattitastattvajñānārthamūhastarkaḥ*

that means "hypothetical argument' (*tarka*) is a form of deliberation (*ūha*) for determining the specific nature of 'an object whose real nature is yet to be known' (*a-vijñāta-tattve-arthe*) by pointing out the real grounds [for it]"(Ibid., p. 121). The word *tarka* is used in various senses. However, as one of the sixteen categories enumerated by Gautama, it carries a technical sense. It means a form of deliberation (*ūha*) which acts as an accessory to a *pramāna*, without itself being a *pramāna*. The purpose of such a deliberation is the attainment of 'the right knowledge of an object' (*tattva-jñānā*). How can it lead to such knowledge? Because it points to the real grounds or proof in favour of the knowledge. But what is the nature of the object for which such a deliberation is appreciated? It has relevance for an object that is known in general but whose specific nature is not yet known.The question of such a deliberation does not arise in the case of an object which is completely unknown or the specific nature of which is already determined. Let us examine the model of *tarka* in detail.

Regarding an object the specific nature of which is not yet known, there arises an enquiry in the form: I should like to know it [i.e. its specific nature]. In respect of the object thus enquired, one separately considers [the possibility of] two contradictory characteristics [as belonging to it]: is this its specific nature? Or is its specific nature, not this? The enquirer ultimately ascertains one of the two characteristics thus doubted by way of providing proof

[in its favour], i.e. because there is ground or proof or justification in favour of this alternative. Based on the instances, it convinces one position as there is enough proof in favour of this alternative, and ascertained that the object must be of such nature and not otherwise. Here is the example.

The enquiry takes the form: I should like to know the exact nature of the knower that cognises the various objects known. The doubt takes the form: Is this (knower) of the nature of something produced or of something not produced? One then asserts the specific characteristic in favor of which one finds definite ground in respect of the object [the specific nature of which is] doubted and the specific nature of which is unknown. [The assertion takes the following form] only when the knower is of the nature of something not produced [i.e., is eternal], it can enjoy the fruits of its own action [i.e., can enjoythe pleasure or pain resulting from the action of its previous births]. Further, of suffering, birth, activity, evil and false knowledge-each of the succeeding one causes the preceding one and on the removal of each succeeding one is removed the immediately preceding one, thus ultimately resulting in liberation. In this way there can be worldly existence and liberation [only on the assumption that the knower is of the nature of something not produced]. On the assumption that the knower is of the nature of something produced, there can be [no explanation of] worldly existence and liberation. If the knower is viewed as something produced, it will have to be considered as being conjoined with body, senses, mind and awareness [only] at the moment it is produced and hence this [connection with body etc.] will not be the result of its own previous action. When something is produced, it is produced not as something previously existing and hence there can be no enjoyment of the fruits of the knower's own action which are non-existing or completely destroyed. On the same ground, the

same knower cannot have connection with various bodies [in its different births] nor can it have absolute cessation of connection with body [during liberation]. The alternative, for which no adequate ground is ascertained, is not asserted. Deliberation of this nature is known as *tarka*.

Why is *tarka* considered as an accessory to right knowledge and not right knowledge as such? Because it does not [by itself] establish [one of the alternatives] definitely, it simply asserts one of the characteristics by pointing to the real grounds but does not [by itself] ascertain or establish or demonstrate in the form: the object must be of such nature.How then can it be an accessary to true knowledge? It can be an accessary to true knowledge because such a deliberation, by asserting the grounds in favour of true knowledge [i.e. in favour of the correct alternative], strengthens the efficacy of the instrument of valid knowledge [and from this enhanced efficacy] results right knowledge. *Tarka*, which thus is an accessary to the instrument of valid knowledge, is mentioned in the *sutra* defining *vada* (*Nyāya-sūtra*-1.1.42) conjointly with *pramāna*, because it lends support to *pramāna*. In the expression 'an object whose real nature is yet to be known' (*avijñāta-tattve-arthe*), 'real nature' (*tattva*) means the identity of the object as it is rather than its contrary, i.e., its absolute sameness.

Vacaspati Misra, however, points out that an enquiry into the exact nature of an object takes place after there is doubt as to its exact nature, though there are cases of doubt following the enquiry, in which cases alone *tarka* has its efficacy. Accordingly, Vatsyayana says that enquiry is followed by doubt, which is settled by *tarka*. We have seen how Gautama introduced the concept of *tarka* and provided a precise definition (*lakṣaṇa*) for it. Following Gautama *Nyāya-sūtra* (1.1.40) Vatsyayana provides the definition of *tarka*. According to him, *tarka* is a form of reasoning employed

to address a certain type of uncertainty or doubt. If we have knowledge of an object based on its general characteristics but are unable to resolve any doubts due to its special nature (*viśeṣadharma*), we can use *tarka* to address the uncertainty. In Western logic, this type of reasoning is referred to as *reductio ad absurdum*. It involves establishing the statement 'p' by demonstrating the contradiction that arises from assuming 'not-p'. *Tarka* eliminates a particular type of uncertainty regarding an object, but it does not render the object unquestionable; rather, it ensures its certainty in terms of verification. Therefore, *tarka* can result in a cognitive state where it becomes possible to construct a logical argument to support the inherent characteristics of an object. By making this statement, we might infer that in the instance of *tarka*, one can argue that while disproving the contradiction of an item, we are not asserting the object's nature as certain but rather suggesting that it is likely. Therefore, *tarka* is not considered the ultimate truth but rather a means to reach an inevitable conclusion and is viewed as *apramā*.

Furthermore, through a detailed illustration, Vātsyāyana provides an assumption to clarify how we should recognize *tarka*. If, for a specific reason, we doubt the non-eternal character of the self, then any valid methods we possess to understand the self are insufficient in justifying its inherent eternal nature. Nevertheless, as a result of the inherent characteristics of the mind (*manas*), we inevitably engage in the process of scrutinizing the notion of self (*ātman*). If we assume that the body is formed as a consequence of the *ātman*, then we must also acknowledge that achieving self-liberation would be unattainable. Without the '*karmaphala*' (fruits of previous actions), the birth of the *ātman* cannot occur. This implies that the self is perishable and cannot attain liberation. Therefore, to elucidate the true nature of the self, we can provide

pramāṇa (evidence) to justify why the *ātman* is beyond creation and imperishable, affirming its eternal nature. This can be achieved through the use of *tarka* (reasoning). Here, *tarka* serves to justify the position of the self as eternal, addressing and removing the specific doubt that arose earlier. *Vātsyāyana* clearly states that the role *tarka* plays is *anugrāhaka*, meaning that *tarka*, depending on a particular means of valid knowledge, helps us arrive at a conclusion. Precisely, *tarka* removes a specific kind of doubt about an object and does not render the object indubitable in terms of ascertainment. Instead, *tarka* may lead to a cognitive state where it becomes possible to establish an argument justifying an object's nature. In this context, *tarka* disproves contradictions concerning the object, not by asserting the object's nature as inevitable but by suggesting its probability (Tarkavāgīśa, 2006, p.220). Similar interpretation of the nature of *tarka* is also found in the *Bhagavad Gītā* (15/15) with the phrase "*mattaḥsmṛtirjñānamapohanaṃ ca*". In this context, *BhāṣyakāraRāmānuja* interprets "*apohana*" similarly to how *Gautama* uses "*ūhan*" and "*ūha*". *Vātsyāyana's* illustration of *tarka* is supported by *Rāmānuja*, who elucidates,

"*ŪhanamidaṃpramāṇamithyaṅpravarttiturmahartitiPramāṇapravṛtyarhtaprayojakasāmagrādinirūpaṇajanyaṃpramāṇānugrāhakaṃjñānaṃ*". Additionally, *VeṅkaṭanāthaVedāntācārya* in *Nyāya Pariśuddhi* and *Śrīnivāsācāryalakṣmaṇācārya* in *Nyāya Sāra* (*Chowkhambā*) provide the same illustration as *Rāmānuja*. (Tarkavāgīśa, 2006, p.220)

However, there are varying opinions on the nature of *tarka*. Some argue that it is synonymous with *saṁśayajñāna* (doubt), while others contend it is akin to *nirṇaya* (final ascertainment). Even *Vaisesikācārya Prasastapada* does not include any knowledge as '*tarka*' or '*uha*'; rather, they include it under the *anumānapramāna* (in inference) (Ibid., p.221). Udyotkara

vehemently disagreed with all other viewpoints on *tarka* and proposed that Gautama's explanation of the nature of *tarka* is different from *saṁśaya* and *nirnaya*. This is why Gautama includes the notion of *tarka* as a distinct category. Alternative perspectives propose that *tarka* can be seen as *sambhāvana* — the rationale for labelling *tarka* as *sambhāvana* is to emphasise that it is closely related to *saṁśaya*. But *Naiyāikas*do not accept any knowledge of the name *sambhāvana*. They even think that having the knowledge of the *tarka*, the mind, does not propel us to a state of indecision or doubt. Vatsyayana elucidates the manner in which *tarka* eradicates uncertainty and facilitates the acquisition of true knowledge. While *tarka* alone does not provide absolute certainty, it improves the effectiveness of the tool of reliable knowledge and eliminates doubt, allowing the tool to accurately determine the true nature of an object. Hence, the knowledge of the *tarka* can never be the same as the *saṁśaya*. Let us now understand the nature and characteristics of *tarka* and the essence of *tarka* in detail. Udayanacarya in *Tātparyapariśuddhi* provided the nature of *tarka* as – "*sāsya ca svarūpa-maniṣṭhā-prasaṅgyaiti*" (Ibid., p. 221) and Varadaraja in *Tārkikarakṣā* defines *tarka* as –

tarko 'niṣṭa-prasaṅgyaḥsyādāniṣṭaṃdvividhaṃsmṛtam|
prāmāṇika-parityāgaḥsvatvetyaparigrahaḥ ||(Ibid., p. 221)

Udayanacarya and Varadaraja both define *tarka* as *aniṣṭaprasaṅga*, which is, in essence, an argument that forces the other side to acknowledge "the illogical" (*anista*)(Gautama &Vātsyāyana, 1967, p. 123).*Anista*, or the illogical, can be defined as either accepting the unverified or rejecting what has been thoroughly demonstrated. For example, if someone claims that water cannot slake one's thirst, someone will argue that no one who is thirsty should consume water. However, since it is well-established that drinking water can quench one's thirst, this will be an admission of illogical. It will be argued that drinking water

should induce internal burning as well, if someone continues to claim that water causes burning inside. However, since there is no proof that water may induce internal burning, this will be an acknowledgment of the illogical.

The adherents of *Navya-nyāya* interpret *tarka* within a rigorous framework of inferential terminology. According to their view, *tarka* involves the incorrect attribution of the pervader (*vyapaka*) due to a mistaken attribution of the pervaded (*vyapya*) in a scenario where the absence of the pervader is already confirmed. For instance, in the relationship between fire and smoke, fire is the pervader and smoke is the pervaded, and it is well established that fire does not exist in water. However, if someone incorrectly attributes smoke to water, the following *tarka* could be presented to refute this: if water contains smoke, it must also contain fire. This type of *tarka* serves a dual purpose. First, it aids in 'determining the true nature of an object' (*viṣaya-pariśodhaka*), such as establishing the absence of smoke in water. Second, it assists in 'ascertaining the invariable relationship between two terms' (*vyapti-grahaka*) by eliminating the possibility of any doubts about this relationship. For example, the possible doubt about the universal relation between smoke and fire is resolved by the *tarka* that if there were no universal relation between the two, then there would be no causal connection between them either.

In ***Tātparya-pariśuddhi*,**Udayana further divides *tarka* into five types: 1) self-reliance, or *ātmāśraya*; 2) reciprocal dependency, or *anyonyāśraya*; 3) vicious circle, or *cakrāśraya*; 4) infinite regression, or*anavasthā*; and 5) acceptance of the illogical, or *tadanyabādhitārthaprasaṅga*. However, Phanibhusana remarks that the fundamental aspect of *tarka* is the acceptance of the irrational; Udayana lists all of these forms in order to provide a thorough and in-depth comprehension of it. *Tarka* is an accessory to inference as

well as other instruments of valid knowledge, as demonstrated by Udayana, Varadaraja, Narayana Bhatta (*Mimāmsaka* author of Manameyodaya), and others. This aids in the acquisition of correct knowledge. The five types of *tarkas* mentioned by Udayana are genuine *tarkas*. There are also types of *tarkas*; the law of parsimony (*lāghava*) which in *Nyāya-sūtra-vṛtti*, Visvanatha says cannot be genuine *tarkas* since they do not involve any counterfactual imposition (*prasanga*).

Philosophers like Udayana, Varadarāja, and the Mīmāṃsaka Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa also recognised *Tarka* as auxiliary, but they refer to it for all *pramāṇas*, not just inference. They suggest the role of *tarka* for validating perceptual claims (by refuting illusory possibilities) and, crucially, verbal testimony (*śabda*). In KeśavaMiśra's*Tarkabhāsā,* he states that the necessity of *Tarka* (referred to as *vicāra* or *mīmāṃsā* itself in this context) becomes crucial for interpreting scriptures like the *Vedas*. Further, he states that for the ascertainment of the correct purport (*tātparya*), *tarka* becomes the method of eliminating alternative, incorrect interpretations (*arthāntara*) and helps in establishing the true meaning (*prakṛtārtha*). The Mīmāṃsaka use of *ūha* (reasoning/ adaptation) also aligns with the function employed by *tarka*. Implicitly, *Tarka* as *aniṣṭaprasaṅga* is a powerful tool in philosophical debate for exposing inconsistencies to the opponent's position (as seen in Buddhist *prasaṅgānumāna* or Jain logic). The emphasis of *KeśavaMiśra*'s definition of *tarka* becomes very relevant when it emphasises imposing an undesirable consequence unacceptable to both proponent and opponent. The descriptions (as inferred by Śrīdhara, included in ascertainment by Vyomaśivācārya, etc.) suggest that *tarka*, for its auxiliary function to knowledge, is widely accepted, even if various schools encounter its precise epistemological classification as debated, which also acknowledges

its importance across traditions. The Jaina definition of *tarka* is "*sakala-deśakālādi-vyavacchedenasādhyasādhana-bhāvādi-viṣayaūhas-tarkaḥ*," which means that *tarka* is a form of deliberation (*ūha*) concerning subjects that are considered true in relation to Sadhya and Sadhana across all spaces and times. For example, consider the principle that fire produces smoke. This can be deliberated as *tarka* because it holds true in all places and times (*sakala-deśakālādi-vyavacchedena*) with the relationship between *sādhya* (the effect, which is smoke) and *sādhana* (the cause, which is fire). Through *tarka*, one can reason that where there is smoke, there must be fire, consistently across various contexts.Let us now intervene into the recent scholarship that illustrates tarka as a "cognitive validator" and a form of "reflective analysis," while demonstrating how tarka functions as a logical tool of falsification by revealing the absurdity of its key entrant.

Can *Tarka* be Defined as A Priori Reasoning?

Citing B. K. Matilal, Guha (2012, p. 53) supports the view that *tarka* is an a priori principle and provides the rationale for it. Matilal (1986, p. 79) writes that *tarka* "is rather an argument where we use generally the a priori principles only, or what may be closest to the a priori principles in Indian tradition." However, Kang (2010, p. 16) disagrees with Matilal's interpretation, referring to Naiyāyikas like Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, who understood *tarka*'s core function as *viṣaya-pariśodhaka*—the clarification of the subject matter. In support of Matilal, Guha emphasises that while "a *tarka* can be applied to an epistemological content...it has got an abstract form, a schema" (Guha, 2012, p. 53).

Matilal himself seemed aware of this tension, cautiously describing *tarka* as "what may be closest to the a priori principles." This distinction is crucial as well as: what is "closest to a priori" is

not the same as "is a priori," and this is precisely why labelling the entire *tarka* process as such is problematic. To define *tarka* as a purely a priori principle is to commit a category error, mistaking its logical form for its epistemic substance. While the rules of rational consistency that *tarka* employs (e.g., 'avoid contradiction,' 'prefer economy') are a priori, the premises and the specific content it operates on are fundamentally a posteriori. Therefore, *tarka* is not a purely a priori tool but a mixed-reasoning process that applies formal principles to empirical content. To defend the a priori nature of *tarka*, Guha introduces the concept of *aniṣṭa-āpatti*, the "undesired outcome" that *tarka* brings forth. He argues that our ability to recognise these undesired factors is itself a priori. Guha writes:

"any cognizing knows a priori which factors are desired and which are undesired. Contradicting an established fact is undesired; therefore any strong *tarka* demonstrates that the assumption that has led the arguer to such a contradiction is to be denied. Conceptual profligacy or un-economy (*gaurava*) is undesired; therefore a *lāghava tarka* or an argument based on economy prefers the most economical option to the others. It seems every rational being is endowed a priori with a list of undesired things. I would argue that a priority is an important feature of *tarka*." (Guha, 2012, p. 53)

Matilal's and Guha's position has some truth to it. We can agree that the rules that decide whether an outcome is "undesired" (*aniṣṭa*) work like a priori rules. Guha posits that the notion of a contradiction being intolerable or an infinite regress constituting a theoretical deficiency appears to be a foundational principle of reason, rather than a conclusion derived from experience. This is the logical skeleton of *tarka,* which both Matilal's and Guha's support. But a logical schema is just an empty box. The capacity of *tarka* is determined by its *contents*, which are always empirical.

- The *Content* of *tarka* is always aposteriori

Tarka does not operate in a logical vacuum. Even the classic example of *tarka*— "If there were no fire, there would have been no smoke"—is a powerful argument because we have a huge body of *a posteriori* (experiential) knowledge that smoke is the product of fire. Here, the entire doubt it seeks to resolve is *vyabhicāraśaṃkā*, which is a doubt about an empirical generalisation (*vyāpti*). Both the problem (the doubt) and the set of conditions used to solve it (*karaṇasāmagrī*) are empirical. Therefore, the conclusion it validates (*vyāptigraha* through *sāmānyalakṣaṇapratyakṣa*) is also an empirical truth.

- *ViṣayaPariśodhaka* (The Clarifier of the Object)

Kang's analysis highlights that later *Naiyāyikas* like *Jayanta Bhaṭṭa* understood *tarka's* core function as *viṣayapariśodhaka*—the 'clarification of the object' or 'clarification of the subject matter.' Kang acknowledges the broader purview of *tarka* and anticipates the question: how can one 'clarify an object' using purely a priori principles? (Kang, 2010, pp. 9-11)Certainly, you cannot do so by an a priori principle. To 'clarify an object,' you must engage with its empirical content. In the case of Guha's own example, like a bare floor, the reasoning it provides— "Had there been a pot on this floor, I would have seen it"—is not an a priori truth. It is contingent on various *a* posteriorifacts: 'My eyes are working,' 'The lighting is adequate,' 'Pots are visible objects,' etc. Therefore, the function of *tarka* as a 'clarifier' demonstrates that it is an epistemic tool designated to apply an *a priori* logical rule to a set of *a posteriori* facts to reach a sound empirical conclusion.

Refutation of the "Predecided Reason"

Guha's claim that the "*tarka*-schemata are always a priori." But the very idea of the role played by tarka is that it applies to resolve a

specific doubt about an empirical observation (in other words, resolving the doubt about a specific feature of an object which is yet to be known), the *specific reason* is never predecided; it is supplied by the context.

The *form*"If P were true, then Q (an absurdity) would follow" is a priori.

- But the *content*—the "P" and the "Q"—is drawn entirely from the observational evidence. The "absurdity" is not a logical abstraction; it's a contradiction with another known empirical fact.
- This is why tarka is so flexible. Its form doesn't change, but its content is wholly dependent on the situation. This flexibility proves it is not a predecided a priori principle, but a dynamic tool for navigating empirical uncertainty.

Conclusion

Tarka, as a method of *Nyāya* philosophy, plays a crucial role in acquiring knowledge. *Tarka* is not an independent means of valid knowledge (*pramāṇa*) like perception or inference, but a crucial auxiliary (*anugrāhaka*) methodology. Its fundamental nature is described as *aniṣṭaprasaṅga* – a form of indirect reasoning that operates on the premise that an undesirable consequence would follow if a contrary position were true. It typically functions through counterfactual or hypothetical reasoning ("If X were the case, then undesirable Y would follow"). In *Nyāyasūtra* 1.1.40 Gautama defines *tarka* as "*avijñāta-tattveharthekāraṇopapattitastattvajñānārthamūhastarkaḥ*" (Ibid., p. 121) – that is ', Hypothetical argument' (*tarka*) is a form of deliberation (*ūha*) for determining the specific nature of 'an object whose real nature is yet to be known'(*a-vijñāta-tattve-arthe*) by pointing out the real grounds (for it) (Ibid., p. 121).

The *Nyāya* school, focused on its realistic encounter with logic and epistemology, provides insight into how *Tarka* functions as a cognitive validator in acquiring knowledge. Though *tarka* does not provide certain knowledge of an object, it strengthens and validates knowledge obtained through other *pramāṇas*, i.e., inference (*anumāna*). *Tarka*'s primary role is removing doubts (*saṃśaya*) that obstruct the ascertainment of truth (*tattvajñāna*). Crucially, it addresses *vyabhicāraśaṅkā* – the doubt regarding deviation in concomitance (*vyāpti*). The classic example ("If smoke were deviant from fire, it would not be produced by fire") demonstrates how *Tarka* tackles the doubt of whether smoke can exist without fire. Showing the undesirable consequence (smoke not being fire-produced, which contradicts established causal understanding) eliminates the possibility of deviation.

VyāptigrāhakaTarka (Confirming *Vyāpti*) - By systematically eliminating doubts about deviation, *Tarka* firms up the conviction in the invariable concomitance (*vyāpti*) between the proban (*hetu*) and the probandum (*sādhya*), which is the fundamental of sound inference. It does not discover *vyāpti* but confirms its universality.

ViṣayapariśodhakaTarka- *Tarka* helps ascertain the object's true nature under consideration by refuting contradictory possibilities. For instance, the *tarka* "If the mountain were fireless, it would be smokeless" helps establish the presence of fire (the object of the inference) by showing the absurdity (smokelessness) that would follow from the opposite assumption (firelessness), given the presence of smoke. *Tarka* is also understood as an internal perception (*mānasapratyakṣa*) that involves hypothetical or volitional cognition (*āhāryajñāna* or *āhāryabhrama*). This clearly states that how *tarka* is being placed in *Nyāya* logic is a very conscious attempt to seek knowledge, where one form of it is as when one intentionally assumes the contrary position to

demonstrate its untenability, even knowing the contrary is false (like assuming fire in water). This hypothetical nature distinguishes it from direct, certain knowledge claims, but this highlights its function as a testing mechanism. Through the posited components (*aṅga*) and fallacies (*tarkābhāsa*), it indicates how *Nyāya* treated *Tarka* as a structured method with specific conditions for validity and further emphasises its methodological nature.

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TAGORE'S THOUGHTS ON *MANUSHER DHARMA*: A SPIRITUAL BASIS FOR HUMANISM

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Abstract: Tagore's intellectual endeavours and spiritual quest grew under the profound influence of his father, Debendranath Tagore, and a deep connection with nature that he developed from adolescence. Then, gradually, with various turns and curves influenced by *Brahmo Dharma*, *Upanishad*, *Vaisnavism*, and *Bau*l traditions, Tagore's religious quest culminated in his concept of *Manusher Dharma*, which advocated that the religion or *Dharma* of human beings is to act as a human being. Tagore's thoughts on *Manusher Dharma* are grounded in his philosophy of Harmony and the concept of the Human Being. Tagore's understanding of the *Manusher Dharma* advocated for Humanism. Tagore's thoughts and ideas on *Manusher Dharma,* which supported Humanism, talk about human. For Tagore, transcendence enables human beings to ovvercome the narrowness of the self and realise spirituality in human life, as well as have broader implications in other aspects of human life. According to Tagore, it also helps transcend hierarchical social domination and subjugation based on religion, caste, creed, gender, ethnicity, and nationality. It allows humans to transcend various social and national hegemonies and harmonises human life as a creative whole. Thus, Tagore's philosophical understanding and religious quests strongly advocated for bringing harmony to human life and tried to actualise his understanding in his dream projects of *Santiniketan* and *Sriniketan*. Thus, the present paper intends to understand the poet's thoughts on *Manusher Dharma*, which leads to his philosophy of spiritual humanism.

Keywords: Tagore, Humanism, *Manusher Dharma*, Man, Harmony.

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I

"As I look around, I see the crumbling ruins of a proud civilisation strewn like a vast heap of futility. And yet I shall not commit the grievous sin of losing faith in Man…. A day will come when unvanquished Man will retrace his path of conquest, despite all barriers, to win back his human heritage." (Tagore, 2001a, p. 726)

At the second decade of the first half of the twentieth century, on the one hand, the world faced one devastating world war (World War I) where human existence, values, and humanity were subjugated by human greed, aggressive nationalism, ideals of imperialism and colonialism and waiting for another devastating world war (World War II) yet to come within the next few years. At the end of Tagore's life, unlike one of the great visionaries of the world, he gave us hope and belief in humanity through these lines. Tagore was a poet-philosopher who shared thoughts on various aspects of human life. Tagore's thoughts, as expressed in essays such as *Manusher Dharma* and The Religion of Man, Man among others, were significant and influential on his philosophy, particularly his thoughts on Humanism. Questions may arise, such as 'What is *Manush*?' 'What is *Dharma*?' 'What is *Manusher Dharma*?' according to Tagore. 'How is it related to Humanism?' 'Does it add something extra to the existing thoughts on Humanism?' Answers to this question will help us to understand Tagore's thoughts on *Manusher Dharma* and Humanism. Thus, the present paper intends to understand the poet's thoughts on *Manusher Dharma*, which leads to his philosophy of spiritual humanism.

II

Tagore's philosophy presented his thoughts on *Manush*, or Man, with his understanding of the evolution of human beings through history. For Tagore, the course of human evaluation was primarily preoccupied with the individual aspect - humans were fragmented beings governed by the natural instinct of survival, and thus there was a strong sense of competition among them. But the course of human history changed, and human beings shifted their focus from self-aggrandisement to the inward mind. According to Tagore, the shift of focus from individuality to the mind revealed to the human being their fulfilment in mutual cooperation and unity in the course of the evaluation. This realisation of unity comprehended to human beings a comprehensive truth- that fragmented beings cannot express the Universal Man (*Biswamanav*); instead, the unity of Man of all times can best express the Man the Universal, which is spiritual. This urge for unity among all indicates that human beings are not mere biological beings; they have something extra, which differentiates them from animals, inspiring them to transcend the boundaries of individual life. Therefore, Tagore writes:

"The aspect of Man which has surpassed the animal grows with its ideal. It is an aspiration for that which is not evident in his material world nor urgent for his individual life. it belongs to his universal self." (Tagore, 2001b, p.193)

The human urge to transcend the boundaries of the individual life to be one with the Universal Self, Tagore used the analogy of the human cell. Tagore envisioned the human body as a universe comprising millions of human cells. Each of these human cells had its own origin and end within this human body. The microscopic view would reveal that each of these cells was separated from the others. According to Tagore, on the one hand,

every single cell was distinct from others with its individuality; on the other hand, they were directed towards a mysterious unity. (Tagore, 2015, p. 622) Furthermore, Tagore argued that if the living cells of the human body had a sense of self, then, on the one hand, they would know themselves individually. On the other hand, they would know themselves as part of the whole body. However, it was impossible to know the whole body directly and entirely by feeling and imagination. Because this body is not only the present, but it has its past, waiting for its future. Another invisible substance is universal well-being, called health, which cannot be analysed. Apart from that, every living cell has a more profound effort to protect the whole life, which effort in the state of disease causes the loss of its own birth in the enemy of the whole body, just as a patriot gives his life for his country. (Tagore, 2001b, p.193) Man has also noticed the more profound efforts of his heart and felt that he is not only an individual man but a unity of global people. That great Man is motivated by that world- Man, the individual Man indulges in all activities in the face of transcending his physical limits. What he says is good, beautiful, and best - not only from the point of view of social protection, but from the point of view of complete satisfaction of his soul.

"It is the same with Man. He has observed the deeper endeavour of his own heart and felt that he is not exclusively an individual; he is also one in spirit with the universal Man, under whose inspiration the individual engages in expressing his ultimate truth through crossing nature's limitations. To these expressions he gives the name of the true, the good, the beautiful, not only from the point of view of the preservation and enrichment of society, but from the completeness of his own self." (Tagore, 2001b, p.193)

Thus, according to Tagore, human beings exist with two aspects: their individual aspect and the Universal aspect. The

individual aspect of Human beings clings to their presence and moves around the centre of their immediate need. However, the Universal aspect of a human being transcends these physicalities and adheres to the ideal. This ideal is a sincere call, a subtle instruction, to the direction where humans are not isolated but relatively complete, transcending the physical limits of the Universal Man (*Biswamanav*).

Reconciling these aspects of human beings may seem contradictory. But the fundamental dualism of the human being is the cause of this seeming contradiction. In the physical aspect of a human being, satisfying needs is sufficient for bringing happiness. However, the individual Man reaches up to the Universal Man in his heart of hearts. There, he seeks something more significant than simple contentment. He desires majesty. Humans are the only animals who lack composure; because of this, Universal Man destroys the havens of comfort that human beings construct and persistently exhorts them to build challenging designs. Reconciliation of these aspects of the human being is fundamental for human existence. Tagore called it Harmony, which is the core of Tagore's philosophy. According to Tagore, this Harmony is human truth (*Manavsatya*). For Tagore, this human truth or *Manavsatya* lies in nature (*Sabhab*). Thus Tagore writes:

"The nature of an animal conforms to its condition. Its claims never exceed what is due to it. But with Man, it is different. He puts forward claims far beyond what was due to him by nature. The portion allotted to one can be fixed, but there is no limit to the extras one may demand. Man finds sustenance for life from his allotted portion. But it is his extras that reveal his glory….Man has an inherent distrust of what is offered to his senses, what lies spread before his instincts on the surface of existence. For he himself is not superficial, he realises that deep within him there is something

which he calls truth and which is often the opposite of what seems to be the fact." (Tagore, 2001b, p.193)

III

Rabindranath Tagore expressed his religious thoughts through the journey to be one with the Universal. This journey began at a very early age, with his father, Debendranath Tagore, teaching him the Upanishad. It developed through various religious experiences and inspirations, culminating in his thoughts on the Religion of Man, also known as *Manusher Dharma*. This journey has a profound influence and importance in shaping Tagore's ideas on Religion or *Dharma*. Thus, we should first go through the development.

Tagore was born into a *Brahmo* family in the cultural milieu of reformed Hinduism in late nineteenth-century colonial Bengal. (Mukherjee, 2014) On the one hand, this family was a strong follower of nineteenth-century reformed Hinduism, introduced by Rammohan Roy and later developed by Debendranath Tagore as Brahmo *Dharma*. This movement rejected oppressive, ritualistic traditional Hinduism and concentrated on realising the Supreme Being, following the Upanishads. (Mukherjee, 2014)

On the other hand, with the influence of modern European ideas and the presence of Satyendranath Tagore and Joytindranath Tagore, who introduced progressive ideas, they became the flagbearers of the Bengal Renaissance. Tagore was brought up in an environment where he received reformative religious and progressive ideas as a familial inheritance, which profoundly influenced his early thoughts on religion. Tagore, following his family tradition, was critical of traditional ritualistic Hinduism. Even in his early twenties, Tagore became the secretary of *Adi Bramho Samaj* (1884). Thus, due to his family inheritance and the

cultural milieu of the reformed Hinduism of the late nineteenth century, he was concerned and conscious about religion. Except for a few years in the early twentieth century, Tagore maintained this position throughout his life. Plays like *Bisarjan* and letters written to Kadambini Devi, Nirjhrini Devi, Ranu Adhikari, and Hemantabala Devi trace ample evidence supporting this.

Creative geniuses like Tagore do not adhere to boundaries based on religion, sect, or creed. From his early days, Tagore experienced a close union with nature; specifically, his experience of the natural and simple village life of *Shlaidha* and *Patisa* influenced him immensely. (Basu, 2020) From this time, Tagore strongly urges one to be one with the Universal or the Supreme. This urge Tagore expressed in various letters written to Indira Devi in straightforward language. (Basu, 2020) At the turn of the new century, Tagore influenced traditional Hinduism and argued in favour of many orthodox religious and social practices. However, novels like *Gora* and plays like *Achalatyan* demonstrated, within a brief time, a deviation from institutional religious beliefs, and the poems *in Gitanjali* revealed Tagore's urge for personal religion. Therefore, it is clear that, for Tagore, religion means neither ritualistic Hinduism nor the traditional institutional religions; instead, Tagore advocated for a religion that is based on human nature because, for Tagore, *Dharma* means 'that which holds'; and in the human context, *Dharma* means 'which holds human beings together.' (Mukherjee,2014) To focus on this point, Tagore writes:

"The Sanskrit word dharma which is usually translated into English as religion has a deeper meaning in our language. Dharma is the innermost nature, the essence, the implicit truth of all things. Dharma is the ultimate purpose that works within ourselves. When any wrong is done, we say that Dharma is violated, meaning that the lie has been given to our true nature…. The higher nature in Man

always seeks for something which transcends itself and yet is its deepest truth; which claims all its sacrifice, yet makes this sacrifice its own recompense. This is Man's Dharma, Man's religion, and Man's self is the vessel which is to carry this sacrifice to the altar." (Tagore, 2001c, pp. 308-09)

One thing that is clear to Tagore is that religion should be Man's religion, and his search for this religion leads Tagore closer to human beings. On the other hand, it is also clear that the sources of this religion are human beings. Thus, Tagore, unlike the *Bauls*, searched his Man of heart and wrote:

"Once I heard a wandering beggar sing the lament of the Man who scatteres himself and loses the touch of the Eternal within him:-

Where shall I find Him, Him who is the Man of my heart.
Because I have lost him, I wander in strange and far – off lands in his quest. (Tagore, 2001b, p.202)

Tagore finds the answer very simply from the *Bauls* from Bengal, who sing, "Seek for the inner man in your heart." (Tagore, 2001b, p.202) Which means seek the Universal Man within you. This search for the Man of heart leads to the new meaning of religion in the book *The Religion of Man*, where Tagore considered the core of religion to be "the will to transcend the limit of the self-centred being towards an ideal of perfection," (Tagore, 1993, p.120) which he calls divinity of MAN. (Mukherjee, 2014) In the book, *Manusher Dharma* Tagore, one step ahead and advocates that the religion or *Dharma* is *Swabhab* or nature, specifically *Manusher swabhab* or human nature- the motivation of humabeings, ng which always tries to transcend their individual aspect to realise the Universal itheiris knowledge, action, and devotion. And striving for

this *Swabhab* for human beings is a spiritual discipline of *Dharma Sadhana*. Thus Tagore writes:

"The root-meaning of the word Dharma is nature. It sounds self-contradictory to say that one's nature is to be realised through effort, through discipline; this seems like finding nature by transcending it. The Christian Scriptures have condemned the nature of Man for its original sin and disobedience. The Indian Scriptures also prescribe the repudiation of nature in order to realise truth in us. Man has no respect for what he is by nature." (Tagore, 2001b, p. 199)

And again,

"Man's discovery and utilisation of the hidden forces of nature contribute to his well-being. The truth which constitutes the well-being of his soul is also hidden: it can be realised only through endeavour. To this endeavour man gives the name spiritual discipline." (Tagore, 2001b, p. 199)

For Tagore, this *Swabhab* or nature of human beings is the truth, human truth, or *Manavsatya*. According to Tagore, this Manavsatya or human truth is Harmony, which is the core of his philosophical thinking. In this search for human truth, Tagore realises that religious experiences should be based on his world. Therefore, if there is a God, God must be a human God who can be experienced in this world. (Mukherjee, 2014) Moreover, for Tagore, this world is the human world; if more than that exists, it exists only in this world. We cannot do anything with them because they are out of the scope of humans. We should remain silent about them. The question may arise that imposing human quality on God is anthropomorphism. Here, Tagore presents an insightful explanation that human beings should be one with God, rather than

imposing human qualities on Him. This Idea of God is called Tagore *Manavbramha*. (Tagore, 2015)

IV

Creative geniuses like Tagore, from his adolescence, reacted to various social issues and were highly critical of the social conditions in colonial Bengal in his creative works. He was involved in debates regarding various social issues related to culture, tradition, education, and nationalist issues with various personalities of his time. Tagore, however, had a deep sense of unity in life. With time, his realisation of unity in life and various social issues became concentrated, and he presented constructive ideas about society, accompanied by an understanding of Indian history, culture, and society immediately after the dawn of the twentieth century. Tagore presented a dynamic, constructive, and vibrant analysis of Indian society in *the Swadeshi Samaj* article. (Tagore, 2015b) After that, in a series of articles, lectures, addresses, and letters, Tagore expressed his unique understanding of Indian social realities and solutions to social issues of colonial India. Surprisingly, he did not limit himself to expressing his realisation and ideas through various literary outputs, but with the help of some close associates, such as Kalimohan Ghosh, Santoshchandra Mazumder, and many others. He first tried to apply some of those ideas- on education and rural reconstruction- in *Kaligram*, *Patisar*, and around *Santiniketan*. Although his early endeavours were hindered, he continued his experiments in *Visva-Bharati* and the rural reconstruction project at *Sriniketan*.

However, the lifelong involvement of Tagore in social problems, ongoing conceptualisation and reconceptualisation of various social realities, and active participation in actualising those ideas present us with a simple, dynamic, and vibrant social

philosophy that was deeply influenced and shaped by his philosophic realisations of Harmony. The central concern of Rabindranath Tagore's philosophical endeavour is the realisation of Harmony in life through love and sympathy. For Tagore, man not only seeks harmony in his life but also seeks to realise Harmony in the relationship between the universe, nature, and man. Thus, Tagore found the way of emancipation in the realisation of Harmony in life. Moreover, for Tagore, the realisation of Harmony pervades every aspect of human life- religious, philosophical, social life, etc. Thus, he expanded the scope of his ideas of *Mukti* and *Ananda* to the society in which we live. For Tagore, human beings have a refuge not only in the world but also in society. Thus, they must consider the genuine relationship between human beings (individuals) and society. With a genuine relationship, human beings attain emancipation in society. Whereas the more space provided to the lies by human beings, the more they were hindered on the path of emancipation. (Tagore, 2015c) Therefore, it is essential to understand the intricate relationship between society and individuals to comprehend Tagore's philosophy fully.

Tagore's ideas, thoughts, and actions were deeply influenced by his philosophic realisations, which provided the highest values for Harmony, truth, beauty, and goodness. Thus, Tagore's regard of the human being was that all human beings were ultimately in Harmony with the universal man, nature, and the world. Even in Tagore's consideration, the distant other in the world was a part of the human being. Conflicts and clashes arise between human beings and the community due to the overemphasis on sectional interests:

"He has faith in the dignity of human relationship, so he disdains the insolence of might; he knows that the mission of civilisation is to bring unity among people and establish peace and

harmony, so he rejects the poisonous fumes of greed and hatred corroding the spirit of Man." (Sen, 1941, p. 184)

Thus, Tagore advocated for cooperation among human beings, which can be achieved through a deep belief in Harmony in all beings. Tagore emphasises that as long as human beings raise their consciousness of Harmony and realise the unity in the universe, all sectional differences will disappear, and harmony among human beings will be restored. (Kabir, 2010, p.143)

For Tagore, Indian history was not a political history; instead, the centre of the Indian civilisation was community and society. Historically, Indian society has repeatedly faced community-based conflicts, which have been a fundamental problem for India. Yet, Indian society had survived through various hindrances because the welfare of the society was in the hands of the community. Thus, according to Tagore, India had to resolve conflicts based on religion, community, caste, and ethnicity creatively and cooperatively to maintain its social vitality.

"With Rabindranath, the emphasis is on evolving a social unity, within which all the different peoples can be held together, while fully enjoying the freedom of maintaining their own differences." (Sen, 1941, pp. 184-85)

Tagore argued that India's foundation lies in society, rather than the Nation and the State. According to Tagore, the concepts of the Nation and state were Western imports of colonialism. For Tagore, the Nation and the State were the centres of the national life of Europe. According to Tagore, political changes in the state had a profound impact on Europe's social life. On the contrary, India had survived and remained undisturbed by the political changes. Tagore has a nuanced understanding of India's past and warns us to be mindful of our history when interpreting it. Because he believed

that it would be misleading to understand India's past solely through a Western lens, focusing on its political history. Instead, Tagore believed that,

"In Western countries, the state forms the core of national life, but in ancient India, the life of the people had little to do with the state and its activities. The problems that confronted our forefathers were not primarily political, but rather cultural and social in nature. Various people with widely divergent cultures met on the soil of India. Hence, the great problem that faced India was how to adjust and harmonise these diverse elements into a happy synthesis." (Tagore, 1988, p. 229)

Through such an understanding of India's past, Tagore attracted our attention to two crucial aspects of social philosophy. First, Tagore drew our attention to the crucial fact that the fundamental difference between Eastern and Western outlooks on various social realities lies in the distinction between society and state. According to Tagore, the centre of Indian life is located in society, community, and traditions. On the contrary, the Western world developed based on a comprehensive national and state structure. Besides that, Tagore strongly criticised the notion of nationalism and advocated for internationalism. To focus on that point, Mukherjee (1941) writes that:

"At the close of the nineteenth century, just before the outbreak of the South African war and again in 1926 when he went to Europe, Tagore wrote with almost prophetic vision about "the blood-red clouds of the West and whirlwind of hatred" driving the peoples to "a clash of steel". The world-teacher found out that the greatest problem for humanity is not the conflict between the East and the West, which preoccupies Asiatic thinkers, but the conflict

between man and the machine, between personality and organisation." (p. 97)

V

Tagore's social philosophy, based on his fundamental philosophical principle of Harmony and unity in life, was not in favour of any discrimination, injustice, or domination based on class, caste, creed, religion, gender, nationality, etc. Instead, according to Tagore, all forms of discrimination, injustice, and domination stem from the sectional interests of human beings. For Tagore, the moment a human being realises the being or truth that lies in the realisation of Harmony, the cause of sectional interests will vanish. The basis for a human relationship is Harmony, love, sympathy, and interdependence. Tagore considered these fundamental human values -Harmony, love, sympathy, and interdependence as virtues and ethical foundations for the well-being of the individual and the whole globe. According to Tagore, human beings seek Harmony not only in their lives but also in the realisation of Harmony in their interactions with the world, nature, and other individuals. As a result, Tagore discovered the path to joy and freedom through realising Harmony in life.

"An individual finds her/his meaning in fundamental reality, which enables him/her to comprehend all individuals. Such reality is the moral and spiritual basis of the realm of human values. Science is the liberation of our knowledge in the universal reason, which cannot be other than reason; religion is then the liberation of our individual personality in the universal Person who cannot be other than human. Perfection has two aspects in human beings: perfection in being and perfection in doing. The latter is a question of moral perfection when an individual is "true in his goodness." The inner perfection of one's personality is valuable in terms of

spiritual freedom for humanity. The goodness requires detachment of our spirit from egoism; we need to identify ourselves with universal humanity." (Mukherjee, 2021, p. 169)

Tagore's philosophical insights, which provided the greatest value to Harmony, truth, beauty, and goodness, had a profound impact on Tagore's ideas, thoughts, and actions. All beings are rooted in Tagore's profound awareness of Harmony. As a result, Tagore believed that at their core, all people were in tune with nature, the universe, and all other living things. Even the most remote part of the world was a component of the human experience. Additionally, according to Tagore, sectional interests were overemphasised, which led to tensions and fights between people and communities. Therefore, Tagore promoted human cooperation due to his strong belief in the Harmony of all beings. Tagore stresses that all divisions into different sections would vanish, and human peace would be restored as long as people increased their consciousness of Harmony and understood their oneness with the universe.

For Tagore, truth is a self-conscious principle of transcendental unity within human beings. It encompasses all aspects of the human being – whether finite or infinite- and both these aspects reside within every human being. This truth can only be realised in human beings' deep inner spirit. The nature of truth is such that, according to Tagore, it incorporates both infinity and finitude, and all the conflicts and contradictions resolve in truth.

Tagore addresses the perennial issue of how the infinite and the finite can coexist. In *Sadhana* (Tagore, 2001c, pp. 308-09), harmony is the standard and character of existence and truth in Tagore's philosophy. In this regard, one may say that Tagore subscribed to the *Vaishnava* viewpoint, which proclaims with

confidence that the infinite (God) has linked itself to the finite to express the highest splendour of human existence (man). Tagore is aware that a person can only be authentic if he/she is nourished by sympathy and love. Tagore considered love to be another form of truth. He never differentiated between these two concepts; instead, he advocated that love manifests truth. Moreover, it is the perfection of consciousness and joy, according to him, that lies at the heart of all creation. One can only become simply ignorant due to the conflict of a loveless mind. When we recognise love as beauty, we can become truth and the ultimate state of freedom. Granting that love, by its essence, requires dualism to be realised, and to achieve the relation, it requires separation. He beautifully explained by saying that it is very similar to a parent tossing their child. He is throwing his son not to separate but out of a desire for connection. The human spirit is evolving from a state of separation to one of unification on its path. The highest purpose of love is to embrace and surpass all boundaries. Love is the only force that can break the constraints of law, allowing freedom to emerge in its place. The soul finds its freedom in action because joy manifests itself in law. (Mukherjee, 2021, p. 175) The more the human being acts and brings to life what is dormant within them, the more room this vision creates for freedom.

For Tagore, the fundamental purpose of religion is to spread humanity throughout the world. Religion does not support any boundaries or restrictions among human beings. Instead, according to him, religion provides the space and opportunity to deepen the inner consciousness of human beings and helps to express the innermost consciousness of beings. The infinite is formless and manifests through the human personality; the human being achieves perfection through the realisation of the infinite. Truth is everywhere, and love and sympathy for others help to attain it.

Humanity is the centre of religion. Love and sympathy are the virtues that helped to attain perfection in this world with disinterested works. However, Tagore never perceived religious rituals as hindrances on the path to attaining religious perfection. Instead, for Tagore, rituals are spiritual and religious because they provide a space for humans to engage in activities that promote their own well-being. Moreover, they allow a human being to leave their narrowness and inspire them to manifest the infinite or the Universal Man. Through accepting life's joys and sorrows, as well as its pleasures and sacrifices, religion enables people to experience eternal love. The purest example of perfection that conveys a sense of welfare must be the ultimate ideal of religion. (Mukherjee, 2021, pp. 175-76)

Unlike the human values of love and sympathy, Tagore talks about interdependence or relatedness as a fundamental human value. Tagore discussed the notion of interdependence in terms of freedom. Tagore's understanding of the concept of freedom is vital in describing his thoughts on interdependence. Tagore understands the concept of freedom in terms of transcendence and interdependence or relatedness. For Tagore, freedom as transcendence means going beyond the narrowness of one's self. The narrowness is on two levels- the deeper level and the individual level. Human endeavours to find the truth extend beyond utilitarian requirements to a deeper level. One's manifestations of goodness and truth prove his/her infinite nature and help him/her to believe in his faith. (Mukherjee, 2021, pp. 175-76)

Therefore, Tagore's thoughts and actions are grounded in the harmony and unity of life; thus, he not only advocates for Harmony in the inner realisations of human beings but also speaks for social Harmony through love, sympathy, and relatedness. Tagore, by reinterpreting the understanding of Indian history, tradition, culture,

and society, recognised India's social vitality, which depended on its villages, and that the disputes between communities were the country's biggest problem. Tagore advocated for bringing Harmony between humans and society via love, sympathy and relatedness. Tagore simultaneously voiced his strong opposition to imperialism and the violent nationalism that resulted from it. According to Tagore, the concepts of dominance and segregation should not serve as the foundation for relationships between individuals, communities, societies, cultures, and nations. He believed that it should be built on the human qualities of compassion, love, and cooperation.

VI

Humanism, as a philosophy, offers a straightforward understanding of the universe, human nature, and potential solutions to human problems. The term Humanist was first coined in the early sixteenth century to refer to the scholars and writers of the European Renaissance. However, the concept of Humanism has a long history. It has been practised in various ways, from ancient civilisations to the great nations of the world today. In contemporary times, scholars have sought to clarify the elusiveness of the concept of Humanism by incorporating the most critical ideas of Renaissance Humanism; however, its philosophical importance extends far beyond this. Such as Corliss Lamont in his book '*The Philosophy of Humanism'* writes:

"To define twentieth-century humanism briefly, I would say that it is a philosophy of joyous service for the greater good of all humanity in this natural world and advocating the methods of reason, science, and democracy." (Lamont, 1997, pp. 12- 20)

This conceptualisation of Humanism placed supreme authority on reason and advocated that human reason is the only

hope for leading a happy human life. These human beings do not require any justification, sanction, or support from supernatural sources, as they adhere to naturalistic metaphysics, which rejects the existence of heavenly gods or immortal heavens. Moreover, human beings, using their capacity for reason and effort, can create a happy and prosperous earth.

This conceptualisation of Humanism provides an idea of Humanism based on human reason, neglecting the significance of religious and spiritual experiences of human life. However, Tagore's ideas of the philosophy of Man and the *Manusher Dharma* represent a straightforward understanding of human nature, the world, and human problems. Tagore's ideas on the two aspects of human being provide a philosophic understanding of human nature which harmonises the being of man. And, based on this humanistic philosophical understanding, Tagore presents an interpretation of the human world, explaining the problems of human life, including social, political, economic, and spiritual issues. Tagore attempted to present these understandings and solutions without neglecting the rational, emotional, and spiritual aspects of human beings. Tagore's dream project of *Santiniketan* and *Sriniketan* are the best expression of his ideas of Humanism, which have been practised for the last hundred years. The most noteworthy point of Tagore's humanistic philosophy is that it successfully reconciles his ideas on religion and Humanism without depending on religious orthodoxies. Therefore, Tagore's understanding of *Manusher Dharma* and his philosophical perspective on the human being, the world, and religion can serve as a foundation for humanism, and it can be considered a form of spiritual humanism.

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EXPLORING *TRIGUNAS* AND HUMAN NATURE (THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE *ADI SANKARACARYA'SVIVEKACHUDAMANI*)

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Abstract

Human behaviours are not accidental. Human nature is not purely instinctive like animals. Man is rational and intelligent. Man is a free being. But the tragedy with man is that despite his free pursuit of thinking and will-power, he suffers from the fate of determinism. The determining factors are due to his own past *vasanas* or unsatiated desires. The root of the *vasanas* is his causal body (*karanasarira*), which is constituted of *trigunas*, such as *Sattva, Rajas,* and *Tamas*. Human personality is both determined and free. Man is determined because of the predominating influences of *trigunas (sattva, rajas,* and *tamas)*. Man is free because man can exert his free will to transform his life from the lower level of propensities to the higher scale of consciousness. This is the *Purushartha* or the self-effort of man. In this article, an attempt has been made to focus on the influences of *trigunas (sattva, rajas,* and *tamas)* on human nature from the perspectives of the great treatise of *Adi Sankaracarya*, the*Vivekachudamani*.

Keywords: *Trigunas* 'Sattva, Rajas, Tamas', Human Nature, *Vivekachudamani*, Determinism and Free Will, *Purushartha.*

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Introduction

The *Vivekachudamani*, a highly esteemed text credited to *Adi Shankaracharya*, serves as a profound guide to spiritual enlightenment. It provides insights into the essence of the Self, the differentiation between the real and the unreal, and the journey toward Self-realization. Its verses are imbued with wisdom, directing seekers toward the ultimate truth and liberation. The *Vivekachudamani* elaborates on the *trigunas* (*sattva, rajas, and tamas*) within the framework of comprehending human nature and the pathway to spiritual development. Grasping these *gunas* enables individuals to identify their inclinations and pursue equilibrium, ultimately aspiring to transcend them for spiritual liberation. *Adi Sankaracharya'sVivekachudamani* is the great treatise of spiritual knowledge, which logically explains the *Viveka Jnana* and *Vairagya Bhava*. This treatise has highlighted the *trigunas* - *Sattva, Rajas,* and *Tamas* as the three veils, which cover the truth of the Self, the state of bliss or pure consciousness. It explains how human nature is affected by these three dominating *gunas* and deluded by their veils.

Human beings possess three Divine powers: the ability to discern (*jnana shakti*), the capacity to desire (*ichha shakti*), and the drive to act (*kriya shakti*). During deep sleep, all these powers exist in an unmanifested form known as 'nescience' (*avidya*). This deep sleep state is influenced by the *trigunas – sattva, rajas,* and *tamas*. It is only when a specific tendency emerges in an individual that it can be said that their *vasanas* belong to a certain type. Therefore, *maya shakti* can be deduced from the effects by those who possess the requisite subtle intellect. Consequently, this finite, mortal, and ever-changing world we perceive is solely a product of *maya*. Due to our inability to grasp Reality, we identify with the realm of objects, emotions, and thoughts. Through the body, mind, and

intellect, we engage with the world and generate increasingly more *vasanas*. These *vasanas* compel us to act repeatedly, ultimately leading us to become engrossed in them and permanently acquire a sense of separate individuality, known as *jiva bhava*. All of this arises from *avidya*, this failure to comprehend Reality. *Avidya* represents the *Vasana* within the microcosm, the individual. The collective *avidya* of all individuals manifests as its macrocosmic form, referred to as *maya. Maya* serves as the medium for Brahman when He operates as *Isvara*, and when He acts through the *vasanas* or *avidya*, He becomes the *Jiva* – the individual ego. Thus, *maya* is the macrocosmic *avidya*, while *avidya* is the microcosmic *maya*. Each individual constructs their own world around themselves due to their ignorance (*avidya*), utilizing their mind. The aggregation of each person's world culminates in the total world we refer to as the universe, or *jagat*. Therefore, the entire world, the universe, is formed by the collective mind expressing through the total *vasanas*, otherwise known as *maya*. The grand *avidya*, or non-apprehension, possesses *sattva*, *rajas,* and *tamas* as its gunas or attributes, named according to their functions. The operations of *maya-shakti* fall within these three categories. The *gunas* determine the landscapes of the mind and appear differently in the individuals.

II

Rajoguna

Rajas has projecting power (*viksepa-sakti*). Activity is its very nature. From it, the initial flow of activity has originated. From it, mental Modifications such as attachment and grief are also continuously produced. (*Vivekachudamani*–verse 111) Desire, anger, greed, hypocrisy, arrogance, jealousy, egoism, envy, and so on. These are the dreadful attributes of rajas, from which the worldly tendencies of man are produced. *Rajas* is, therefore, the

cause of bondage in life. (*Vivekachudamani* – verse 112) The attitude of *rajas* in relation to *maya* induces disturbances in the mind (*viksepa*). When *maya* is expressed at the mental level, it manifests as mental agitation. The form of *maya* that generates restlessness in the mind is referred to as *'rajoguna'*, from which all actions originate. When the mind is active, we engage with the external world; conversely, when the mind is tranquil, all actions cease. In deep sleep, the mind is at rest and remains calm. Thus, no activities are initiated in this state, as actions can only occur when the mind is active. A mental image precedes every action. Our connections with objects and beings foster increasing attachment, leading to mental agitation along with desires and passions. The mind pursues these desires and passions for fulfillment, resulting in the experience of both joy and sorrow. However, such joys are limited and impervious to sorrows because they arise from *avidya*. The expression of *avidya* within a particular personality is termed *'rajoguna'*. *Rajoguna* incites disturbances in the mind, and as a result of these mental agitations, we act in the world objectively, while subjectively we encounter desires, passions, lust, and consequently, joys and sorrows. Emotions such as desire, anger, greed, deceit, arrogance, jealousy, egoism, and envy manifest due to *rajoguna*. These are lower forms of emotions generated by *rajoguna* within the psychological aspect of personality. The reactions stemming from these agitations are detrimental as they exacerbate the disturbances, leading to all forms of bondage in life, ultimately ensnaring individuals completely. As *rajas* produces agitations (*viksepa*), these mental disturbances obscure (*avarana*) the Self within us, thereby also concealing bliss (*ananda*) in the individual's experience. Being heavily influenced by rajas, the individual gradually descends into the realm of *tamas*. Once higher

awareness is obscured, we tend to act unwisely and become increasingly entangled in the frantic pursuit of pleasurable objects.

III

Tamoguna

The veiling power (*avriti*) is the power of tamas, which makes things appear to be other than what they actually are. It causes man's repeated transmigration and initiates the action of the projecting power (*viksepa*). (*Vikekachudamani* – verse 113) *Tamas* obscures Reality, while *rajas* stirs unrest within the mind. Consequently, the interplay of these two forces leads us to perceive illusions that do not truly exist. The true nature of things is concealed by *tamas*, and the mind, influenced by *rajoguna*, imposes its fantasies upon them. When the inner self is tainted by *rajas* and *tamas*, objects and emotions are not experienced in their true context. We identify ourselves with the body, mind, and intellect, navigating through a realm of objects, feelings, and thoughts, thereby generating an increasing number of *vasanas* for ourselves. To exhaust these *vasanas*, we require the continuity of our existence through the physical body, mind, and intellect, which perpetuates our cycle of birth and death. This cycle persists until all *vasanas* are fully exhausted. The fundamental reason for this ongoing cycle of *vasanas* and our attachment to them lies in the veil of Reality, which is influenced by *Tamas*. *Maya*, in its *tamoguna* aspect, operates within our personality as the power of concealment. The tamasic dimension of *Maya* is indeed the source of all mental disturbances. When the intellect is shrouded by *tamas*, the mind, under the sway of *rajas*, misrepresents the reality of what is perceived through the senses. The individual becomes agitated due to his own misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Thus, *maya*

functions in dual capacities – through her *Avarana-shakti* (the power of veiling) and her *viksepa-shakti* (the power of projection) – which correspond to *tamas* and *rajas*, respectively. Even the wise, learned individuals, and those adept in grasping the profoundly subtle meanings of the scriptures, are often overwhelmed by tamas and fail to grasp the Truth, despite its clear articulation in various forms. Individuals perceive what is merely imposed by delusion as reality and become attached to its consequences. (*Vivekachudamani* – Verse 114). Not only does he fail to grasp the Truth, but he also asserts that what he has falsely projected is the only reality. He mistakenly believes that the existence of the body, mind, and intellect, along with their functions of perceiving, feeling, and thinking, represent the sole Reality. By insisting that his projections are the only Truth, he falls victim to their characteristics, and similarly, when the attributes of his erroneous projections shift, he evolves into a higher self. When the body experiences slight illness, he asserts, "I am ill"; if the mind is troubled, he laments, "I am worried." Such misidentification intensifies when *tamas* and *rajas* are subjected to calamities such as 1) lack of sound judgment (*abhavana*), 2) opposing judgment (*Viparita bhavana*), 3) absence of a firm belief in the existence of something, despite having a vague notion of it (*asamabhavana*), and 4) doubt (*vipratipati*). (*Vivekachudamani* – verse 115) These tendencies are all manifestations of the influence of tamas within one's character. Ignorance of Reality, the inability to act appropriately, the incapacity to understand correctly, excessive lethargy, performing actions selfishly for others, profound foolishness, and similar traits are all consequences of *tamoguna*. When *tamas* obscures the intellect, *rajas* begins to influence the mind incessantly, causing the individual to suffer and lose the natural flow of bliss within.

The effects of *tamoguna* include a lack of understanding of Reality, an inability to act correctly, a failure to grasp concepts effectively, excessive drowsiness, profound foolishness, engaging in actions merely for the sake of doing so, and negligence. (*Vivekachudamani* – verse 115) These flaws in the operation of our personality layers resemble parasitic growths on the intellect, rendering it dull and unresponsive. An individual, burdened with such a poorly functioning intellect, navigates the world as if in a state of slumber, existing like a lifeless column or an unfeeling statue. This is entirely due to the presence of concentrated tamas within the individual.

IV

Sattva-guna

Pure *sattva* is like clear water, yet in combination with *rajas* and *tamas*, it provides for transmigration. But when the light of the Self gets reflected in *sattva* alone, like the sun, it reveals the entire world of matter. (*Vivekachudamani* -verse 117) *Sattva guna* does not entirely eliminate the presence of *rajoguna* and *tamoguna*. When pure *sattva* coexists with *rajas* and *tamas* in an individual, it leads to transmigration. Transmigration cannot occur if *rajas* and *tamas* are fully eradicated by *Sattva guna*. In the presence of *pure sattva*, the intellect functions consistently, free from veils and disturbances in the mind. When consciousness is reflected in the *sattva* aspect of the mind, it illuminates the inert and insentient world around, similar to how the sun brightens everything during the day. Intelligence represents the light of consciousness as it is mirrored in the intellect. Consequently, when the intellect is disturbed, the level of intelligence diminishes or is lost. If the reflecting surface is unstable, the reflection of consciousness becomes disturbed and tainted. Thus, when *rajas* and *tamas*

intermingle with *sattva*, an individual possesses limited intelligence. However, as *rajas* and *tamas* diminish within one's character, the amount of *sattva* increases. Practices such as *upasana, japa*, *dhyana*, and other spiritual disciplines aim to purify the personality. Through this purification, as the mind becomes increasingly *sattvik*, it begins to perceive things more clearly and attains a state of calmness and serenity. A *sattvik* mind is more intuitive and is referred to as *'jnana chaksu'* or 'a vision of trans experience'. The evolution of the mind from a *rajasic* and tamasic state to a *sattvik* state occurs in an ascending spiral, gaining momentum towards greater visibility and clarity.

The traits of *sattva-guna* include a complete lack of pride, adherence to *niyama, yama*, and similar principles, along with faith, devotion, a longing for liberation, divine inclinations, and a natural aversion to all that is unreal. (*Vivekachudamani* -verse118) An individual is considered to be on the path to Realisation when the levels of *rajas* and *tamas* are minimal, and the intellect predominantly exhibits *sattva* qualities. Due to the dominance of *sattva*, the individual's desire for liberation intensifies, leading to the eradication of *rajas* and *tamas* tendencies from their character. The seeker must possess the qualifications to comprehend Reality, referred to as an *Adhikari*. The attributes that contribute to the highest good, such as the absence of pride and other qualities that motivate spiritual practices like *yama* and *niyama*, along with ethical disciplines including *sama* and *dama*, combined with unwavering devotion to the ideal, signify a state of mixed *sattva-guna*, where rajas and tamas are diminished, and *sattva* is dominant. The features of pure *sattva* encompass joy, the realization of one's own Self, ultimate peace, contentment, bliss, and a continuous devotion to the Supreme Self, through which the aspirant attains eternal bliss. (*Vivekachudamani* -verse119) When the final

remnants of dirt (*rajas* and *tamas*) are eliminated, the personality achieves complete purity. This inner state is filled with untainted *sattva*. Upon reaching such a condition, the aspirant perceives the supreme Self and attains eternal bliss, rendering them impervious to sorrow. *Sattva-guna* encompasses various transcendental experiences, including 1) Awareness of one's own Self (*svatma-anubhutih*), 2) Ultimate peace (*parama prasantih*), 3) Satisfaction (*triptih*), 4) Joy (*praharsah*), and Steadfast devotion to the supreme Self (*Paramtma-nista*). In pure *sattva, rajas*, which leads to all misconceptions, and *tamas*, which results in ignorance, are completely absent. Consequently, the Self is recognized when the intellect is impeccably pure. In this spiritual state of divine experience, there is no rajas, which is the source of disturbances. Once the Self is recognized, all disturbances cease, leading to perfect tranquility. Due to the absence of desires, the seeker experiences a feeling of incompleteness. This represents the state of desirelessness, a state of perfection or divinity. A *sattvic* mind does not partake in the bliss of ignorance but rather in the dynamic bliss of Realization. This bliss originates from a source that transcends all known notions of happiness and sorrow. Due to the lack of understanding of Reality, our individuality, as a perceiver, feeler, and thinker, is wholly engaged in pursuing joy through the objects, emotions, and thoughts, utilizing the instruments of the body, mind, and intellect. When these instruments are transcended, neither the objective nor the subjective realms influence the individual. Once the *vasanas* of *rajas* and *tamas* are eradicated, the ego rediscovers itself as the supreme Reality and unites with It. Unwavering, steady, and profound devotion to the Supreme Self becomes instinctive for such a seeker, as they no longer identify with the body. Such a *Sattvic* intellect experiences the essence of eternal bliss.

Although consciousness remains constant in all beings, the intelligence of individuals varies due to the differing levels of *rajas* and *tamas* present in their personalities. With the predominance of *sattva*, an individual's character is enriched with divine qualities, liberating them from the constraints of *rajasic* and *tamasic* influences. Once the final remnants of *rajas* and *tamas* are eliminated, the personality achieves complete purity. When such a state is achieved, the aspirant comprehends the supreme Self and attains eternal bliss, impervious to sorrow. When the *vasanas* of *rajas* and *tamas* are eliminated, the ego reclaims its identity as the supreme Reality and unites with it. Thus, by purifying the intellect entirely, the aspirant partakes in the essence of everlasting bliss. The causal body comprises the three *gunas* – *sattva, rajas,* and *tamas* – in their unmanifest form. When the individual withdraws from the waking and dream states of Consciousness, he is considered to be in the deep sleep state. The experiences of waking and dream states exist in the deep sleep state in an 'unmanifest' or seed form. These seeds manifest in the subtle and waking states, respectively. This 'unmanifest', described as a combination of all three *gunas*, is the Causal body of the individual. Its special state is deep sleep, in which all the functions of the mind-intellect and the sense organs are totally suspended. (*Vivekachudamani* – verse -120) The mind remains in a subtle seed form in deep sleep, which is the state of complete cessation of all kinds of perceptions. Indeed, the universal experience in this state is, "I did not know anything." (*Vivekachudamani* - verse121)

When a man is in deep sleep, all functions of his intellect, mind, and sensory organs are momentarily inactive, a condition referred to as the state of unmanifest (*avyakta*). In this state, neither Reality nor the realm of objects, emotions, or thoughts is evident or accessible for his awareness. This represents a phase of non-

comprehension of Reality, often articulated as 'I do not know.' It is a state of total ignorance where the intellect and its manifestations are obscured. The complete absence of all forms of knowledge is universally experienced in deep sleep by all beings. This level of absolute and comprehensive ignorance, along with total non-comprehension, is identified as the causal body (*karana sharira*). All instruments – body (*deha*), sensory organs (*indriyas*), physiological processes (*prana*), mind (*mana*), and ego (*aham*), along with all modifications (*vikara*) such as pain and pleasure (*sukhadayah*), all sensory objects (*visaya*), the gross elements (*bhutani*), and the tangible world of objects, emotions, and thoughts (*visva*), extending to the unmanifest (*avyakta*) – all these pertain to the non-Self (*Anatma*). This non-Self (*anatman*) is the product of *maya*, arising from the non-comprehension of Reality. Although they are fundamentally non-existent, they are perceived by us through our own delusion. To understand Reality, all that is illusory must be eliminated and transcended, leading to the realization of the Self.

V

Conclusion

Understanding *trigunas* (*sattva, rajas,* and *tamas*) from the perspectives of the *Vivekachudamani* not only gives us a conceptual clarity of the nature and function of these gunas but also helps transform human life towards perfection and freedom. So, the practice of spiritual discipline is very much required along with clarity in understanding. Human life is progressive by self-effort. Man is determined and at the same time is also the maker of his own destiny. Man should ever strive to elevate his standard of living by transcending the *triguna* influences and reach the height of

perfection in his short span of life. This is how his life would be worth living.

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DIFFERENT THEORIES OF ERROR IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

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Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to give a text-based exposition of different theories of erroneous cognition in Indian Philosophy. There are seven main theories regarding error in Indian Philosophy. We shall explain the main concern of these theories one by one. The theory of *Satkhyāti* is held by Rāmānuja and his followers. According to this theory, there is no error in fact. What is experienced is real. The general theory of *Satkhyāti*advocates the view that in wrong knowledge there is cognition of some kind of reality or existence. It is usually believed that the theory of *Asatkhyāti* is advanced by the Madhyamaka Buddhist philosophers, who hold that in wrong cognition there is cognition of unreality or non-existence. But in our examination of this claim we shall show that the Madhyamaka Buddhist philosophers cannot be called *Asatkhyātivādins.* The *Anirvacanīyakhyāti* is the view of the Advaitins, that experienced objects are indeterminable and that the object of erroneous cognition is neither real, nor unreal, i.e.,it is *Sadāsadvilakṣaṇa*. According to Sāṁkhyaview*, Sadāsatkhyāti,* one and the same thing can be regarded as a real and also as unreal under different conditions. So, the theory is not self-contradictory. *Ātmakhyāti* is the theory of the Vijñānavādins, the Vaibhāṣikas and the Sautrāntikas, in spite of having different theories of perception, believe that the internal concept appears as the external percept in erroneous cognition. *Akhyāti* is the theory of PrābhākaraPūrva-Mīmāṁsa, according to which, in error there is non-distinction between a 'memory – image' and a 'percept'. *Anyathākhyāti* is the view of the Nyāya philosophers which holds that substratum and perception of erroneous cognition are really independent.

Keywords-*khyāti*,*anirvacanīya*,*sat*, *asat*, *smṛti, viparyaya-jñāna, nihilism*

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Introduction

The issue of *Viparyaya-jñāna* or erroneous cognition has been remained attractive and favourite not only to the Indian scholars of philosophy but also to the Western scholars as well. In English, it is sometime rendered as 'illusory cognition' which is a type of non-veridical cognition. In Indian philosophy, philosophers took effort to explain the issue of erroneous cognition from different ontological presupposition. In Indian philosophy, all schools have admitted the importance of erroneous cognition. This erroneous cognition is the cause of our all type of bondages (suffering). So, the knowledge of negation of ignorance is the first step for liberation.

When we do make a mistake:

In our daily life, when we come to know that it was a wrong action, immediately we accept the correct one instead of the false one. According to the realist Indian philosopher Prabhākara (7^{th}--8^{th} centuries AD), any knowledge is intrinsically valid. Because no one will admit that knowledge is adulterous of its own object's. So, we can conclude that the knowledge follows its object. However, we admit that we make mistake. When we perceive the shell as a piece of silver and intend to take it, it is the cause of our unsuccessful action.

Now, we shall explain the process of our wrong action which is the result of our false cognition by this following table

1. *Laukikasannikarṣa* with the shell and sense organ (eye)
2. The knowledge of white-ness and shine-ness in this present object due to the reflection of sunlight (*doṣa*)
3. The absence of perception of the special character (*viśeṣādarśana)*
4. The recollection (*saṁskāra*) of the knowledge of silver which we perceived at silver smith shop in the past.

5. The memory (*smṛti*) [1] of the silver
6. We perceive the shell as a silver
7. Out of greed we intend to take it as a silver which is the cause of an unsuccessful action.

Let us now elaborate the main tenets of different theories of error.

1. Satkhyātivāda:

Satkhyātivāda is advocated by Rāmānuja and his followers to explain the so-called illusory experience. Rāmānuja holds that object exists before they are known. The existence of the object alone is apprehended. According to the Satkhyātivādins, the error is neither the apprehension of absolute 'naught', nor the apprehension of 'indescribable object'. When the perceiver perceives the snake in a rope, the perceiver perceives the real snake features on this lying rope. So, if we admit that the perceiver perceives the real snake features on this lying rope, it means that snake is also present there. Because, attributes (*dharma*) cannot reside without its substratum (*dharmi)*. That is why, this *khyātivāda* is known as *yathārthakhyātivāda.*

Error arises when the apprehension of a partial truth is considered as the whole truth (i.e., when the perceiver thinks that the silver character is the only characteristic of the object before him). According to Rāmānuja and his followers, the reference of the error is neither *asat*, nor indescribable fact. The snake is real, because we perceive snake's characteristics on this rope.

2. Asatkhyātivāda:

It is said by the opponent philosophers ofNāgārjuna that he advocates *Asatkhyātivāda* regarding erroneous cognition according to which the object of cognition is unreal (*asat*). An unreal thing cannot cause of anything. It is popularly known among the

opponent philosophers of Nāgārjuna, that he propounded *śūnyavāda* which admits the unreality of everything that we experience in the world. The opponents criticized Madhyamaka Philosophy as 'nihilism' (*sarvavainā́śikavāda*). This is the official version we get from the author of *Sarvadarśanasaṁgraha*, Mādhavācārya. This has been deepened by the philosophical opponents and contestants of Madhyamaka Philosophy. According to them, the content of cognition is *asat* or absolute naught. When the rope is apprehended as a snake then the snake is falsely cognized in the rope. Because, the snake and the rope both are non-existent (*asat*) from the ultimate point of view. They are not *sat* like permanent reality or eternal and not *asat*or *alik,* like sky-flower. Here, the word *asat* is defined as that which is not existent in any time like past, present and future. [2] Here we propose to examine the claim of the opponent that Nāgārjuna and his followers advocate *asatkyātivāda*, the theory of error according to which the object of erroneous cognition is unreal.

In general, *śūnyavāda* is understood by the non-Buddhist philosophers as nihilism which means a philosophy that denies any reality to the world. Everything is void. Now in the following paragraphs we shall discuss why a controversy has been started against Nāgārjuna's philosophy of *śūnyatā* by his opponents.

Mādhavācārya in his *Sarvadarśanasaṁgraha*has mentioned that according to the Madhyamaka Buddhist philosophy, the knower or the self, the object known and the knowledge all are interdependent with each other (like, one is dependent upon another two), they don't have any intrinsic nature. So, if we consider them as non-intrinsic in nature, then we have to accept that they depend on other or relative. So, if one of them is regarded as false so another will must be the same.

Now the *pūrvapakṣin* further raised the following question: In the case of erroneous cognition when we perceive the rope as a snake, then we perceive the erroneous snake in a rope which is absolutely false. So, we can conclude that if the object oferroneous snake turns out to be false then all knowledge will be regarded as false (because, all are interdependent and relative). That means, the phenomenal universe turns out to be emptied of reality or void or *śūnya*.

But a close reading of the texts and commentaries of Madhyamaka School of Philosophy will show us that it is not nihilism. The term *śūnya,* means in ordinary sense void or empty. But if we thoroughly study Madhyamaka Buddhist philosophy then we come to realize that here, *śūnya*does not mean stupendous zero and it is not nihilism, because it also does not deny all reality; rather it only denies the intrinsic nature of things. Because the actual and ultimate nature of reality is inexpressible, that is why, it is called *śūnya,* but not void of reality. The world is called '*śūnya'* to mean that its existence is relative (*pratītyasamutpanna*) and the reality in itself (*nirvāṇa*) is called '*śūnya'* to mean that it is devoid of the reach-ability of the so-called means of knowing and in this sense, it is called '*prapañca-śūnya'*.

Mādhavācārya has argued that the original characteristics of the object cannot be expressible as real, unreal, real and unreal, neither real nor unreal both not. Because that which is real must be an independent reality. On the other hand, which is unreal like sky-flower that must be non-existent. And real and unreal or neither real nor unreal is called unintelligible jargon. [3]

Now, it is quite clear that *śūnyatā* means indescribable the real nature of things. It also means dependent origination. Nāgārjuna mentioned that "the fact of dependent origination is called by us *śūnyatā.''* [4] *Śūnya*means conditional character of

things, changeability and indescribability. This path is called 'the path of *śūnyatā'* or 'middle path'. Here, Nāgārjuna refuted the extreme path of absolute reality and unreality of things and introduced us conditional existence or dependent origination. So, he says that *śūnyatā = pratītyasamutpāda = madhyamāpratipad.*

But a careful reading of the texts and commentaries of Madhyamaka philosophy at once makes it clear that it is wrong to call them nihilists. Nāgārjuna does not preach nihilism; he rather advocates a philosophy of relativity, conditional existence of the furniture of the world. Since everything is co-interdependent, nothing is real in the sense of having intrinsic nature. Everything is empty from its own side. To say something as 'empty' is not to say it fictitious.

Major schools of Indian philosophy have started their discussion with their own ontological presuppositions to explain the reality of world. Nāgārjuna's philosophy and his contribution was mis-interpreted by his opponent philosophers. Nāgārjuna's opponents termed his philosophy as '*śūnyavāda'* which popularly means that everything is unreal or *asat* like sky-flower. But, Nāgārjuna used the term '*śūnya'* in a specific sense which does not deny the reality of the world altogether. It does not preach nihilism. Here, the Advaita Philosopher Śaṁkara also mis-interprets the term *śūnya* as unreal.

The world is not an absolute naught, which is *alīka* (fictitious) such as hare's horn etc. The word *śūnyatā* has been used by Nāgārjuna in two different senses. According to him, *śūnyatā* means *niḥsvabhāvatā*. The world is *svabhāvaśūnya* means it has dependent existence (*pratītyasamutpanna*). The word '*svabhāva'* means which can exist unconditionally and not dependent upon any other causes i.e., independent.

Nirvāṇa or thing-in-itself lies beyond of our know-ability and hence it cannot be described in categorical terms like 'is' or 'is not' etc. It remains above the reach of the application of the four-fold way of theory-making. So, the word *svabhāva* is equal to thing-in-itself (*svayaṁ bhāva*) and *svabhāvaśūnya* is equals to relative existence (unconditional non-existence) but not absolute naught.

In our empirical world each and every thing are existing with some kind of condition with each other. Let us explain the word 'fire' for example. Fire has the ability to burn something, but its origin is conditional. Such as: friction of two stone, fuels etc. In Buddhist philosophy, it is called the law of Dependent Origination (*pratītyasamutpādavāda*).

According to them, the effect arises when the cause has been able to produce (potentiality or *arthakriyākārī*) such things. But those things which are unable to produce anything are called absolute naught (i.e., absolutely non-existent).

Here, Nāgārjuna has used the way of middle path (*madhyma-pratipad*). We cannot define anything in exclusive sense because everything is conditionally changing, depending upon certain conditions. There is no permanent essence, everything exists relatively (*nih̤svabhāva).*

Nāgārjuna does not admit that the objects are unreal (*asat*). According to him, objects are *nih̤svabhāva.* It is clear that both*niḥsvabhāva* and *asat* are not synonymous. According to him, we cannot define the object by using the term *astitva* or *nāstitva* in absolute sense.

Nāgārjuna also mentioned that *nirvāṇa*is *prapañcaśūnya*or *vikalpaśūnya.* He also follows the middle path to know the ultimate or highest reality which is called *śūnya,* that is devoid of thought construction and linguistic expression— (*bhāva, abhāva, bhāvābhāva, naivabhāvābhāva*) being, non-being, being and non-being, neither being nor non-being. *Nirvāṇa*is independent and non-

contingent. Nāgārjuna admits that the world is *niḥsvabhāva* or *śūnya*but not as unreal. Objects has*samvṛtic* existence.

Two Truths of Nāgārjuna's Philosophy

Nāgārjuna speaks of two truth: one is empirical or phenomenal and another is the transcendental on noumenal. This transcendental reality is free from changeability, conditionality and other phenomenal character. Here, one is empirical (*saṁvṛtisatya*) truth which we can know through the instrument of knowledge and another is transcendental or (*pāramārthikasatya*) which is cannot be experienced like phenomenal object. But this first one is the stepping stone to attainment of higher truth. The nature of *Nirvāṇa* is not describable. And one who attained the *Nirvāṇa*, the *tathāgata* is also indescribable.

The Advaita Vedāntin Śaṁkarācārya's philosophy and Madhyamaka philosopher Nāgārjuna's philosophy both have tried to explain the status of world. This empirical world is not unreal like sky-flower. It is inexpressible. Due to our ignorance, we assume the world as real. But what is real, cannot be sublated anytime, anywhere. World is also not unreal because we can feel the worldly objects. Unreal objects are non-empirical and non-originated entities. Now the question is: If Śaṁkara's explanationof erroneous cognition is accepted as *anirvacanīyakhyātivāda* which means indescribable in the same manner, Nāgārjuna's philosophy of *śūnyatā*also means indescribable nature of reality. So, if the opponents claimed that Nāgārjuna's philosophy advocates *Asatkhyātivāda,* then they also have to admit that Śaṁkara's view of *anirvacanīyakhyātivāda* is also *asatkhyātivāda*.

After the overall discussion it appears that both Śaṁkara's philosophy and Nāgārjuna's philosophy are similar explanations of the world. In the same way, Nāgārjuna's*śūnyatā* means relative existence, not absence of reality.To call Nāgārjuna's explanation of error as *asatkhyātivāda* is not satisfactory.

3. Anirvacanīyakhyātivāda:

The AdvaitaVedānta advocates the view of*Anirvacanīyakhyāti*. *Anirvacanīyakhyāti* repudiates the Nyāya view of *Anyathākhyāti*. When we perceive a snake in a piece of rope, then the attribute of the snake (snake-hood) does not exist in the rope. According to the Naiyāyikas, the relation between snake-ness and snake is *samavāya*(inherence). But what is the relation between snake-ness and rope? Does there any relation exist? According to the Naiyāyikas, error arises through a single complex unitary experience. The false element in error is consisting of a false relation. The relation between the contents is false, because the contents are related wrongly. In the instance, 'this is a snake' our cognition is a false cognition. In the case of true cognition, snake-hood is inherent in snake. The relation between the snake and snake-hood is *samavāya*. But here, the relation between 'this' and 'snake' is false. So, in the case of erroneous cognition, no relation resides in this false content. "This is snake" is an indivisible unity. But the Naiyāyikas falsely split it, into a 'this', 'a snake' and 'a relation between the two'. According to the AdvaitaVedāntins, the error is neither *sat* nor *asat* (unreal, non-existent). Why is it not *sat* (real, existent)? Because, what is *sat,* cannot be refuted by anyway. Why is it not *asat*? Because, it is not perceived by sense organ. Sky-flower, barren-mother etc. do not exist anywhere. They are not perceived through sense organs. But we can perceive a snake in a rope. It is not an absolute 'naught'. So, error is neither *sat* nor *asat*. Now, the question is: If it is neither *sat* nor *asat*, then how could it be described? According to the Advaitins, error is *Anirvacanīya* (indescribable). When we are rejecting the snake, it is absolute rejection. When the perceiver perceives the real rope, then s/he rejects the 'here and now' snake which is perceived falsely. For AdvaitaVedāntins, the snake may be present somewhere, which is always connected with reality. We can deny only, the jungle snake

which is falsely perceived as this snake. When we cognize the real object, then we can deny the snake absolutely.

Here, we can say that both the Buddhists and the Advaitins have tried to establish the world of illusion from their own idealistic point of view. They explain that the world is indescribable. Here, the difference between two schools is that the – Advaita VedāntinŚaṁkara has admitted the locus of the illusion is existent (*sat)*, whereas, the Madhyamaka Bauddha school admit the locus of the illusion as non-existent (*asat*). But in our empirical world, if we try to explain the worldly object and its knowledge then we have to accept the ontological status of the world as relative.

4. Sadāsatkhyātivāda:

Sadāsatkhyāti is advocated by the Sāṁkhyaschool of Indian philosophy. The philosophers of Sāṁkhya school do not agree to the Advaita theory of the apprehension of the indescribable (*Anirvacanīyakhyāti*)'. This theory of the Advaitins' contends that the super-imposing of something indeterminable as either real or unreal. But, in fact, this is not possible. What is not known that cannot be superimposed. We know that superimposition of any object must be consistent with experience. So, theSāṁkhya philosophers propound the theory of the apprehension of a real and unreal object (*Sadāsatkhyāti*). According to the Sāṁkhya philosophy, one and the same thing can be regarded as real (*sat*) and also as unreal (*asat*) under different conditions. But this theory is not self-contradictory. In the illusory perception, 'this is silver', silver is real as existent in the silversmith's shop. But it is unreal when it is superimposed on nacre. So, it is the cognition of a real and unreal object. [5] This is Vijñānabhikṣu's explanation of the Sāṁkhyatheory of error.

5. Ātmakhyātivāda:

There is another Buddhist view of error which is known as*Ātmakhyāti*. This theory is propounded by the Vijñānavādins. According to the Vijñānavādins, *jñāna* is only *sat* or real. Except

jñāna, all external objects are non-existent. Because there are no such *pramāṇa*-s which can establish the *prameya*-s. [6]

According to the Vijñānavādins, *jñāna* and *prameya*both are equal. So, the external objects are nothing but *jñānasvarūpa.* They admit that error is not the cognition of absolute naught. It does not apprehend a non-existent blank. It apprehends the psychic fact as a trans-cognitive object. [7] Error arises from extra-mental psychosis. According to the Ātmakhyātivādins, the object exists depending on our mental state. Object cannot exist independently. When a perceiver cognizes the pot, this pot does not exist independently. They repudiated that object exists unconditionally. The existence of the object depends on mental psychosis. If something exists, it depends on our mental psychosis. They affirmed that the existence of an object depends on its own referential knowledge. Error does not arise from absolute naught. Something must be present there. Because without any referent, knowledge is not possible. Pot's presence depends upon the cognition of pot. Knowledge arises from mental state. But error arises from extra-mental state. When we perceive a snake on a rope, it is only the subjective image. But this is wrongly taken to be the cognition of an external object. According to the Ātmakhyātivādins, the self-cognition of the psychic fact is imagined to be the cognition of an objective trans-psychic reality.

6. Akhyātivāda:

The Pūrva-MīmāṁsakaPrābhākara School advocated the view which is known as *Akhyātivāda*. Both*Asatkhyāti* and *Ātmakhyāti* views of the Buddhists are rejected by the PrābhākaraMīmāṁsakas. They admit that error always involves a given element. Error involves both representation and presentation. In other words, according to the Prābhākara, the error does notconsist of one-single-cognition, but of two cognitions. We fail to distinguish between the

perceived fact and the memory image. For instance, 'this is silver'. It is a compound of two cognitions. One is given and another one is collecting through memory. It is not the case that, 'this' and 'silver' both are non-existents or psychic facts as a trans-cognitive object. 'This' involves the external object of reference or the presented one. Even in the case of erroneous cognition, there is something which must be present.

"This is silver" is a simple judgment. 'Silver' is not present here. So, 'this' is an instance, which is commonly used for the mis-identification of the silver. i.e. 'this' is the referent which is presented as the object externally. Here, the 'silver' is not actually identified as 'this' but rather 'silver' is separately cognized. When someone notices it as; "this is silver" then s/he does not perceive the silver. The cognition of the silver is presented to the perceiver through memory. The perceiver perceives only 'this'. 'This' is the referent of silver, without its silver-ness. 'This' is perceived by sense organ and 'the silver' is remembered. In the instance, there is a combination of two cognitions, i.e. perception and memory. The perceiver is unable to distinguish of two experiences.

Erroneous cognition is only negative non-distinction. On the contrary, correction is the negation of non-distinction. The cognition of "this is silver" - 'this' is a fact and 'silver' is also a fact. The correction does not deny its fact-hood. The object of 'this' and 'silver' both experiences are also fact and these are not cancelled. The shell is not cancelled as a fact. When the shell is re-called, at that time the shell is not cancelled as a fact nor as a reality of the elsewhere. The distinction between the perceived and remembered facts are rejected, i.e., called non-distinction. Prābhākara refused to recognize any positive element in error. According to them, error is only negative non-distinguishing between the presented object and the represented image. The Prābhākaras have given objective starting point, for all false

cognitions. In this respect, they go beyond the subjectivism of the Ātmakhyātivādins who reduce the false cognition to a mere subjective fact illegitimately objectified.

7. Anyathākhyātivāda:

The Naiyāyikas advocate *Anyathākhyāti* view. The theory of *Anyathākhyāti* is different from the Prābhākaras' *Akhyāti*. According to the Prābhākaras' *akhyāti* means non-apprehension. But this non-apprehension does not mean non-objectivity. *Akhyāti* means non-judging of the discriminative features between two cognitions. According to the Nyāya philosophy, the error arises from a single complex experience. On the other side, Prābhākaras' view, the error arises from negative non-distinguishing of two cognitions. That is to say, we confuse to discriminate two experiences, perception and memory. According to the Prābhākaras, both of the experiences are real.

But according to the Nyāya philosophy, in the rope-snake illusion; we are not aware of two experiences. When we perceive a snake on a rope, it is a single complex unitary experience. 'This is snake' for example, we perceive "this", and "snake" both. One is ordinary perception; another is extra-ordinary perception. This type of error does not arise from dual experience, which we are not able to discriminate. Negative non-distinguishing or *akhyāti* arises from 'failure of discrimination'. If we are able to discriminate these dual experiences then the error does not arise anymore.

But the Naiyāyikas do not admit this view. Because, there is present only a single complex experience. So, we do not have need to discriminate two experiences. When we perceive a snake on a rope, we perceive only 'this' through sense experience. 'Snake' is perceived through *jñanālakṣaṇa-pratyakṣa,* a kind of extra-ordinary perception. Somewhere we perceived a real snake through our sense experience. The apprehension of snake was real. When we perceive

a snake on a rope, we perceive only "this", without its special attribute. Now the question is: why do we perceive a snake on a rope? The answer is, we fail to perceive the special attribute of 'this'. We only perceive the general features. 'Curving' is the common feature of snake and rope. The error arises due to this similarity. Firstly, we perceive something which is lying. This perception is ordinary perception. But we do not know, what it is exactly. Due to some similarities and defects (media), we see this object as snake. The cognition of a snake is also true cognition. Because, the cognition of a snake is being gained through extra-ordinary perception. We are at present only perceiving 'this'. But the cognition of a snake arises through memory, because, we perceived the real snake in the jungle. That is why due to similarities, the cognition of a snake arises through memory and we perceive the snake through extra-ordinary perception. It is a case of false-characterization of 'this'. Snake-hood is inherent in snake. Snake-hood could not reside in 'this'. The error, according to the Naiyāyikas, arises due to false-characterization.

Conclusion

Different systems of Indian Philosophy explain error according to their own ontological presuppositions. The Bhāṭṭas and the Naiyāyikas approach the problem in a purely empirical and psychological way and their positions can derive support from common sense. The explanation of erroneous perception has been a perplexing question for all philosophy. The question is: How are we to explain the false perception of silver in a shell? Is it due to object itself? Or, is it due to our subjective attitude towards the object? According to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, while valid knowledge (*pramā)* is objective in the sense of being grounded in the object itself, all error is subjective in so far as it is due to the introduction of a certain foreign character into the object by the knowing subject.

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PROPER NAMES IN INDIAN AND WESTERN PHILOSOPHY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

What makes proper names unique in establishing a relationship between language and reality? This paper seeks to explore that question through a comparative study of the concept of proper names in both Indian and Western philosophical traditions. It examines the theories of meaning and reference developed by Frege, Russell, and Kripke alongside the Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā schools of Indian philosophy. The central aim is to illuminate how both traditions grapple with the ways in which names connect thought, language, and existence. While Western philosophers such as Frege, Russell, and Kripke investigated sense, reference, and rigid designation, Indian philosophers explored nāma (name) and nāma-rūpa (name and form) through epistemological categories such as śabda-pramāṇa (verbal testimony). By bringing these perspectives together, this paper attempts to show how names function not merely as linguistic labels but as instruments of knowledge and vehicles of meaning. The discussion concludes with the suggestion that Nyāya philosophy offers a framework capable of reconciling the semantic and ontological concerns surrounding proper names. Ultimately, this comparative inquiry aims to demonstrate that the meaning of a name cannot be understood apart from its use and its embeddedness in both thought and communicative practice.

Key words: Meaning, Proper Names, Sense, Name, *Śabda-Pramāṇa*.

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Introduction

It is claimed that Frege has not given a precise definition of a proper name. What he meant by the term 'proper name' can be explicated by his use of the term 'object'. An object is the referent of a proper name. The descriptivist account of proper names Russell and Frege has been vehemently criticized by the proponent of causal theory of reference. In this regard, we can, at first, mention the name of Saul Kripke. In fact, after Russell, it was Saul Kripke who interpreted names in terms of rigid designator. However, Kripke gives a different interpretation of proving the rigidity of proper names. Unlike Russell, Frege gives modal interpretation of proper names. According to Kripke, a name is a rigid designator if it designates the same objects in every possible world of an actual world. As far as the 'referential' aspect is concerned, there we find continuity from Russell to Wittgenstein down to Kripke.

The question of how names function has been one of the most enduring in philosophy of language. A name is more than a sound or sign; it is a medium through which identity, meaning, and reality are negotiated. In Western philosophy, particularly in the analytic tradition, debates surrounding proper names have centered on the issues of sense, reference, and the conditions under which a name successfully denotes an object. Meanwhile, Indian philosophical traditions have examined nāma (name) and nāma-rūpa (name and form) as fundamental categories tied to knowledge (pramāṇa), language, and ontology. By comparing the analytic debates initiated by Frege, Russell, and Kripke with the insights from Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā, Buddhist, and Vedāntic thought, we can uncover both convergences and divergences in the philosophical treatment of names. Such a dialogue not only enriches our understanding of proper names but also moves us toward a pluralistic philosophy of language that transcends cultural boundaries.

Proper Names in Western Philosophy

Frege: Sense and Reference

Frege's distinction between *Sinn* (sense) and *Bedeutung* (reference) remains foundational in the philosophy of language. He argued that the meaning of a proper name is not limited to the object it denotes. For instance, both "the Morning Star" and "the Evening Star" point to the same celestial body, Venus, though they express different modes of understanding or perspectives of that object.Sense, in Frege's theory, mediates between word and referent, allowing one to explain how informative identity statements are possible.

The issue that prompted Frege's theory was the problem of equality or identity statements—how it is that a statement such as "The Morning Star is the Evening Star" can be both informative and true. In *Concept Script* and later in *On Sense and Reference*, Frege argued that the identity relation involves not just objects but also the names or signs of those objects. A proper name, he said, is a sign designating a particular object. For instance, "Aristotle" refers to the historical individual, the pupil of Plato and the author of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Frege thus proposed that the sense of a name determines its reference, ensuring that language connects thought and reality in a stable and meaningful way.

Russell: Theory of Descriptions

Russell, in contrast, argued that most apparent proper names are actually "disguised descriptions." According to his theory, a name such as "Aristotle" is meaningful because it can be analyzed into a set of definite descriptions, e.g., "the teacher of Alexander" or "the author of the Metaphysics." Russell's approach avoids problems of empty names but struggles with names used rigidly

without descriptive backing.Russell's theory of proper name may be said to be a development of some of the basic ideas of J.S.Mill, because Mill was the first philosopher who ingrained the seed of proper name. From Mill's classification of names, Russell takes some clues in developing his theory of the concept of proper name. Mill maintaining that proper names are devoid of all connotation i.e.,devoid of descriptive content or meaning. But Russell equally differs from Mill in maintaining that the expressions which Mill used as proper names in ordinary usage are not proper names at all, they are only abbreviated or 'disguised descriptions'Russell (1911) advanced the view that proper names are disguised descriptions.For example, Aristotle might mean "the teacher of Alexander" or "the author of the Metaphysics." According to this theory, the meaning of a name is equivalent to the definite description associated with it. For Russell what we normally call Proper names like Aristotle, Socrates are not really logically Proper names but it is a ordinary Proper names .So ordinary Proper names are actually disguised description.Russell distinguishes between two categories of names: logically proper names and ordinary proper names. His theory of naming operates at two distinct levels that is one corresponding to logically proper names, which aligns with the realist theory of meaning and the principle of acquaintance, and the other concerning ordinary proper names. Examples such as "Aristotle," "Troy," and "Margaret" fall under the latter category. According to Russell, these ordinary proper names are not genuine logical names but rather abbreviated or condensed forms of descriptive expressions.."[2]

In 1905, Bertrand Russell formulated "Theory of denoting" to solve the three puzzles in his article, "On Denoting".

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[2]*Russell, B. 'Principle of Logical Atomism', in Contemporary British Philosophy: Personal Statements, First Series, London and New York, 1924. p. 243.*

These puzzles are – (1) the substitution of identical, (2) the law of excluded middle, and (3) the negative existential.

Russell got the first puzzle from Gottlob Frege's philosophy and last two puzzles form Alexius Meinong's philosophy.

He solved these puzzles by providing three part analysis of logical form.

To illustrate his argument, Russell used the well-known example, "The present king of France is bald." He argued that every properly constructed denoting phrase must denote something, and that definite descriptions; phrases of the form "the so-and-so" are intended to refer to whatever satisfies the given description. On this account, expressions such as "the Golden Mountain," "the Round Square," or "the winged horse of Greek mythology" appear to denote entities that fulfill their respective descriptions. In his seminal essay On Denoting (1905), Russell developed the Theory of Descriptions to explain how sentences containing such expressions can still be meaningful, even though they do not refer to any real or existing objects.

Kripke: Rigid Designation and the Causal Theory

Kripke challenged descriptivist theories by introducing the notion of rigid designation. A proper name refers to the same individual in every possible world in which that individual exists. Unlike descriptions, which may vary across worlds, names fix reference through a causal-historical chain of communication. "Aristotle" rigidly designates the same person even if he had not taught Alexander or written the Metaphysics. Kripke's view supports a direct reference theory, shifting the debate away from descriptive mediation. Kripke introduced the idea of a causal chain of reference. The reference of a name is fixed at an initial "baptism," and then passed on through communicative practices in

a community. Thus, names do not depend on associated descriptions but on historical and causal link. Saul Kripke (1972), in Naming and Necessity, revolutionized the debate. He rejected descriptivism and argued that names are rigid designators: A rigid designator refers to the same individual in all possible worlds in which that individual exists. In terms of this distinction between rigid and non-rigid designators, wecan now formulate Kripke's basic argument against the theory that proper names have sense as well as reference. The following is my formulation of the argument: "If a proper names has a sense then the reference of the proper name is determine by its sense, i.e., there is associated with a proper name a certain condition, whatever that condition may be, and an object is designated by the name if and only if it satisfies that condition. If this is how the reference of a proper name is determined then a proper name can not be a rigid designator; at least it can not in general be a rigid designator.

Kripke advanced several influential objections to the descriptivist position. He notably pointed out that in modal contexts, a proper name referring to an object x and a definite description that applies to x cannot be interchanged without altering the truth value of the statement. Building on this insight, he proposed an alternative “picture” of reference, wherein proper names function as linguistic tags initially assigned during a process of “baptism” and subsequently passed down through a chain of communication among speakers. Kripke’s challenge to descriptivism did not conclude the debate but rather revitalized it. If his view is correct, then the semantic content of a proper name lies entirely in its referent. This raises further questions: how can a name without a referent still hold meaning, and how can identity statements involving proper names be informative? Descriptivists have continued to refine their theories to address these concerns

while integrating aspects of Kripke's insights particularly by reconsidering how the modal distinctions between proper names and definite descriptions might coexist with descriptivist principles.

Kripke's causal theory suggested that a proper name's reference is established through a historical chain of usage, though he did not fully elaborate on this model. Later, philosophers such as R. M. Sainsbury extended his ideas. In Reference without Referents (2005), Sainsbury offered a framework for understanding how names and their references can persist, even in the case of empty names. His essay "The Same Name" further developed this causal approach, focusing on how names can be distinguished and maintained as distinct entities despite identical spellings, emphasizing individuation rather than reference determination.

Following Kripke's theory of rigid designation for proper names, a related development emerged in the form of the theory of natural kind terms, proposed by Hilary Putnam in his influential work The Meaning of "Meaning". Putnam argued that natural kind terms like "water" or "gold" are also rigid designators. They maintain their reference across possible worlds based on an initial act of naming or a shared conventional background. Putnam's account expanded the discussion of reference, linking it to the linguistic and social practices that sustain meaning. Together, Kripke and Putnam transformed the philosophy of language by demonstrating that both proper names and natural kind terms operate through causal and conventional mechanisms that ensure stability of reference. Yet, an important distinction remains: while proper names identify particular individuals, natural kind terms refer to entire categories or kinds of entities, thereby extending the theory of naming from individuals to the natural world itself.

The Concept of Nāma in Indian Philosophy

The Indian philosophical traditions approach the question of names not merely as semantic markers but as deeply embedded within epistemology (pramāṇa-śāstra), metaphysics, and soteriology. Unlike the Western analytic tradition, where the problem of proper names largely concerns reference and meaning in a logical-linguistic framework, Indian systems treat names as part of a larger inquiry into the relation between language (śabda), knowledge, and reality. Several schools, notably Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā, Buddhism, and Vedānta, offer distinctive treatments of nāma (name) and nāma-rūpa (name and form). Nama meaning that naming object. In Indian philosophy nama is compare to analytical philosophy conpet of Proper names.

Nyāya: Śabda-pramāṇa and Proper Names

The Nyāya school regards śabda (verbal testimony) as a valid source of knowledge (pramāṇa). A word, including a proper name, is meaningful because of its conventionally established relation (saṃketa) with its referent. Thus, when one utters the name "Rāma," the hearer grasps the individual Rāma through an established linguistic convention. Proper names here are not arbitrary noises but carry epistemic authority, provided they are uttered by a trustworthy source (āpta-vākya).Nyāya philosophers also emphasize the social-historical dimension of names, somewhat parallel to Kripke's causal-historical theory. Once a name is conventionally fixed, it is transmitted through linguistic practice with a community. In this sense, Nyāya anticipates elements of modern direct-reference theories, although framed in terms of testimony and trustworthiness.

Mīmāṃsā: Eternal Words and Authority

The Mīmāṃsā school, particularly in its focus on Vedic interpretation, takes a stronger stance: words, including names, are eternal (śabda-nityatva). According to Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, words are not human inventions but exist independently, revealed in the Veda. Names thus carry intrinsic authority, especially when connected to Vedic injunctions. A proper name in this context does not merely identify an individual but participates in the eternal structure of language itself.This stands in contrast to Western views like Russell's descriptivism or Kripke's causal theory, where names are contingent and historically generated. In Mīmāṃsā, names embody a trans-historical reality, grounding their epistemic reliability.

Sense and Reference vs. Śabda and Artha

Frege's distinction between Sinn (sense) and Bedeutung (reference) finds resonance with the Indian pairing of śabda (word/sound) and artha (meaning/referent). Both traditions recognize that a name cannot be reduced to mere phonetic sound; it must be linked to a referent through an intermediary cognitive or conventional element.

For Frege, this intermediary is "sense," which provides a mode of presentation.

For Nyāya, it is the convention (saṃketa) that connects śabda with artha.

Thus, both highlight the necessity of a mediating structure, although the Western debate is primarily semantic and cognitive, while the Indian is epistemological and pragmatic.

Mīmāṃsā and the Problem of Reference

The Mīmāṃsā idea of eternal words challenges the assumption that names are merely contingent historical phenomena. While

analytic philosophy does not accept such metaphysical claims, this view raises a deeper question: is there a structural permanence to linguistic meaning that transcends individual acts of naming?

Buddhism and Empty Names: Buddhist nominalism provides a radical critique of Kripkean realism. If names lack stable referents because all entities are aggregates in flux, then the analytic fixation on rigid designation may presuppose an ontological stability that does not exist. This Buddhist challenge could reframe contemporary debates on fictional names, negative existentials, and non-referring terms.

Indian philosophical traditions, by contrast, approach names through a broader epistemological and metaphysical lens. Nyāya emphasizes the role of testimony (śabda-pramāṇa) in establishing reference, showing that names function reliably within social and linguistic conventions. Mīmāṃsā views words as eternal, highlighting their intrinsic authority and ontological grounding.

This cross-cultural dialogue invites a more integrative and pluralistic philosophy of language. Names are not mere symbols; they are instruments of knowledge, communication, and understanding. They simultaneously anchor us in empirical reality, connect us across historical and linguistic contexts, and point toward the ultimate or transcendent dimensions of experience. By engaging both Western analytic precision and Indian epistemological and metaphysical sophistication, a global philosophy of names emerges—one that acknowledges the complexity of meaning, the contingency and stability of reference, and the interplay between language, thought, and reality.

Conclusion

The study of proper names uncovers both universal philosophical concerns and culturally distinct insights. In the

Western analytic tradition, thinkers such as Frege, Russell, and Kripke investigated names through the lens of sense, reference, and logical necessity. Their work clarifies how language maps onto the world and how reference remains stable across different contexts.Indian philosophy, by contrast, situates the question of naming within epistemology and metaphysics. Nyāya emphasizes linguistic convention and testimony; Mīmāṃsā treats words as eternal; and Buddhism questions the very stability of reference.By bringing these perspectives together, we arrive at a richer understanding of how names function as bridges—between words and objects, between thought and reality, and between philosophical cultures. Both traditions remind us that a name, though simple in appearance, encapsulates the profound human effort to connect language with truth.

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