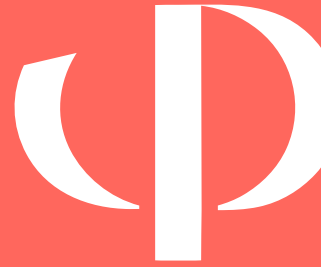


# Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies



FALL 2017

VOLUME 17 | NUMBER 1

## FROM THE EDITORS

Ethan Mills and Prasanta Bandyopadhyay

## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

## ARTICLES

Jonardon Ganeri

*An Exemplary Indian Intellectual: Bimal  
Krishna Matilal*

Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad

*Philosophy, Indian and Western: Some  
Thoughts from Bimal Matilal*

Richard Hayes

*Bimal Krishna Matilal's Style of Doing  
Philosophy*

Purushottama Bilimoria

*Three Dogmas of Matilal: Direct Realism,  
Lingophilia, and Dharma Ethics*

Nirmalya Narayan Chakraborty

*A Cautionary Note on Matilal's Way of  
Doing Indian Philosophy*

Ethan Mills

*Whither the Matilal Strategy?*

Kisor K. Chakrabarti

*Nyāya Ethical Theory*

Anand Jayprakash Vaidya

*Bimal Krishna Matilal and the Enduring  
Significance of the Constructive  
Engagement Between Contemporary  
Analytic and Classical Indian Philosophy*

Neil Sims

*Expanding Matilal's Project through First-  
Person Research*



APA NEWSLETTER ON

# Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies

ETHAN MILLS AND PRASANTA BANDYOPADHYAY, CO-EDITORS

VOLUME 17 | NUMBER 1 | FALL 2017

## FROM THE EDITORS

### *B. K. Matilal: The Past and Future of the Study of Indian Philosophy*

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To readers familiar with the contemporary study of Indian philosophy, B. K. Matilal (1935–1991) needs little introduction. Through his tireless promotion of the philosophical riches of classical India, which was rooted in classical texts and traditions while at the same time forging connections to contemporary (primarily Anglo-American) philosophy, he became one of the most influential scholars of Indian philosophy of the late twentieth century (along with a handful of others such as J. N. Mohanty and Karl Potter).

Matilal was also a creative thinker in his own right, as exemplified by his intricate defense of direct realism in the context of a sympathetic treatment of philosophical skepticism, his nuanced understanding of ethics informed by careful readings of literature, and his articulation of a culturally informed ethical pluralism as a response to relativism (to give just a few examples). He continues to inspire philosophers who feel that a background in what he called “history of philosophy in the global sense” can be a vital resource for original philosophical work.<sup>1</sup>

Matilal’s education was, like his later work, a mixture of Western and Indian elements. He studied Navya Nyāya (“New Logic”) with several *pandits* (scholars trained in traditional Indian philosophical systems) while completing his M.A. from Calcutta University. He eventually moved to Harvard, where he studied with Daniel Ingalls and W. V. O. Quine, earning his Ph.D. in 1965. After teaching at the University of Toronto in the early 1970s, Matilal was appointed Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at the University of Oxford and Fellow of All Souls College in 1976, a post he held until his untimely death from cancer in 1991. (Further biographical details can be found in the articles below, especially those by Ganeri, Hayes, Ram-Prasad, and Bilimoria).

The purpose of the present issue of the *APA Newsletter on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies* is

to honor the life and work of B. K. Matilal by continuing conversations—both complimentary and critical—concerning his extraordinary influence on the direction of the study of Indian philosophy both during his lifetime and in the quarter century since his death. A recent issue of the journal *Sophia* has a similar theme (see volume 55, issue 4), and we direct readers to that issue as well. We hope this issue of the newsletter will complement the *Sophia* issue.

Our first contribution, by Jonardon Ganeri, begins with Matilal’s biography and how this shaped his thought on issues from logic to cross-cultural understanding, all of which made him “an exemplary Indian intellectual.” Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad’s contribution explores some of the deeper cultural issues involved in Matilal’s work and their continuing relevance today, especially with regard to the relationship between Indian and Western philosophy and the place of Indian philosophy in the Western academy. The contribution from Richard Hayes is a warm, personal reflection on what Matilal was like as a philosopher and as a human being. Purushottama Bilimoria’s contribution focuses on what he calls “three dogmas” of Matilal: direct realism, *lingophilia*, and *dharma* ethics (although Bilimoria’s intentions are more expository than deeply critical).

Slightly more critical contributions are provided by Nirmalya Narayan Chakraborty, Ethan Mills, and Kisor K. Chakrabarti. Chakraborty wonders whether Matilal’s efforts unfairly use Western thought as *the* standard by which we should understand Indian philosophy, while Mills questions whether we might consider approaches beyond Matilal’s typical classical Indian-contemporary analytic comparisons. Chakrabarti looks into whether Matilal has slightly overlooked the contributions to ethics in the Nyāya school through a detailed discussion of classical Nyāya texts.

The contribution from Anand Jayprakash Vaidya defends Matilal’s approach from criticism by noting that “analytic” can refer to a methodology, which is quite readily found within classical Indian philosophy. Lastly, the contribution from Neil Sims considers one way in which we might expand Matilal’s project to include first-person, phenomenological methods such as those provided by the Yoga school, methods that Sims argues should not be seen as irrational.

We hope this issue will continue the kinds of conversations Matilal wanted to have about deep philosophical issues in logic, epistemology, and ethics, but also about cultural issues surrounding relations between East and West in our contemporary, postcolonial world. We hope that the essays in this volume will encourage members of our discipline

to develop an appreciation of India's rich and vast philosophical heritage. The proper representation of Indian and other non-Western traditions within the discipline would be the best way to honor the life and legacy of B. K. Matilal.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editors wish to thank Erin Shepherd, all of our contributors, and our anonymous reviewer for helping to make this issue possible.

#### NOTES

1. *Mind, Language, and World: The Collected Essays of Bimal Krishna Matilal*, edited by Jonardon Ganeri (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 356.

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## SUBMISSION GUIDELINES AND INFORMATION

### GOAL OF THE NEWSLETTER ON ASIAN AND ASIAN-AMERICAN PHILOSOPHERS

The *APA Newsletter on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies* is sponsored by the APA Committee on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies to report on the philosophical work of Asian and Asian-American philosophy, to report on new work in Asian philosophy, and to provide a forum for the discussion of topics of importance to Asian and Asian-American philosophers and those engaged with Asian and Asian-American philosophy. We encourage a diversity of views and topics within this broad rubric. None of the varied philosophical views provided by authors of newsletter articles necessarily represents the views of any or all the members of the Committee on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies, including the editor(s) of the newsletter. The committee and the newsletter are committed to advancing Asian and Asian-American philosophical scholarships and bringing this work and this community to the attention of the larger philosophical community; we do not endorse any particular approach to Asian or Asian-American philosophy.

### SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

1) **Purpose:** The purpose of the newsletter is to publish information about the status of Asians and Asian Americans and their philosophy and to make the resources of Asians and Asian-American philosophy available to a larger philosophical community. The newsletter presents discussions of recent developments in Asians and Asian-American philosophy (including, for example, both modern and classical East-Asian philosophy, both modern and classical South Asian philosophy, and Asians and Asian Americans doing philosophy in its various forms), related work in other disciplines, literature overviews, reviews of the discipline as a whole, timely book reviews, and suggestions for both spreading and improving the teaching of Asian philosophy in the current curriculum. It also informs the profession about the work of the APA Committee on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers

and Philosophies. One way the dissemination of knowledge of the relevant areas occurs is by holding highly visible, interactive sessions on Asian philosophy at the American Philosophical Association's three annual divisional meetings. Potential authors should follow the submission guidelines below:

- i) Please submit essays electronically to the editor(s). Articles submitted to the newsletter should be limited to ten double-spaced pages and must follow the APA submission guidelines.
  - ii) All manuscripts should be prepared for anonymous review. Each submission shall be sent to two referees. Reports will be shared with authors. References should follow *The Chicago Manual Style*.
  - iii) If the paper is accepted, each author is required to sign a copyright transfer form, available on the APA website, prior to publication.
- 2) **Book reviews and reviewers:** If you have published a book that you consider appropriate for review in the newsletter, please ask your publisher to send the editor(s) a copy of your book. Each call for papers may also include a list of books for possible review. To volunteer to review books (or some specific book), kindly send the editor(s) a CV and letter of interest mentioning your areas of research and teaching.
  - 3) **Where to send papers/reviews:** Please send all articles, comments, reviews, suggestions, books, and other communications to the editor: Prasanta Bandyopadhyay ([psb@montana.edu](mailto:psb@montana.edu)).
  - 4) **Submission deadlines:** Submissions for spring issues are due by the preceding November 1, and submissions for fall issues are due by the preceding February 1.
  - 5) **Guest editorship:** It is possible that one or more members of the Committee on Asian and Asian American Philosophers and Philosophies could act as guest editors for one of the issues of the newsletter depending on their expertise in the field. To produce a high-quality newsletter, one of the co-editors could even come from outside the members of the committee depending on his/her area of research interest.

## ARTICLES

### *An Exemplary Indian Intellectual: Bimal Krishna Matilal*

Jonardon Ganeri

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY, ABU DHABI

*Editors' Note: The following paper originally appeared as Chapter 15 of Identity as Reasoned Choice: A South Asian Perspective on the Reach and Resources of Public and Practical Reason in Shaping Individual Identities (New York: Continuum Books, 2012; Paperback: London: Bloomsbury, 2014). We are grateful to the author and the publisher for their permission to reprint this paper here.*

Bimal Krishna Matilal is an exemplary case of a modern Indian intellectual whose identity is fashioned through an engagement with and re-appropriation of India's intellectual past. I will first sketch his intellectual biography and then examine the range and significance of his work. Matilal became the Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at the University of Oxford and Fellow of All Souls College in 1976, a position that had earlier been held by the renowned Indian philosopher and later President of India, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. Born in 1935 in Joynagar, a small town in West Bengal, he left for Kolkata at the age of fourteen, where he studied many subjects, including mathematics, and was persuaded to take up the study of Navya-Nyāya—the “new reason” of early modern India—by Gaurinath Sastri, who, he said, “encouraged me to enter the dense and thorny world of Navya-nyāya when I was considering more favourably the sunny world of Kāvya [poetry] and Alamkāra [poetics].” He studied with Anantakumar Tarkatīrtha and, while doing his M.A. at Calcutta University, with Taranatha Tarkatīrtha. In 1957 he was appointed as lecturer in the Government Sanskrit College, continuing to study Nyāya with eminent *pandits* including Kalipada Tarkacarya and Madhusudana Nyayacarya. Under their guidance he completed the traditional degree of Tarkatīrtha, Master of Logic and Argument, in 1962. Such was his enthusiasm that there are even rumors that he went to his wedding with a volume of Navya-Nyāya in his pocket.

For some time prior to this, Matilal had been in correspondence with Daniel Ingalls, who suggested to him the possibility of moving to Harvard in order to acquaint himself with the work being done by W. V. O. Quine in philosophical and mathematical logic. Breaking with traditional patterns Matilal decided to follow this advice, completing his Ph.D. at Harvard in 1965 having attended Quine's classes and continuing his studies in mathematical logic with Dagfinn Føllesdal. In his doctoral thesis, *The Navya-Nyāya Doctrine of Negation*, published by Harvard University Press in 1968, he gives voice to his growing conviction, emerging from this exposure to contemporary logic, that “India should not, indeed cannot, be left out of any general study of the history of logic and philosophy.” This was to be the first statement of a thesis to the defense of which he devoted his academic life, that our philosophical understanding of the fundamental problems of logic and philosophy is enriched if the ideas of the Indian scholars are brought to bear in the modern discussion. His further researches into Navya-Nyāya, as

well as into Indian theory more generally, were published in a range of path-breaking books, including *Epistemology, Logic and Grammar in Indian Philosophical Analysis*,<sup>1</sup> *Logic, Language and Reality*,<sup>2</sup> and (posthumously) *The Character of Logic in India*.<sup>3</sup>

It was without doubt very fitting that a conference should have been held in Kolkata in 2007 to commemorate Matilal's enormous contribution to the field.<sup>4</sup> When, fifty-five years before, D. H. H. Ingalls published his *Materials for the Study of Navya-Nyāya Logic*, what he managed to do above all else was to read the logical theory of Navya-Nyāya with the benefit of contemporary work in logic, especially the work of his Harvard colleague W. V. O. Quine. He demonstrated, simply but brilliantly, that the distinctions, techniques, and concepts that had been developed by the Naiyāyikas (i.e., followers of Nyāya) were not mere works of hair-splitting sophistry, as they had appeared to the logically untutored Indological eye, but were rather sophisticated achievements in logical theory. Before Ingalls, one of the few people who could be said to have achieved something similar was Stanisław Schayer, the brilliant student of the Polish logician Łukasiewicz, who tried to reinterpret the early Nyāya theory of inference according to modern logic much as Łukasiewicz had sought to reinterpret the Aristotelian syllogism. Ingalls was himself very much aided in his work, I should add, by the doctoral thesis of the Calcutta scholar Saileswar Sen, published from Wageningen in 1924 under the title *A Study on Mathurānātha's Tattvacintāmaṇi-rahasya*. Saileswar Sen states that “It was in 1920, when I was a student of the University of Calcutta, that I made up my mind to prosecute research studies in Hindu Philosophy in a Dutch University,” a decision that led him eventually to Amsterdam, where he worked under the supervision of the great Vaiśeṣika scholar B. Faddegon. Another scholar from Amsterdam, Frits Staal, wrote a sequence of breakthrough articles in Navya-Nyāya logic in the early 1960s, now collected in his book *Universals: Studies in Indian Logic and Linguistics*.<sup>5</sup> Staal supervised the doctoral work of Cornelis Goekoop, which resulted in an important publication, *The Logic of Invariable Concomitance in the Tattvacintāmaṇi*.<sup>6</sup> Because of this link between Holland and Kolkata, forged by a shared devotion to the study of logic, it is perhaps not a coincidence that Matilal chose to publish his second book with the Dutch publisher Mouton.

Ingalls's inspirational approach drew Matilal to Harvard, and I do not think it would be very controversial to say that Matilal soon showed himself to have a finer logical acumen even than Ingalls himself (Ingalls by this time having already returned from Navya-Nyāya to the “sunny world” of poetics and the translation of poetry). Matilal's interest was in logic *per se*, as a global human intellectual achievement, and in Indian logic and Navya-Nyāya logic insofar as they were very significant but poorly studied components of that achievement. Indian theory was then, and I believe remains today, a tremendously exciting area for someone to work in who is by temperament a philosopher, that is, not so much interested in the history of ideas as in the ideas themselves, in the potential and possibilities they can lead to. For philosophers in the past have often had ideas or thought in ways that did not enter the mainstream of historical development, and a return

to those neglected pathways in the history of thought is sometimes intellectually enriching as nothing else can be.

To give an example of what I mean, one has only to consider the dominance of Aristotle's logic on the development of logic in the West, and to think, for instance, how the Stoics are now admired for their anticipations of the propositional calculus. If many other forks in the history of logic in the West were only briefly ventured along, which in many cases can be returned to now with profit, how much more so will that be true of an entire non-Western history of logic, branches, trunk-roads, and all? So when Matilal wrote about the relationship between Aristotelian and Nyāya logic, as he did in both his *Logic, Language and Reality* and in his *The Character of Logic in India*, he displayed very little interest indeed in the question that would intrigue a historian of ideas, the question of diffusion or possible historical influence. Matilal's interest was in the philosophical relationship between Greek and Indian logic; indeed, he was perhaps the first to demonstrate conclusively that there are structural differences between the two that go deeper than contingent differences in formulation or emphasis. Matilal's insistence that Indian logic is to be thought of as operating with what he calls a "property-location" model of sentential structure rather than a subject-predicate model has wide-ranging implications that are still being worked out.

A similar spirit can be seen at work in Matilal's groundbreaking work on the informal logic to be found in the debating manuals of the Naiyāyikas, Buddhists, Medics, and Jainas, in comparison with each other and with works such as Aristotle's *Topics* and *Sophistici Elenchi*. Here I would highlight in particular Matilal's defense and rehabilitation of the so-called *vitaṇḍā* "refutation-only" style of debate, in which the proponent advances no thesis at all but merely attacks the opponent's counter-thesis. Matilal simultaneously recognized that such debating positions have an important philosophical value in the construction of skeptical arguments, and offered a defense with the help of speech-act theory and the idea of illocutionary negation. In many ways this epitomizes Matilal's approach, which resembles the spirit in which modern philosophers have sought to reinterpret the early Greeks. So when Matilal writes about Nāgārjuna's *catuṣkoṭi* or "tetralemma," his question is not "Where did this formula come from?" but "How is it logically possible to deny all four lemmas?" This approach is one which he himself describes at various times as a "re-thinking of the ancient and medieval Indian philosophers in contemporary terms," a reconceptualization and reappropriation of historical ideas which was seen by him as a prerequisite of all creative philosophical thinking.

In his study of Buddhist logic, Matilal again both saw the philosophical importance and asked the critical philosophical questions, challenging the theory with problems it had not previously had to address. Matilal was not the first to notice, for example, that Dinnāga's idea of a "triple-condition" or *trirūpa* seems threatened with redundancy problems, but to him we owe the distinction between an epistemic and a realistic reading of the conditions, as well as a formal solution to the redundancy problem. To Matilal is due also the idea that the Buddhist

use of a double negation in its semantic theory incorporates two different negations, which he called "nominally bound" and "sententially bound," thereby avoiding a triviality objection. In the last few years there have been several workshops and conferences on Buddhist logic and philosophy of language, and it has seemed evident to me that the trajectory of research over this period has been shaped very greatly by Matilal's framing of the issues.<sup>7</sup> Something similar is true in the field of Jaina logic, where again Matilal asked the philosophical question "Is Jaina logic paraconsistent?" a question that has generated a lively debate in recent years.

Many of the issues that earlier Indian logicians had wrestled with resurface, sometimes in a rarified form, in the early modern system of Navya-Nyāya. Matilal's work on negation in Navya-Nyāya, both his book *The Navya-Nyāya Doctrine of Negation*, and his article "Double Negation in Navya-Nyāya" (appropriately first published in a *festschrift* for Ingalls), are now standard works. Matilal's "Q" notation, which formed the basis for the later idea of a "property-location" model, has been the subject of much discussion, and Matilal's conjecture that Navya-Nyāya logic is best understood as a three-valued logic is an ongoing topic of debate. The field of Navya-Nyāya studies has been slower to take off than some of the other areas of research Matilal's work has opened up, and this is, of course, both an irony and a pity. But with the gradual publication of better editions and translations, and with the continuing search for appropriate tools and concepts from modern theory to assist in its interpretation, I would confidently predict that Matilal's work on philosophical theory in early modern South Asia may yet well prove to be one of his most enduring legacies.

### A CONVERSATION AMONG EQUALS

The articles in Matilal's two volumes of *Collected Essays*<sup>8</sup> reveal much about the extraordinary depth and quality of his philosophical engagement with India. His reputation as one of the leading exponents of Indian logic and epistemology is, of course, reflected here. Yet those who know of him through his work in this field, as I have just described it, may be surprised to discover the range of his other work. His writings deal, in general, with every aspect of intellectual India: from analysis of the arguments of the classical philosophers to evaluation of the role of philosophy in classical Indian society, from diagnosis of Western perceptions of Indian philosophy to analysis of the thought of past Indian intellectuals like Bankimchandra and Radhakrishnan. Matilal, strikingly, is willing to look in a great range of sources for philosophical theory. As well as the writings of the classical Indian philosophical schools, he uses material from the grammatical literature, the epics, law books, medical literature, poetics, and literary criticism. Matilal argues that it is only in the study of such diversity of literature that one can discover the mechanisms of the internal criticism to which a dynamic culture necessarily subjects itself in the process of revising and reinterpreting its values and the meaning of its fundamental concepts, and to be sure that one's own evaluation and criticism is immersed in, and not detached from, the practices and perceptions of the culture (vol. 1, ch. 28). He also observes that a selective attention to particular aspects of Indian

culture is part of what has generated a set of myths and misperceptions about Indian philosophy, notably the popular idea that Indian philosophy is primarily spiritual and intuitive, in contrast to “the rational West.” Explicitly recognizing this risk of bias produced by selective attention, Matilal extends as widely as possible the observational basis from which his conclusions are drawn.

While his work always appeals to classical Indian sources, Matilal’s treatment is neither historical nor philological. He does not engage in the reconstruction of the original Ur-texts, nor in descriptions of the intellectual development of a person or the evolution and chronology of a school. Instead, Matilal approaches the Indian materials with a methodology that is explicitly comparative-philosophical. In one essay, he describes the aims of this approach in the following terms: “The purpose of the Indian philosopher today who chooses to work on the classical systems is to interpret, and thereby offer a medium where philosophers . . . , both Indian and Western, may converse” (vol. 1, 356). Behind this modest statement lay a bold intellectual program, a reinterpretation of the relationship between contemporary philosophy and the classical cultures.

The history of Indian philosophical studies in the twentieth century has indeed been a history of comparisons, comparisons between Indian philosophy on the one hand, and whichever philosophical system was in vogue on the other. British idealism, logical positivism, neo-Kantian, and ordinary language philosophy have all been used as counterpoints for a comparison with Indian theory. Matilal himself drew mainly on the developments in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy. Is Matilal’s work, then, simply the latest in a long line of fashionable but transient comparisons, this time between Indian and analytical philosophy? Matilal himself responded to this criticism, arguing that if nothing else, his work was a much needed “corrective,” a way of displacing prevalent myths about the irrational and mystical nature of the Indian philosophers. More importantly, he criticized early comparativists for misunderstanding the nature and extent of the problem they were addressing. His predecessors were unclear first of all about the purpose of making the comparison, and in consequence rarely got further than merely juxtaposing doctrines, making priority claims in the history of ideas, or, at best, arguing that a doctrine acquires *prima facie* support if it can be shown to have arisen independently in different places. They could supply, however, no criterion for determining when a point of comparison is significant and when merely superficial. Indeed, the very existence of such a criterion might be cast in doubt by J. N. Mohanty’s observation that, in practice, “just when an exciting point of agreement is identified and pursued, surprising differences erupt; and just when you have the feeling that no two ideas could be further apart, identities catch you off guard.”<sup>9</sup> Comparison is always a process of simplification, in which allegedly “accidental” differences in formulation or context are eliminated, but without a criterion for distinguishing the accidental from the essential, the comparison lacks proper grounding. Another objection to the early approach is that the Indian theories were mostly treated as the objects of the comparison, to be placed in correspondence with some subset of Western theory, an approach which necessarily

denied to them the possibility of original content or of making a contribution to an ongoing investigation.

For Matilal, on the other hand, the goal was never merely to compare. His program was informed, first and foremost, by a deep humanism, a conviction that the classical thinkers should not be thought of as mysterious, exotic, or tradition-bound creatures, but as rational agents trying to understand their cultures and societies with as little prejudice as possible: “We may discover in this way that in the past we were not all gods or spiritual dolls, but we were at least humans with all their glories and shortcomings, their ambitions and aspirations, their reasons and emotions” (vol. 1, 376). It is this humanism in Matilal’s approach that is brought out in his claim that the comparativist should create the means whereby philosophers of different ages and societies may converse. The point is to establish the prerequisites for a debate or an interaction, something that can sustain, in Amartya Sen’s apt phrase, an “intellectual connecting” between philosophers of different cultures.<sup>10</sup> The basis for such an interaction is, for Matilal, a shared commitment to a set of evaluative norms on reasoned argument and the assessment of evidence, rather than to any particular shared body of doctrine. A little like the *adhyakṣa* or “supervisor” in a traditional Indian debate, the comparativist’s role in Matilal’s conception is to set out and oversee those ground rules adherence to which is a precondition for the conversation to take place. Matilal’s field of expertise was analytical philosophy and so he sought to open the conversation between the classical Indian philosophers and his contemporary analytical colleagues. He succeeded in charting the philosophical terrain, identifying the salient groups of texts appropriate for analytical inquiry (most notably, the *pramāṇa-śāstra*), and pinpointing the topics in which Indian theory can be expected to make a substantial contribution.

Matilal stresses that it is essential for the modern comparativist to have, in addition to sound linguistic and philological skills, a good understanding of “what counts as a philosophical problem in the classical texts” (vol. 1, 356). How does one know, when reading a classical text, what is to count as a philosophical problem? Broadly speaking, there have been two sorts of response to this question: universalism and relativism. Universalism, in its extreme form, is the doctrine that philosophical problems are global, that diverse philosophical cultures are addressing the same questions, and that the differences between them are ones of style rather than content. A more moderate universalism claims only that there is a single logical space of philosophical problems, in which different cultures explore overlapping but not necessarily coextensive regions. Universalists believe that there is a *philosophia perennis*, a global philosophy, whose nature will be revealed by a synthesis or amalgamation of the ideas of East and West. The alternative, relativism, states in its extreme form that philosophical problems are entirely culture-specific, that each tradition has its own private conceptual scheme, incommensurable with all others. A more moderate relativism permits a “notional” commensuration of the ideas of diverse cultures, but insists that the similarities are in style alone, and not in content. The doctrines of the East can be made to look familiar to a Western thinker, similar

enough indeed to seem intelligible; but in substance, they are quite different.

### A COMMON GROUND?

Matilal unambiguously rejects relativism, and he offers both a critique and an alternative. The alternative is most clearly formulated in his later analysis of relativism in moral theory. He formulates there a thesis of “minimal universal morality,” the doctrine that there are certain basic and universally applicable values, a “minimal moral fabric underlying all societies and all groups of human beings” (vol. 2, 260). The minimal universal morals are values that attach to the “naked man” stripped of specific cultural context; they are perhaps the basic capacities and needs associated with one’s position as a human being in a society. These are values that the comparativist can identify, if he approaches the other culture with humanity and imagination (vol. 1, chs. 24, 25). The existence of such raw human values is consistent with there being substantive and even incommensurable local differences, and for this reason Matilal regarded his position as combining pluralism with moral realism. The relativist, mistaking the local, context-specific values of a given society with the totality of its values, overlooks the existence of a commonality which can serve as the basis of real confrontation, interaction, and exchange between cultures: “To transform two monologues into a dialogue we need a common ground, some common thought patterns between the participants, as well as a willingness to listen to each other” (vol. 2, 163).

At the same time, it is the local, culture-specific values that characterize or individuate a given culture, distinguish it from others. The characteristic values of a culture, religion, or society are often the interesting and important things to explore, but it is the existence of a common framework that makes it possible to explore them: “I do not say that different Indian religions talk simply about the same thing in different languages and idioms. . . . Rather, I would say that they talk about different things while standing on a common ground” (vol. 2, 174). Underlying Matilal’s humane pluralism is a bold recognition that “human nature is manifold and is expressed through diverse values, ways of thinking, acting and feeling” (vol. 2, 387), that global human values can coexist with culture-specific constraints, that genuinely conflicting values are possible, and that they are possible because of the existence of a common set of values.

The idea has a specific application in Matilal’s approach to comparative philosophy. Here the common ground consists in norms governing rational argument. Any conversation between Indian and Western philosophers depends on there being a minimum of agreement, or at least a limit on difference, about what counts as a rational argument or a well-conducted investigation into a philosophical problem. Rationality in a minimal sense is itself a universal value. When he has identified the idioms for these shared principles of rational argument, a comparativist has a common ground from which to explore differences. Matilal’s pluralism acknowledges what is right about both universalism and relativism, without being reducible to either. His writings are “marvellous conversations of mankind,”<sup>11</sup> between Sextus Empiricus and Sañjaya, Strawson and Udayana, Bhartṛhari and Quine.

Matilal sought in his work to bring classical India into the philosophical mainstream, thereby “transforming the exile into companion.”<sup>12</sup> If the Sanskrit philosophical literature had indeed been excluded from the philosophical curriculum, it was because of a myth, the myth that there are two philosophical cultures, one Eastern, spiritual, atavistic, the other Western, rational, materialistic, cultures having incommensurable values, doctrines, and standards. As H. H. Price, while Wykeham Professor of Logic at Oxford, put the matter: “We seem to be confronted with two entirely different worlds of thought, so different that there is not even the possibility of disagreement between them. The one looks outward, and is concerned with Logic and with the presuppositions of scientific knowledge; the other inward, into the ‘deep yet dazzling darkness’ of the mystical consciousness.”<sup>13</sup> Matilal ruefully comments, in a slightly different context, that in this strange mixture of fact and imagination, it is as if the Westerner is set on conquering the other (foreign lands, the material world), and the Indian on conquering himself (his inner world) (vol. 2, 274). In any case, the effect of the division was to deny to “Orientals” the status of being people-like-us: “The Oriental man is either subhuman or superhuman, never human. He is either a snake-charmer, a native, an outlandish species, or else a Bhagawan, a Maharishi, a Mahārāja, an exotic person, a Prabhupāda. The implication of the presupposition is that there cannot be any horizontal relationship between East and West” (vol. 1, 373).

Matilal regarded the very idea that there are independently bounded and closed philosophical cultures as a dogma of Orientalism, albeit a self-sustaining one which has served the historical interests of Indian and Western philosophers alike. Mysticism and spirituality, the properties projected onto the East, do not fit the Western self-image as rational and scientific: “It is as if our Western man is embarrassed to acknowledge anything that is even remotely irrational or mystical as part of his indigenous heritage” (vol. 2, 273). So streams of thought such as Neoplatonism have been marginalized in the standard history of Western philosophy. In no less measure, Indian authors like Radhakrishnan have wished to downplay the rationalist streams in the Indian cultures in their desire to represent Indian culture as distinctively spiritual and intuitive, a desire at one with the nationalist search for an autonomous Indian identity (vol. 1, ch. 26). Anthropologists and “colonial liberals” have also found the relativist dogma convenient, for it absolved them of the need to make value judgments on the practices of the society being governed or observed. The platitude, however, is a myth: “The fact of the matter is that materialism and spiritualism, rationality and irrationalism-cum-intuitionism, are monopolies of neither India nor the West” (vol. 1, 428). Matilal’s argument against the dogma (and, indeed, against other expressions of cultural relativism) is that it is impossible to individuate cultures in any such way as would give them sharp boundaries: cultures are always mixing and merging with each other, identities are being enriched and revised by adoption and absorption (vol. 2, chs. 18, 19). Indeed, it is for Matilal the very mutability of cultures that shows real confrontation between them to be possible. If relativism were true, the only confrontation that could occur would be notional, and would have no impact on the values of either culture.

Matilal's insistence that cultures do not have unchanging, immutable essences anticipates Amartya Sen's denial of the existence of "cultural boundaries" in the reach of reasons;<sup>14</sup> even what seem to be the most characteristic and embedded values of a culture are subject to gradual trade-offs, rejections, and modifications in the course of time.

Matilal, then, as an intellectual had no desire simply to be a scholar of Indian intellectual history. He regarded himself as a philosopher in a cosmopolitan sense, a member of a global intellectual community. He was also very much a situated interpreter: someone for whom the engagement with India's past was an important ingredient in the fashioning of his own intellectual identity as a philosopher. Nourishing his philosophical imagination with ideas made available to him by this past, he was perfectly able to offer a critique of contemporary analytical theory when appropriate; and it is for this reason that it is a somewhat facile misunderstanding of Matilal as a thinker to suppose that he was simply using analytical philosophy as a standard with which to evaluate Indian theory.<sup>15</sup> It was through a retrieval of Indian theory that Matilal fashioned himself as a contemporary intellectual; and, as a modern intellectual, he was able to criticize both Indian and Western theory alike.

#### NOTES

1. Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Epistemology, Logic and Grammar in Indian Philosophical Analysis* (Le Hague: Mouton, 1971); 2nd ed. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005).
2. Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Logic, Language and Reality* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985).
3. Bimal Krishna Matilal, *The Character of Logic in India* (Albany: State University of New York, 1998).
4. See Mihir Chakraborty, Benedikt Loewe, and Madhabendra Nath Mitra eds., *Logic, Navya-Nyāya and Its Applications: Homage to Bimal Krishna Matilal* (London: College Publications, 2008).
5. Frits Staal, *Universals: Studies in Indian Logic and Linguistics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).
6. Cornelis Goekoop, *The Logic of Invariable Concomitance in the Tattvacintāmaṇi* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1967).
7. See, for instance, *Buddhist Semantics and Human Cognition*, ed. Arindam Chakrabarti, Mark Siderits, and Tom Tillemans (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).
8. Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Collected Essays, Volume 1: Mind, Language and World* (Delhi: Oxford University Press 2002); *Collected Essays, Volume 2: Ethics and Epics* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002).
9. J. N. Mohanty, "On Interpreting Indian Philosophy: Some Problems and Concerns," in *Essays on Indian Philosophy*, ed. P. Bilimoria, 207–19 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), 216.
10. Amartya Sen, address delivered on the occasion of a commemoration of Bimal Krishna Matilal at All Souls College, June 6, 1992.
11. J. N. Mohanty, "A Conversation of Mankind," Review of B. K. Matilal, *Perception: An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*, *Times Literary Supplement*, October 10, 1986.
12. The phrase is from Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East 1680–1880* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 1.
13. H. H. Price, "The Present Relations between Eastern and Western Philosophy," *The Hibbert Journal* LIII, no. 3 (1955): 228.
14. Amartya Sen, *The Argumentative Indian* (New York: Picador, 2005), 280.

15. Thus Wilhelm Halbfass, who accuses Matilal of using analytical philosophy as a "standard of evaluation" (*On Being and What There Is: Classical Vaiśeṣika and the History of Indian Ontology* [Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1992], 82) or a "measure" (*India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding* [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988], 158) of Indian thought.

## Philosophy, Indian and Western: Some Thoughts from Bimal Matilal

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In 1992, about a year after Bimal Krishna Matilal passed away, I tried to assess in a paper for the Sanskrit Traditions in the Modern World seminar, then held at Newcastle, his contributions in comparison (or rather, contrast) with S. Radhakrishnan, through the lens of their having held the Spalding Chair at Oxford University. I present here some of what I said about Matilal's work, in the context of the challenges that faced him. Twenty-five years on, I have added a few things, and said some things differently; but I will leave it to the reader to think about how much those challenges remain, or have changed since that time. I think, in any case, that it is fair to say that a generation of scholars that is prepared to talk of "Indian Philosophy" has sought to take as given some of the very basic premises that Matilal had felt he had to articulate and defend.

In what follows, I want to talk about three interrelated aspects of Matilal's project. First, in the face of the attitude that "philosophy" is a rational enterprise uniquely found in the history of Western culture, instead of granting that premise and claiming that what is called Indian philosophy had something else to offer (as Radhakrishnan had done), it should be demonstrated that the questions and methods of philosophy are found equally in Indian traditions. Second, to engage with Western philosophy in this intercultural way is not to give up working in and through Indian traditions of thought, but rather to do philosophy as it necessarily needs to be done now, in the conditions of the present. And third, it is no longer possible to continue making a claim to uniqueness when different cultures have come to mingle so much that philosophy is irreducibly intercultural.

### INDIAN PHILOSOPHY AS COMPARABLE TO WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

Throughout his academic career in the West, Matilal took himself to be working against the cultural assumption that whatever could be called "philosophy" could only be traced back to the Greeks. In particular, of course, he framed his intellectual activity as engagement with analytic philosophy. His starting point was the basic claim that the work of analysis was indisputably present in the Indian tradition, although he presented it as if he had only a modest proposal: "If two different streams of philosophical ideas that originated and developed quite independently of each other are found to be grappling with the same or similar problems . . . this fact is by itself interesting enough for further exploration," he says in the introduction to an anthology emphatically entitled *Analytic Philosophy in*



*Comparative Perspective.*<sup>1</sup> What this indicated was his determination to treat Indian thought as including those problems, responses, and procedures that could rightfully fall under the definition of the discipline of “philosophy.” In this he wanted to break away from the dominant nineteenth- and twentieth-century view (as we know, still stubbornly persistent in the twenty-first century academy) that Indian thought was primarily “religious.” Towards the end of his life, his tenacious resistance to this view was recognized. Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen pointed out that “This [i.e., the conventional] view of the nature of Indian philosophy is rarely challenged. Bimal Matilal, one of the few major challengers, puts the problem thus<sup>2</sup> in answer to the criticism that he has been ‘leaning over backwards’ to ‘show the analytic nature of Indian philosophy: ‘Too often the term Indian philosophy is identified with a subject that is presented as mystical and non-argumentative, that is at best poetic and at worst dogmatic. A corrective is long overdue.’”<sup>3</sup>

In doing so, he challenged the authenticity and the basis of this dismissive view. Radhakrishnan had not denied the substance of the view that Indian thought was mystical and intuitive, but sought to show that its value was immeasurably greater than the rationalism of the West.<sup>4</sup> Matilal never even implicitly accepted the exclusion of the Indian traditions from philosophical activity through such a radically alternative evaluation. His argument was that Indian thought had standards of rationality and rigor every bit as discriminating as—and in fundamental ways similar to—what had been claimed for Western thought.

It must be pointed out that this dismissal of Indian traditions of thought from the discipline of “philosophy” was hardly ever argued for; it was simply asserted as being unworthy. In insisting on the rigor of Indian thought, Matilal was moving it on to the same ground as Western philosophy: he hoped to force those who would deem Indian thought unworthy of the name of philosophy to move from assertion of that claim to arguments for it. (Alas, he did not realize until the later years of his life that he had not planned for a different response altogether: not any assertion against the status of Indian philosophy at all, but a complete and utter refusal to entertain altogether the very thought of its possible existence in the academy. Arguably, the generation of Indian philosophers since has been no better at coming up with a strategy to counter *that* cunning plan. . . .)

Matilal, then, was optimistic in his methodology. He hoped that by bringing Western analytic issues and methods to bear upon classical Indian texts, he would get the traditions to communicate. He would work on the boundaries of cultural identity, enacting the very nature of a future global philosophy. Even as Radhakrishnan disclaimed any assumption of India’s monopoly over knowledge, he nevertheless wanted to present the uniqueness of India to the world.<sup>5</sup> When one asserts the uniqueness of one’s tradition, one is less engaged in the details of another tradition, for one must only reveal that one is not ignorant of it (Radhakrishnan had studied Western philosophy at Madras University and, as is well known, identified Absolute Idealism as the West’s nearest approach to his interpretation of Advaita Vedānta). But to deny the uniqueness of another

tradition—as Matilal did—is to enter into it and function in it as one does in one’s own tradition, thereby demonstrating one’s claim that they are sufficiently similar for claims of uniqueness to be wrong. This is where Matilal’s work was significant: beyond familiarity with both canonical early modern and influential contemporary Western thought, he functioned with a mastery of the procedures of analytic philosophy.<sup>6</sup> His approach to Sanskrit texts never fell short of scholarly rigor, and yet he made it seem entirely natural that one could think across from some intricate passage in a Navya-Nyāya text to a consideration of John Locke. He set out to do this because of his conviction about the nature of Indian thought. “The vocabulary of *pramāṇa-śāstra* [the study of the means of knowledge] implies a universe of discourse that not only is commonly shared by all the different schools of Indian philosophy but also tends to be global in meaning. If we use ‘logic’ in a broad and liberal sense, then, . . . it would be difficult to talk about any inherent distinction between Indian and Western logic.”<sup>7</sup>

### STILL “INDIAN” IF “PHILOSOPHY”?

It could be (and has been) asked whether this is a revisionary and perhaps artificial and ahistorical view of Indian thought. Such a question is misplaced, although understandable. In considering Matilal and Indian thought, two issues should be disambiguated. One was his approach to the history of thought, the other his interpretation of it in the present. Of course, the former informed the latter—he never denied the necessity of philology, only sought to make it a tool for his philosophical inquiry. Naturally, this required a hermeneutic shift from the discipline of Indology, and he showed this in the way he situated the context of the textual past within terms relevant to the enterprise of the present. Thus he talked of the “seriousness and professionalism” of the classical Indian thinkers and commented that one “cannot but admire greatly their intellectual honesty and professional sophistication.”<sup>8</sup>

The contemporary idea of professionalism therefore informs his reading of the past, but to say it is anachronistic is already to fail to appreciate that the hermeneutic shift from Indology to philosophy (a shift apparently permitted freely to philosophers of the Western traditions) has already been made. But this is a legitimate undertaking, his attempt for a Gadamerian “fusion of horizons,” past and present.<sup>9</sup> This fusion is not automatically present in a tradition; it is not even automatically available if one reads the texts of the traditions. It requires a readiness to create novel conceptions of the implications of the texts as well as of the nature of the interpreter’s intellectual presuppositions. (So it is not as if an Indologist reading philosophical texts text-critically and historically is not starting from a set of hermeneutic prejudices, too. But the *philosophical* reading of these texts is not only to operate from out of the inevitable historical condition of the scholar, but imaginatively to reconstruct the significance and functions of that condition.) Matilal was well aware of the fact that he was taking these hermeneutic liberties of the imagination: “Too often, Indian philosophy has been considered (very wrongly) as being ‘soft’ and tender-minded. . . . An emphasis on the other side has been attempted here to correct this heavily one-sided picture. What better way is there to accomplish this than by initiating a dialogue with

modern analytical philosophers in a way that would try to transcend the language-barrier?"<sup>10</sup>

In a slightly different context (discussing ethical norms), Matilal comments that "a conscious individual belonging to a particular culture may self-consciously be able to articulate the . . . norms embedded in his or her culture. In the process she would have to distance herself from her culture or community and develop an internal critique for looking across boundaries in order to have the real options derivable from her knowledge and acquaintance of other cultures."<sup>11</sup> Of course, this fusion of horizons is complex for those working on Indian philosophy: it is not merely of the past and present of a supposedly single culture (although, as scholarship on such areas as the role of Arabic texts in the history of "Western" philosophy has shown, the singularity is an imaginative act of forgetting, not a historical truth). The "present" is already non-singular, already a time in which awareness of the other is unavoidable and ignorance of the other indefensible. This attitude is implicit in Matilal's bold engagement with Western philosophy.

There are essentially two criticisms of the Matilalian approach. One is the primarily philological approach of a certain—often dominant—strand of academic Indology. This discipline sees the ideas of the texts only in terms of their historical context, leaving their content without life and value today.<sup>12</sup> Indian philosophy is therefore dismissed as either historically impossible or disciplinarily incoherent. Matilal did not particularly engage with this, primarily because his traditional training in Sanskrit texts before his Harvard doctorate made him simply impatient with claims about the scholarly demands of reading Sanskrit texts.

The other criticism stems from what we have already noted about the assertion that "philosophy" as a category is a purely Western product. As I said, Western philosophers themselves both then and now have seldom bothered to engage even critically with the Matilalian notion of Indian philosophy. But nonetheless, there is a question that does arise from the assumption of the Westernness of "philosophy": Can there be anything authentic about doing Indian philosophy that not only functions in Western languages and is inescapably aware of Western philosophical categories but, even more rashly, deliberately engages with Western philosophy through Indian texts?

The first line of response to this is, of course, that history has happened, there can be no reversing of time, and Indian thought that happens now is no less Indian for that; the real issue is what one does now. There is a whole area of debate there, perhaps going back to Ashis Nandy's provocative notion of the West as the "intimate enemy" after colonization. Matilal did not say anything explicit about this, but he assumed that this was simply a fact, from what I gathered in conversations with him. But he had a second, more specific line of response, which he did articulate towards the end of his life: this is not just a challenge for those who were colonized, it is a challenge for everyone in a world of global cultural flows. This means that the question of philosophy is not just about the Indian-ness of Indian philosophy (or of similar questions to other non-Western traditions), it is about the artificiality of the boundaries that

the West has tried to keep around philosophy, as if such cultural determinism is possible.

## PHILOSOPHY AND THE THESIS OF THE "IMPOSSIBILITY OF INDIVIDUATION OF CULTURES"

Matilal's view of philosophy challenged the crystallized view of tradition that both internal and external interpreters had largely taken for granted. His knowledge and use of analytic procedure was meant to show that functional familiarity with different traditions blurs the boundaries between cultures of thought. In one of the last pieces he completed for publication, he made a rare, explicit methodological statement about his work. He argued for what he called the "Impossibility of the Individuation of Cultures" (ICC), the view that "the proper individuation or separation of two contemporary cultures . . . does not seem possible."<sup>13</sup> He thought it incoherent the notion that historically separate cultures of thought could continue to be considered pristine and singular as contact increased and mutual study became possible. "[C]ultures and subcultures flow into each other, interacting both visibly and invisibly, eventually effecting value-rejection and value-modification at ever stage. This only shows the vitality of cultures, which are like living organisms in which internal and external changes are incontrovertible facts."<sup>14</sup>

His project, then, was meant to challenge not only the treatment of Indian thought as locked away in the past, an inert historical object. It also rejected "the essentialist dogma"<sup>15</sup> of Western philosophers as well as anyone tempted to keep the *pandit* traditions of Sanskrit texts somehow insulated from today's world. A tradition may well have traits and values, as well as textual materials that are historically central to any contemporary reading. But that centrality is a historically contingent fact, and if a tradition lives today, it participates in a history that is in the making. Indian philosophy today is a global philosophy. But equally significantly, Western philosophy ought to be just a part of that global philosophy, even if Matilal ruefully acknowledged, "I have not assumed here that such time has come!"<sup>16</sup>

That day has not arrived yet, but for the generations of students of Indian philosophy since Matilal, it has become a tenet of our disciplinary faith that it will.

### NOTES

1. Matilal and Shaw, *Analytic Philosophy in Comparative Perspective*, Introduction.
2. In Matilal, *Perception. An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*, 4-5.
3. Nussbaum and Sen, "Internal Criticism and Indian Rationalist Traditions," in *Relativism: Interpretation and Confrontation*, 303.
4. "From the beginning of her history India has adored and idealized, not soldiers and statesman, not men of science and leaders of industry, not even poets and philosophers, who influence the world by their deeds or their words, but those rarer and more chastened spirits, whose greatness lies in what they are and not in what they do; mean who have stamped infinity on the thought and life of the country, men who have added to the invisible forces of goodness in the world" (Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religion and Western Thought*, 35).

5. Radhakrishnan, "Reply to Critics," in *The Philosophy of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan*, 820.
6. A systematic comparison awaits between his method and the very different yet fruitful approach of his great older contemporary, J. N. Mohanty—not only in that Mohanty functioned primarily in phenomenology but that he developed his work largely on parallel lines, establishing a reputation in phenomenology quite independently of his work in Indian philosophy.
7. Matilal, *The Logical Illumination of Indian Mysticism*, 6.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Soon after I suggested this notion in my original talk, I read J. N. Mohanty's appreciation of Matilal, in which he too—with considerably greater authority!—makes a Gadamarian point about the nature of interpretation involved in doing Indian philosophy (Mohanty, "On Matilal's Understanding of Indian Philosophy," 404). To my mind, this is perhaps the most acute study of Matilal's approach, and while Mohanty is often modest about his own comparable achievements, the essay offers rich potential for further consideration of both thinkers.
10. Matilal and Shaw, *Analytic Philosophy in Comparative Perspective*, 37.
11. Matilal, "Ethical Relativism and Confrontation of Cultures." In *Relativism: Interpretation and Confrontation*, 350.
12. Mohanty comments on how they felt about this as students, in Mohanty, "On Matilal's Understanding of Indian Philosophy."
13. Matilal, "Pluralism, Relativism, and Interaction between Cultures," 146.
14. *Ibid.*, 152.
15. Matilal, "Ethical Relativism and Confrontation of Cultures," 351.
16. Matilal, *Perception. An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*, "Acknowledgements."

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## *Bimal Krishna Matilal's Style of Doing Philosophy*

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In the mid-1990s I went to a daylong interdisciplinary symposium with a friend who was trained in computer science and was working as a software developer. Although well read in the humanities, my friend had not had much exposure to professional academic philosophers, religious studies scholars, and sociologists strutting their stuff in a confined space. During the day many papers were read, and after each paper came an aggressive critique and a good deal of spirited discussion. When the day was over, my friend characterized the academic culture he had witnessed that day as "non-contact blood sport." He had expected to see people with differing backgrounds and expertise sharing ideas and cooperating on solving intellectual problems, but what he witnessed was people showing off their knowledge, belittling the accomplishments of others, and competing aggressively as if they were in a debate tournament. His observations of a style that I had grown accustomed to seeing gave me much to think about, and invoked in me a nostalgia for a very different academic culture, one that I had experienced in my decade of taking seminars with and being supervised by Bimal Matilal.

My first encounter with Matilal was at the University of Toronto in the autumn of 1972. The first issue of *The Journal of Indian Philosophy* had come out just two years earlier, and his book *Epistemology, Logic, and Grammar in Indian Philosophical Analysis* had been published in 1971. Both the journal and that book represented what could be described as a missionary zeal to present Indian philosophy in a way that it would be taken seriously as *philosophy* by philosophers in Europe, the Americas, and the Antipodes. In those days, Matilal felt that if Western scholars knew anything about Indian philosophy, they knew something about the mystical forms of Vedānta and the notion that the empirical world is an illusion, but they knew next to nothing about the rigorous linguistic analysis of the grammarians or the logical systems in the realism found in Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika and the school that Stcherbatsky had dubbed Buddhist logic. In those times, Matilal was a great admirer of Bertrand Russell, and he hoped that someday Western philosophers would regard Indian philosophy to be as worthy of study as Russell and his circle. Matilal hoped he could play a role in bringing that respect for Indian philosophy about. The title of his 1971 book hit all the themes he wanted to emphasize as being important in the Indian philosophical traditions: epistemology, logic, grammar, and philosophical analysis.

In the 1972–73 academic year, my first year as a graduate student, Matilal offered a graduate seminar based on his newly published 1971 book. The students enrolled in that seminar and the philosophy professor who audited it represented the full range of intellectual and social ferment of the early 1970s. Matilal found himself leading a seminar in which there was a student keen on learning

as much as possible about the Yoga school, an admirer of Theosophy and paranormal psychology, a follower of Jiddu Krishnamurti, a couple of devotees of the later Wittgenstein, a couple of students in the thrall of a Mādhyamika conviction that philosophy is a hopeless enterprise, an enthusiast of the mind-expanding potentials of hallucinogenic drugs, and no one who was particularly receptive to hearing about Indian philosophy as an adumbration of Bertrand Russell. Not only were there no people in the seminar in fundamental agreement with Matilal's mission, there were no two people in philosophical agreement about much of anything. Given the participants, and the rather stark cultural divisions of the times, the seminar might well have turned into a free-for-all. It did not. Most of the reason it did not was because of Matilal's way of doing philosophy, and in particular because of two doctrines from the history of Indian philosophy that Matilal took very seriously and put into practice.

The first of those doctrines was one from the Nyāya tradition. Very early on in the seminar, Matilal explained that the Nyāya tradition distinguished three kinds of discussion. In one kind of discussion, he explained, the participants have as their principal goal stating a position and defending it, using whatever it takes to win an argument at all costs. In a second kind of discussion, the participants have as their goal finding whatever fault they can with their opponent's position, using whatever it takes to win an argument not so much by establishing their own position but by refuting the opponent's. The third kind of discussion is one in which all the participants have the goal of finding out what is true. That is done by listening respectfully to what others say, reflecting on it, building upon it, being willing to change one's mind. It was this third type of discussion that Matilal unfailingly demonstrated through his own example and encouraged in every way.

The second principle was one that every Indian tradition embraced but which Matilal felt the Jaina philosophers had mastered most thoroughly, and that was the principle of non-violence (*ahimsā*). Matilal was convinced that the practice of intellectual non-violence, of non-combative but still enthusiastic and spirited discussion, was closely associated with the Jaina practice of looking at every issue from as many perspectives as possible and recognizing that there is something of the truth, and therefore something of value, in every perspective, but that there is no single perspective that is privileged above all the others. In 1981, Matilal articulated some of these ideas in his book *The Central Philosophy of Jainism (Anekānta-Vāda)*, but his interest in and practice of those ideas were a key part of his approach much earlier than that. They were the essence of his personality.

The result of applying those two principles—cooperative, non-combative discussion and intellectual non-violence—was one of the most pleasant and intellectually stimulating seminars I had as a student. I kept coming back for more seminars in subsequent years and eventually asked Matilal to supervise my doctoral dissertation. Never was I disappointed.

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## *Three Dogmas of Matilal: Direct Realism, Lingophilia, and Dharma Ethics*

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It is something of a truism and also much clichéd that Bimal K. Matilal was one of the twentieth century's leading exponent of Indian logic and epistemology as well as something of an analytical visionary on the role of philosophy in classical Indian society. A special issue of *Sophia* was recently dedicated to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of Professor Matilal's demise, and therein one will find a number of full-blown articles discussing and analyzing his views and theories on a number of related issues and topics covered in this issue of the *APA Newsletter on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies*.<sup>1</sup>

Matilal took as part of his intellectual mission the correction of Western perceptions of Indian philosophy, the advancement of attention to classical and modern Indian philosophy, and an examination of the confluence of currents of thought that had informed recent Indian philosophers. His philosophy drew on grammatical literature, the epics, *dharmasāstras*, medical literature, poetics, and literary criticism. One of his last works, *Epics and Ethics* (2000), sought to uncover the dynamic moral theorizing implicit in the epics, *The Rāmāyaṇa* and *The Mahābhārata*.

Many readers will have guessed that the title of my paper is a play on Quine's "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (in philosophy of science the use of the term "Dogma" was a self-conscious and self-deprecating reference to certain prejudicial views which one wanted to defend with or without apologies). It does not entail "dogmatism." Churches have dogmas as axiomatic creeds; here it signifies axiomatic principles. I do, however, even as a close disciple of Matilal, remain somewhat skeptical about his axiomatic beliefs (I represent for argument's sake the Mīmāṃsā school through-and-through). But of course, Quine was attacking the dogmas of empiricism, while I am merely explicating Matilal's views—so it is all in the spirit of *vādavivāda* (debating and arguing). Therefore, my intentions are somewhat on a par with Quine's use of dogma in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," but without the intent to ravage the philosopher's beliefs under discussion.

Matilal's eclectic approach to philosophy was motivated by deep intellectual commitments. He believed that a comprehensive study of literature is necessary in order to understand the dynamics of a culture's intellectual development and its fundamental philosophical commitments. He also believed deeply that philosophical cultures could neither be understood ahistorically nor in isolation from one another. Prior to Matilal's influence, Indian philosophy had been most often misconstrued in the West as being predominantly spiritual, mystical, and intuitive. Matilal undermined this Orientalist prejudice by

systematically developing a rigorous dialogue between European and Indian philosophy drawing both on classical and modern literature. He believed that by relating current thinking to tradition, new insights could be developed from the *epistemés* of the indigenous systems and that contemporary reflection could lead us to a deeper understanding of those classical systems. An example of this is the epistemology of testimony, where the extensive Indian discussions have a real prospect of informing contemporary debates. A co-edited book, *Knowing From Words*, and writings of his students on *Śabdapramāṇa* are impressive illustrations of the sort of philosophical “interconnecting” Matilal worked to provide.

Another example is his defense of a form of direct realism in his seminal work, *Perception* (Clarendon Press, 1986). The realist Nyāya philosophers assert that we, in fact, see the objects we take ourselves to see as opposed to properties, surfaces, sensations, etc. The Nyāya philosophers also argued that those objects exist by having parts without being merely the sum of their parts, and that they fall into objective, natural categories. They argued that the parts and properties of an object may well feature in the explanation of our coming to see it; but the thesis denies that the parts or properties of the object can enter into the explanation only if they themselves become entities of perceptual awareness.

If this is correct, Matilal points out, then the move typically made by the Buddhist phenomenologists that the percept (*ālambana*) in perceptual awareness must be unstructured and immediately given is blocked. This leads to what Matilal claims is the hardest problem for the Nyāya realist: if phenomenal entities like sense-data have no explanatory role in perception, how do we account for such (apparently purely phenomenal) illusions as seeing the blue dome of the sky, a rainbow, or a circular disk as elliptical? Matilal’s defense of this theory is anchored on the unique formulation of objectivity.

To be objective, he argued, is to be independent of minds. Being “mind-dependent,” however, need not mean being a private, intentional object in the way that sense-data and other purely phenomenal entities are. It can mean simply having a mental event as a causal condition, an event on whose continuing existence the object depends. Although illusory, the blueness of the sky and the ellipticality of the disk are objective at least in the sense that they are not purely private objects of sensation, but are produced and shared by the perception of any observer located in the appropriate position. This is a softer realism than that to which skeptics are committed, according to which objects can exist independently of anyone’s capacity to know they exist.

Matilal was also a proponent of the close relationship that exists between language and knowledge, meaning that language is intimately implicated in the construction of knowledge *qua knowledge* (which is not the same as the view that language essentially constructs knowledge, reductively so). I call this “lingophilic.”

In a longer paper titled “Bimal Matilal’s Navya-Realism, Buddhist ‘Lingo-Phobia’ and Mental Things,”<sup>2</sup> I take Matilal’s work to be central to the issue concerning the relationship between language and the world. While developing his approach, Matilal brought many of the issues and viewpoints that were pertinent to the basic theme. It remains a comprehensive approach to the subject. Essentially, Matilal adopted the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika approach, which assumes a realist perspective of the relationship between language and the world. Through this perspective he seeks to construct a realist metaphysics supported by a theory of language appropriate to it. If this realist account goes through and the analysis is accepted, then, according to Matilal, the Buddhist critique of language is unacceptable and may be deemed to be as “lingophobic.”

I present an analytic account of how Matilal develops this realist theory of language within the Nyāya and Navya-Nyāya framework drawing also on the work of Michael Dummett and Hilary Putnam (only just as Putnam changed his view a number of times and veered closer to qualified anti-realism or “relative-realism” toward the end of his life); here the issue of language mainly arises while in pinning down the structure of *jñāna* or cognition. Cognition is always cognition of something, i.e., directed towards an object, and is always expressed through some verbal form. There is an influential view in Indian epistemology, which suggests that cognition necessarily consists of a sensory core required for the construction of particulars. Such a perspective denies any causal connection between the internal sensory experience and the external object of awareness. This sensory core remains ineffable. Matilal seeks to show that this view is not unconnected to the view of language that underpins this perspective. Dinnāga and many other Indian philosophers, including Candrakīrti, arrive at this view of cognition in accordance with their supposition that private language is possible. But Matilal refutes this view by using the argument especially of Quine and Wittgenstein that language is a social behavior. Wittgenstein’s private language argument shows that the idea of language being private is unintelligible and thus to hold that private sensory experience can be expressed through language is equally unintelligible and logically incoherent. This is the reason why the Buddhist critique of language, as Matilal claims, turns into a lingophobia that reduces mentalese entities to merely mythical or illusory projections. The Nyāya view, on the other hand, claims that any cognitive experience must be expressible in language. Gaṅgeśa rules out the presence of the ineffable sensory core to be the essence of cognition on the ground that it is merely physical and is thus non-cognitive. Matilal interprets this to be a version of metaphysical realism, which argues for an inseparable connection between language and cognition: it is a “linguistically compromised doctrine of knowing.”

And, finally, a brief vignette on Matilal’s thinking on ethics. Matilal was fond of narrating this account supposedly from the epics: namely, the story around not telling a lie. In one of his earth-bound births, Kauśika had been reprimanded for causing the death of an innocent deer fleeing from its predator; while in a subsequent birth, telling the lie in the recurrent situation to save the fleeing deer cost him

gravely the salvation he had all but earned through his stoical moral practices. This was his way of illustrating the tussle also between two dominant paradigms in Western ethical discourse, namely, of utilitarianism and Kantian deontology. But overall, Matilal remained skeptical about the prospects of solid foundation for Indian ethics. Thus he averred,

Certainly, there exists a lacuna in the tradition of Indian philosophy. Professional philosophers of India over the last two thousand years have been consistently concerned with the problems of logic and epistemology, metaphysics and soteriology, and sometimes they have made very important contributions to the global heritage of philosophy. But, except [for] some cursory comments and some insightful observations, the professional philosophers of India very seldom discussed what we call moral philosophy today. It is true that the *dharmaśāstra* texts were there to supplement the Hindu discussion of ethics, classification of virtues and vices, and enumeration of duties related to the social status of the individual. But morality was never discussed as such in these texts. On the other hand, the tradition was very self-conscious about moral values, moral conflicts and dilemmas, as well as about the difficulties of what we call practical reason or practical wisdom.<sup>3</sup>

Matilal nevertheless agonized over the exemplary moral dilemmas presented in narrative literature, particularly the epic *Mahābhārata*, and he suggested that there was always a rational solution around the corner or possibly missed, even by Krishna. Matilal was airing the suspicion that Indian philosophy, particularly during what he calls the Indian Middle Ages, did not break away sufficiently from preoccupations with theology and mysticism, and that without “logic,” any branch of philosophy is bound to flounder at its core. To that end he wrote a number of essays on Indian ethics, underscoring its supposed rational predilection, mostly in the context of the (Hindu) epics while also drawing from the Jaina theory of *anekāntavāda* (not one-sided-ness) that reinforced Matilal’s vision of moral pluralism. The epics embed and exemplify a myriad of moral issues which are thought through rationally; but the epics no more than the tradition at large quite succeeded in articulating a *sui generis* thesis that we would call “ethics” or “morality,” without the cultural, theological, and historical overtones and baggage that might go along with the disciplinary discourse. The irony should not brush over any keen moral thinker that Matilal reduced moral problems and challenges to basically those presented in the context of moral dilemmas or conflicts, when in fact there may be straightforward moral challenges that are not presented to the agents as two horns of a dilemma or a conflict in search of a resolution: for example, climate change and the dangers of the excessive use of fossil fuel, perhaps also premeditated murder and negligent manslaughter (say, from drunken driving). Yet Matilal would state the problem in this form to underscore the point that a rational solution is well nigh around the corner (or ought to be) for almost any moral dilemma. And so this is how he articulated his position:

Admission of moral conflicts or genuine moral dilemmas (or *dharma*-dilemmas) requires using some method toward making a rational choice. It is obvious that some sort of pre-ordering or ranking of principles helps such rational deliberation. In matters of ritual-orientated *dharma*s, when conflict arises, the Mīmāṃsā school has determined a fixed rule of pre-ordering, and has given a rational argument in favour of such ordering. Unfortunately, in all practical cases of value conflict or ordinary *dharma*-orientated conflict, it is extremely difficult to establish priorities in the same way. Many epic stories that illustrated such practical *dharma*-conflicts show that the practical resolution of such conflict does not always fix priorities according to the same pattern. It appears to me that this respect for the difficulties encountered in real life is not a mark of irrationality or inconsistency, but emphasizes that we sometimes face moral predicaments for which we cannot find a simply rational solution.<sup>4</sup>

Matilal returns us again and again to the epics where numerous instances of moral dilemmas appear to plague the actors, from the dice game that Yudhiṣṭira finds himself lured to (where the joint asset of the Pāṇḍava brothers, including their shared Draupadī, is at stake and gambled away), to Arjuna’s dilemma on the battlefield (to be in the fight, or not to be in the fight), and various conflicts that the paradigmatic hero of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is also confronted with—such as whether to resist or accede to the decree of being sent to exile in the forest. Matilal claimed, “sometimes there was more realism in these old epic stories than they are given credit for today. They underlined the two most prominent aspects of *dharma*: the vulnerability of moral virtues and the ever-elusive nature of truth in the moral domain.”<sup>5</sup>

However, Matilal did believe that a historical understanding of the concept of *dharma* (he rarely strayed away from *dharma* to some of the other issues in Indian ethics, barring caste, *karma*, and “evil”) has some relevance today, for it remains a widely misunderstood concept in the modern study of Indian philosophy. And he concluded his insightful essay on “Dharma and Rationality” by noting that the explanations of the traditional *ethos* of India has always been somewhat controversial among the Indianists (South Asianists) of today: “The sociologists or social anthropologists propagate one way of looking at it. The development economists favour another way of taking it. Both, however, assume that to understand modern India some basic knowledge of classical India is absolutely necessary.” And to that end, he proposed to me a comprehensive volume on Indian ethics, which has since been completed, and in which his own most celebrated essay in edited form on “Dharma and Rationality” has been included (although he did not live to see the volume in print).<sup>6</sup>

Matilal indeed was a rare kind of thinker, a philosopher of profound sensibility who embodied East and West in balanced proportions and who demonstrated that Indian thought, even in its most metaphysical and soteriological

concerns, was rigorously analytical and logical as well as discursive. His work has found broad endorsement and inspired lively debate not only among many contemporary Indian philosophers and Indologists, but also in international philosophical circles.

#### NOTES

1. *Sophia* (Special Issue on 25th Anniversary of the Demise of Professor Bimal K. Matilal) 55, no. 4 (2016).
2. "Bimal Matilal's Navya-Realism, Buddhist 'Lingo-Phobia' and Mental Things," in *Language and Mind (Volume 2): The Classical Indian Perspective*, ed. K. S. Prasad (New Delhi: Decent Books, 2008), 17–34.
3. Bimal K Matilal, "Moral Dilemmas: Insights from Indian Epics," in *Philosophy, Culture and Religion Collected Papers of B. K. Matilal*, ed. J. Ganeri, vol. 1, *Ethics and Epics* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 21.
4. "Dharma and Rationality," in *Indian Ethics*, eds. P. Bilimoria, J. Prabhu, R. Sharma (Aldershot: Ashgate 2007/Routledge 2017: 79–192), 89.
5. *Ibid.*, 99.
6. See reference to *Indian Ethics* vol. 1 in the foregoing note.

## A Cautionary Note on Matilal's Way of Doing Indian Philosophy

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Tirelessly and with a missionary zeal Matilal, through his entire philosophical career, presented classical Indian philosophical debates in contemporary philosophical idioms thereby highlighting the richness of the insights and the intensity of the effort to gain philosophical clarity that the ancient philosophical works exhibit. And Matilal has succeeded in his effort to a great extent. Matilal thought that this is the way one could integrate classical Indian philosophical insights into the contemporary Western analytical tradition. While Matilal concedes that the basic philosophical motivations of the classical Indians might be very different from the contemporary Anglo-American analytic philosophers, still some important questions and puzzles found in the classical philosophical literature "do seem to coincide to a considerable extent with those discussed today."<sup>1</sup> Matilal, with great acumen, demonstrates how a dialogue could take place between the classical Nyāya, Mīmāṃsā, and Buddhist schools on the one hand and the Cartesian epistemologists and modern analytic philosophers on the other in his *magnum opus*, *Perception*. Matilal thinks that Indian philosophy is an enigma to many and he substantiates his claim with quotes from David Hume and John Locke where both remarked about the "poor" Indian philosophers who came up with absurd proposals like God creating the world like a spider creating a cobweb out of itself or an elephant supporting the earth and a tortoise supporting the elephant. And this kind of attitude toward Indian philosophy still persists as is evidenced by Anthony Flew's comment that Eastern philosophy is not concerned with arguments and so history of philosophy records philosophical activities that took place only in

Europe. Matilal felt strongly about correcting this view of Indian philosophy. Too many times Indian philosophy is presented as mystical and non-argumentative, as poetic or dogmatic. Matilal dedicates his entire philosophical career to correct these misconceptions even at the cost of "leaning backwards." Matilal holds that even Locke himself would be surprised to note the similarity in arguments in defending certain problems of empirical philosophy, had he been aware of the classical texts like *Abhidharmakosa-bhāṣya* or *Padārthadharmasamgraha*. Even the Lockean notion of substance as something where properties inhere is as old as the *Vaiśeṣika-sūtra*. Matilal is aware of the friendly criticism that if classical people were ultimately concerned with attaining the ultimate good, then why are these questions regarding perception held to be so important regarding its nature and content or the possibility of its failure to generate knowledge? Matilal hopes that even the questions about the nature of the ultimate good and the nature of reality lead to many specific and complicated philosophical issues. And these demand a philosophical handling. After a while, almost unconsciously, theological concerns are replaced by philosophical engagements. The intellectual history of classical India bears this out.

From what has been presented so far, it seems clear that for Matilal, 1) The model of philosophy is that which is practiced in the Anglo-American analytical tradition. Matilal's exposure to the works of Quine, Strawson, Dummett, etc. colored his interpretation of classical Indian philosophy, and he took great interest particularly in those problems and puzzles in Indian philosophy that could be juxtaposed with their counterparts in analytic philosophy. 2) This leads Matilal to unearth the key concepts and issues debated in the analytical tradition within the corpus of classical Indian philosophy. Western analytic philosophy becomes the yardstick for him. This generates what Matilal calls "comparative philosophy in the minimal sense." Let me comment on each of these points.

The idea of philosophy as it is found in the Western tradition is not a homogenous one. Certainly Anglo-American analytic philosophy is not the only philosophical activity that the Western tradition offers. There are multiple ways of doing philosophy within the Western tradition. Each of these philosophical stances has its own style of writing, its own preferred set of problems and perspectives. The philosophical movements that originated and were nourished in Germany and France are different both in their style and problematic from the tradition that mesmerized Matilal. Edmund Husserl's exploration of logical foundation of experience is far from how Frege talks about logic in his attempt to have a foundation of arithmetic. Even for Frege, logic does not remain content with formalization procedures. Logic in Frege turns out to be a theory of meaning, a philosophy of language as it is understood in the analytic tradition. A logician *per se* might not accept this Fregean use of the word "logic." And so Western philosophy is not to be equated with Anglo-American philosophy. In fact, Michael Dummett thinks that it is better to call this "Anglo-Austrian" and not Anglo-American philosophy for reasons he has explained. Thus even within the Western tradition one comes across varied paradigms of philosophy, philosophical problems, and philosophical methodologies.

And this is expected. If philosophy, broadly speaking, is an attempt to explain human experience in all its facets, then different people could be expected to philosophize in different ways. And these philosophical trajectories move in different directions. Taking one of these as *the* philosophy, and then trying to shape all other philosophical activities following this proper philosophy, so to speak, is misleading at best and authoritarian at worst. If Husserlian logic and Fregean logic can coexist, then why can't Western logic and Indian logic? Any attempt to interpret Indian logic in terms of the Western logical problems and vocabularies would actually reinforce the claim that logic proper is Western in its origin. If it is true, as Matilal formulates, that relativism moves ahead of pluralism in claiming that alternative concepts are equally valid and that there is no overarching standard to evaluate each of the individual claims,<sup>2</sup> then one could be a relativist with regard to various conceptions of logic. And a relativist in this sense could be an orthodox person. An orthodox person undergoes three stages in her life:<sup>3</sup> 1) She accepts whatever is given, sometimes through family, sometimes through society, education, etc.; 2) she constantly evaluates the received data resulting in reformulation, accepting, or rejecting what has been received; and 3) finally, the orthodox person rests herself either on the old view that has been received, or she might accept the new view after the conversion takes place. The dogmatic person does not undergo these stages. Thus if an orthodox person leaves open the possibility of conversion and still wants to hold on to her views, then an Indian logician might appreciate logic in the Western sense and yet stick to her Indian logic that she has received from the indigenous system of education. And then the attempt to reorient Indian logic following Western logical vocabulary and problematic does not seem to be a *desideratum*.

Two points stand out in the Indian theory of inference having five syllogistic members. First, the entire account is given in terms of mental events that take place in the mind of the interlocutor. The internal consistency of the inferential process is guided by the norms of cognitive psychology. Second, this whole inferential process is taking place against the background of a dialogical context where one person tries to convince the other of the desired conclusion. The inferential process aims at proving something to the other person. This process was often followed in the cases of disputes or debates. It is quite clear that Indian theory of inference is couched in psychological terms. It is also evident that the account of inference that is found in Indian philosophy is different in a significant sense from that one can find in Western logic. Acknowledging this distinctive feature of Indian logic, can one label Indian logic as psychologistic?

A reconstruction of Indian theory of inference à la J. N. Mohanty<sup>4</sup> could be of help here. In this interpretation we are talking about inference in terms of mental events, but here a mental event exemplifies a universal structure in the sense that two mental events can illustrate the same structure. When we talk of a mental event or act, there is always a reference to a self where that mental act or event occurs. And, of course, it has a temporal reference. There is a particular point in time when that mental event/act takes place. But we can also talk about the act nature, and by "act

nature" I mean the act could be perception or memory, etc. And last but not least, there is the content of the act. This content is clearly not the object lying there outside in the world. It is best understood as the intended object of the mental act. The epistemic entities like qualifier, qualified, etc. do not belong to the objects in the world *per se*. They float in the structure of the content of the knowledge. These entities and their structure are universal in the sense that many cognitive acts or events may illustrate the same structure. In the Indian theory of inference we can be said to deal with this structure of a cognitive act that is universal. On this account two cognitive acts can be said to be identical if they have the same act nature and exemplify the same content-structure. Viewed in this way, the references to the owner of the mental act and the time when the act takes place are irrelevant. Here we are giving an account of knowledge in terms of mental act, but it does not land us in the realm of the subjective that the anti-psychologistic philosophers thought it would. Thus, one can very well argue that Indian logic (or the Indian theory of inference) does involve the idea of the mental, but nonetheless, it does not lead to psychologism in the sense in which it has been used in Western philosophy.

In light of the above account we can now look at the ideas of necessary and contingent truths in Indian logic. Usually, logical truths are treated as necessary truths. They are true by virtue of their forms. They are analytic. Factual truths are contingent. They are true by virtue of what happens in the world. Setting aside the question whether this distinction between necessary and contingent truth is ultimately tenable, in the present context the more significant query concerns the presence or absence of the idea of necessity in Indian logic. If the Indian theory of inference is formulated in terms of mental acts, then can we talk of logical necessity, in the Western sense, playing any role in such a theory? One could talk of different kinds of necessity: 1) logical necessity, 2) physical necessity, and 3) causal necessity. Logical necessity is the necessity that could be said to hold between sentence-forms. This is the kind of necessity that we find obtaining among different propositions in logic in Western philosophy. Physical necessity is expressed in the laws that are grounded on the essences of the things concerned. If one accepts this kind of necessity, then these laws are, though necessary, not analytic. One could also talk of causal necessity where the relation holds between cause and effect.

From the above presentation of the Indian theory of inference, it is natural to conclude that this theory involves the idea of causal necessity. In the Indian formulation of the inferential process, causal necessity can be said to hold between the sequences of mental episodes leading to the conclusion of the inference. The structure of inference for other (*parārthānumāna*) is presented in such a manner that the cognitive episodes expressed in the corresponding sentences do exhibit a causal structure where each mental act is bound to produce the following mental act provided the required conditions are fulfilled. The important question that we face here is can we ascribe non-causal necessity to the Indian theory of inference? One problem that arises immediately is that logical necessity is said to hold between propositions, and Indian logic lacks any



such concept. Instead, what we find in the Indian theory of inference is the division between inference for one self (*svārthānumāna*) and inference for other (*parārthānumāna*). In inference for one self, the inferential process involves an internal mechanism where one cognitive episode necessarily follows another. In the case of inference for another, the external mechanism is expressed in terms of sentences or utterances of them where each of these sentences/utterances is necessarily followed by another. This leads Matilal to suggest that in the internal case "logic appears to be psychologized while in the second it is linguisticized."<sup>5</sup> And he further claims that in either case causal necessity is superimposed on what is called logical necessity. Matilal's argument for ascribing logical necessity to Indian theory of inference is that when it is said that if A is a sign (*liṅga*) of B and if we assert A of something, we must assert B of it, internally it is viewed as a causal sequence of mental cognitive events like seeing A in a particular case combined with another cognitive episode of remembering that A is the sign of B, etc. The combination of these episodes is called *parāmarśā*; it is said that if there is *parāmarśā*, then the conclusion will necessarily follow. This causally necessary consequence is also a logically necessary consequence, according to Matilal, for to the question what would happen if the person gets distracted or falls asleep immediately after the appearance of *parāmarśā*, the answer would be that though the concluding cognitive episode would not follow, this psychological contingency would not undermine the logical necessity of the conclusion that follows from the prior cognitive episodes. The failure of the conclusion to appear is due to some non-logical factors. Even in the external mechanism of inference when it is said that if the sign (pervaded or *vyāpya*) is there, the signified (pervader or *vyāpaka*) is necessarily there, the principle is couched in non-psychologistic terms. It is true that we identify a sign as a logical sign, i.e., sign that warrants inference through empirical method, but then a sign is thus identified only if its presence necessarily signifies the presence of the signified, thus concludes Matilal.

There could be several responses to Matilal's attempt to find logical necessity in Indian logic. First, one could suggest that there is hardly any opposition between causal and logical necessity. In inference for one self we find causally necessary connection and in the inference for other we find logically necessary connection, and these are just two sides of the same coin. Viewed in this way, the charge against psychologism gets rather weak because there remains no unbridgeable gap between the psychological and logical. One could move further and claim that the idea of logical necessity can be derived from that of psychological necessity. Psychological necessity is the fundamental one on which other kinds of necessities rest, one might claim. If one makes a distinction between source and justification of necessity, one could very well claim that if we think of the source of necessity, then we will fall back on psychological necessity. But if we are interested in the justification of necessity, then we can think in terms of logical necessity for it is in logic that we take up justificatory questions regarding our inferential knowledge. Matilal, it seems to me, is siding with the claim that logical necessity gives rise to psychological necessity,

and he cites evidence for this claim from Indian theories of inference, especially those of Nyāya and Buddhism.

Let me toy with a rather radical idea, viz., psychological necessity is all there is. If this is acceptable, then the motive behind Matilal's attempt to find logical necessity behind the talk of psychological necessity in Indian theory of inference would seem to be wrong headed. Let us take a close look at the use of the word "necessarily" in English.<sup>6</sup> If people thought that almost everything that happened in the world happened by necessity, or if people thought almost nothing in the world happened by necessity, then we would have little occasion to use the word "necessarily." Often we use "necessarily" to talk about future events, like "If a polluting industry is built here, then the local inhabitants are bound to be hostile," meaning thereby that they will necessarily be hostile. We use words like "bound to," "surely," and "must" as synonymous with "necessarily." We use these necessity idioms also to talk about the past and present, like "As a chief minister he must have enriched himself"—meaning he necessarily did—"for look at his earlier record as a member of the Legislative Assembly." Notice that we use the word "necessarily" or its synonyms where we are less than sure of the facts. When we are sure, we just affirm without any intensive. This is indeed paradoxical. But then "necessarily" is not always a rhetorical device to cover up our uncertainty. When somebody is told while looking for a leopard in a jungle, "Necessarily it will have spots," other than viewing it as a prediction, this utterance could also be viewed as a conditional sentence of the form "If it is a leopard, then it has spots." Here there is no rhetoric involved. All these examples show that necessity is a matter of connection between facts, and it is not concerned with facts taken separately.

Now, what does make connection a necessary one? To take the example of the leopard, when the arrival of some leopard is announced, we expect an animal with spots. What is the connection? We have the knowledge of general truth that all leopards have spots. The only answer to the question why the newly arrived leopard should have spots is that all leopards have spots. One can take some more complicated examples, but I guess the answer would be the same. One must not interpret it claiming that a person is entitled to apply "necessarily" as long as she thinks that there is some general truth that subsumes the present one. This would make it possible to use "necessarily" to everything and the term would lose its significance. What is important is that the person has some actual generalization in her mind that she thinks subsumes the present one and whose truth is independent of the particular case in hand. Two points stand out here. First, the adverb "necessarily" applies not to particular events or states, but rather to whole conditional connections. Second, the application of "necessarily" requires an allusion to some generality that subsumes the present case.

One of the cases where the term "necessity" comes under close scrutiny is the case where we explain the dispositional terms like "soluble." To claim that a particular lump of stuff is soluble is to claim more than that whenever it is in water, it dissolves. For a lump to be soluble we must be able to claim that if it were in water, then it would dissolve. Clearly,

what we need here is an “if-then” formulation guided by necessity. With the knowledge gained from chemistry that gives us the details of the sub-microscopic structure of the lump concerned, we equate these explanatory traits with solubility. What is true of the dispositional terms like “solubility” could very well be true of subjunctive conditionals like, “If x were treated like this, then it would do so and so.” One could always come up with a set of explanatory traits, sometimes with the help of an expert, to explain the conditional. These conditional sentences may or may not contain the adverb “necessarily” explicitly; nonetheless, the subjunctive form connotes it. The point worth noticing is that the necessity constructions rest on generality, and the generality can be explained in terms of certain traits that the relevant theory can tell us.

How is one going to explain what is called “logical” or “mathematical necessity”? These varieties of truths are called necessary because they are true by definition. Imagine a physicist is confronted with an experimental finding that goes against her professed theory. She has to change her theory at some point to inactivate the false prediction. And the normal practice in the scientific community is to modify or change the relevant concepts in such a manner that the apparently false prediction can well be accommodated within the theory. Definitions are not something sacrosanct that they can never be altered. They are also susceptible to changes like other sentences. As theoretical and experimental physics do have the same content and differ in motivation and application, so also pure mathematics (dealing with logico-mathematical truths) and physics differ only in motivation, but not in their content. If this is true, then logical necessity is stripped of its privileged status, and the only necessity that one can talk about is the necessity resting on generalization, which in its turn is explicable in terms of empirical traits. So the real burden that the idea of necessity is to bear is shouldered by empirical necessity (i.e., physical and causal necessity). Empirical necessity is all that we need in order to have science including the Indian theory of inference. When this empirical necessity is applied to knowledge, what we get is necessity among the different cognitive episodes. And this is precisely what we have in Indian formulations of inferential knowledge. Let us not split hairs in trying to find out the idea of logical necessity in Indian logic.

What I find uncomfortable in Matilal’s way of doing comparative philosophy is the attempt to excavate the Indian counterparts of Western tradition. As a student of Indian philosophy, what is more natural to me is to understand Western philosophical insights in terms of that which are available in Indian tradition.<sup>7</sup> And it might quite so happen that certain questions are never raised or that the formulations of certain questions are very different in Indian philosophical tradition. Comparison does not and should not force us to find out correlates in the alternative traditions. While analyzing the pervasion (*vyāpti*) relation, one could see that the distinction between necessary truths and contingent truths is not maintained—so the analytic-synthetic distinction seems to be foreign to Indian logic. Consequent to this are the universal ideas that are graspable through senses and the absence of the distinction between formal truth and material truth. And none of these

ideas are available in Western philosophical thinking. This does not make Indian philosophy more philosophical than its Western counterpart. As students of philosophy, we are not obligated to combine all the different paths into a single highway. Each philosophical development is a result of the historic dynamics that are peculiar to it. The long and rich commentarial tradition of classical Indian philosophy shows how philosophical ideas developed by understanding, reformulating, and sometimes rejecting the predecessor’s views.

The original motive of philosophical pursuits, be it either in the East or in the West, was to unravel the mysteries of life and world. And part of this pursuit was to understand human life in its various facets. Philosophers of antiquity thought that life in its present state is fraught with various inadequacies. So they started talking about an ideal state of human existence and the ways to attain that state. Socrates declares that “of all investigations, . . . this is the noblest. . . : what sort of man should one be, and what should one practice and up to what point, when he is young and when he is old.”<sup>8</sup> Similarly, the Upanisadic quest for the understanding of the nature of self leads many of the classical Indian philosophers to set an emancipatory goal before humans and, of course, philosophical justifications ensue. If the *mokṣa*-orientedness of Indian philosophy degenerates into mysticism, then Socrates would meet the same fate. And any student of philosophy would agree that this is furthest from the truth. One need not be apologetic about Indian philosophy. One need not engage in a selective interpretation of either Indian or Western philosophy in the name of comparative study. Let us not delude ourselves in competitive comparative studies of Indian and Western philosophy.

#### NOTES

1. B. K. Matilal, *Perception* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 2.
2. B. K. Matilal, “Pluralism, Relativism, and Interaction between Cultures,” in *Culture and Modernity*, ed. Eliot Deutsch (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991), 141.
3. Kalidas Bhattacharya, “A Modern Defence of Orthodoxy,” in *Philosophy, Logic and Language* (Calcutta: Allied Publishers, 1965), 187.
4. J. N. Mohanty, *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1992), 108.
5. Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Logical and Ethical Issues of Religious Belief* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1982), 134.
6. For the ideas expressed in the following paragraphs I draw heavily on W. V. Quine’s “Necessary Truth” in his *The Ways of Paradox and other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976).
7. P. K. Sen, “The Apriorist Thesis: An Indian Look at Western Thought,” *Empiricism and the Two Dogmas*, eds. N. N. Chakraborty and Madhucchanda Sen (Calcutta: Rabindra Bharati University, 2006), 106.
8. This is from Plato’s Dialogue *Gorgias* as mentioned by G. Vlastos, *Socratic Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 7.

## Whither the Matilal Strategy?

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

B. K. Matilal (1935–1991) was undoubtedly one of the most influential scholars of Indian philosophy in the late twentieth century. His work has greatly influenced many who work on Indian philosophy today, especially those who do so in philosophy departments in the Anglophone world. One of his greatest influences has been what I call “the Matilal Strategy,” which he saw as a way to make the study of classical Indian philosophy more visible within the philosophical community. After discussing Matilal’s articulation and defense of this strategy as well as ways in which it continues to influence the field, I argue that, while the Matilal Strategy still has an important place, there are alternative approaches worth our attention. I consider two such alternatives, which I call “joining the consciousness club” and “expanding the history of philosophy.”

### 2. MATILAL’S STRATEGY

I could have easily written about the J. N. Mohanty Strategy or the Karl Potter Strategy. I in no way mean to diminish the contributions of Mohanty, Potter, and others, but Matilal, who brought his considerable talents and traditional training in Nyāya to positions at the University of Toronto and Oxford University, probably did more than anyone else to increase the visibility of Indian philosophy on the philosophical scene of the Anglophone world.<sup>1</sup>

One of the clearest articulations of the Matilal Strategy can be found in the introduction of Matilal’s *magnum opus*, *Perception: An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*.

The concern of this book is not purely historical. The writer on classical Indian philosophy today is generally pulled in two different directions—toward the historical reconstruction of some classical views and towards the critical examination of similar modern views. I believe those two “forces” are not diametrically opposed; with their combined impetus we might make some progress if only diagonally. This “diagonal” approach represents a tension which is acknowledged here by the author with apologies.<sup>2</sup>

In his use of this diagonal approach, Matilal makes frequent comparisons with contemporary analytic philosophy and admits that he has been “strongly influenced by the analytical tradition of Anglo-American philosophers.”<sup>3</sup> As for why *analytic* philosophy should be the tradition to which Indian philosophy is compared, Matilal says, “Both contemporary analytical philosophy and the classical Nyāya and Buddhist tradition of India seem to be interested in the problems of knowledge and perception, the varieties of meaning and reference, the theory of inference, and the issue of psychologism.”<sup>4</sup> Perhaps we can glean another answer from his comments on his motivations for engaging in such comparisons:

this gesture is needed to correct persisting misconceptions, and sometimes to remove ignorance. Too often the “soft-mindedness” and tender nature of Indian “philosophy” or Oriental wisdom have been emphasized. Too often the term “Indian philosophy” is identified with a subject that is presented as mystical and non-argumentative, that is at best poetic and at worst dogmatic. A corrective to this view is long overdue.<sup>5</sup>

More specifically, Matilal meant to call into question what he called the dogmas of Orientalism, according to which India has a tradition that is monolith, atavistic, emotional, spiritual, intuitive, irrationalist, and mystical, which contrasts with the opposing features of the West.<sup>6</sup> According to Matilal, the problem with these myths—aside from the fact that they are false—is that “The Oriental man is either subhuman or superhuman, never human. . . . there cannot be any *horizontal relationship* between East and West.”<sup>7</sup>

To summarize, the Matilal Strategy is to engage in comparisons between the contemporary analytic and classical Indian philosophical traditions as a means to accomplish the following goals:

- 1) To make the study of classical Indian philosophy more visible within the discipline of philosophy, and
- 2) To correct harmful misconceptions about classical Indian philosophy in particular and South Asia in general.

### 3. THE MATILAL STRATEGY TODAY

#### 3.1. CONTINUING INFLUENCE

The dogmas of Orientalism are alive and well today, even if they are not quite as well as they used to be. Consider, for instance, that a recent *New York Times* article by Jay Garfield and Bryan Van Norden (2016) calling for a more inclusive discipline elicited many online comments with varying mixtures of ignorance, dismissiveness, and hostile Eurocentrism. As there is still a need for the Matilal Strategy, many scholars continue to employ it.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the Matilal Strategy is so pervasive it is difficult to think of scholars of Indian and Buddhist philosophy in the philosophical circles of the Anglophone world who do not at least occasionally feel impelled to draw a comparison with some contemporary analytic issue or figure.

#### 3.2. CRITICISMS

There have been, however, criticisms of the Matilal Strategy. Matilal himself considered one of the most common: that his approach is insufficiently historical in that it takes Indian ideas out of their historical context and creates somewhat forced comparisons with Western ideas. Matilal says, “I have sometimes faced, rightly I believe, the criticism that there is a little ‘leaning over backwards’ in my writings to show the analytic nature of Indian philosophy.”<sup>9</sup> Matilal’s defense was that this approach was necessary to combat harmful preconceptions about Indian philosophy, but one might wonder if there could be other ways of accomplishing this aim. In fact, J. N. Mohanty suggests that Matilal was

himself considering other possible comparative partners in continental philosophy and postcolonial thought.<sup>10</sup>

Another criticism is that the Matilal Strategy supposes that mainstream analytic philosophers have a deeper interest in the history of philosophy than is actually the case. Of course, analytic philosophers are no more monolithic than their classical Indian counterparts, but one might worry whether a certain type of analytic philosopher is sufficiently interested in *any* history of philosophy, whether that history is European or Asian. For instance, a specialist in contemporary ethics once told me that philosophy began in 1970. This person was being facetious, of course, but it represents a not entirely atypical attitude. Whatever else we are doing when we study classical Indian philosophy, we are attempting to understand philosophers temporally distant from ourselves, which often requires a great deal of work. I suspect the historically incurious are often unwilling to do this work, even with help from a practitioner of the Matilal Strategy.

A related criticism is that, even in the hands of a scholar as creative as Matilal, classical Indian philosophy will often, but not always, look like a watered down imitation of the latest analytic positions. Or, to use a phrase from Elisa Freschi, it will be “almost as good as analytic philosophy.”<sup>11</sup> Why go through the trouble to understand a similar Indian position when one has already gone through the trouble of understanding the corresponding contemporary analytic position? The Matilal Strategy may well backfire; an analytic philosopher might say, “It is quaint that Indian philosophers *almost* thought of epistemic contextualism, anti-realism, content externalism, etc., but I prefer to get on with some real philosophy.”

#### 4. ALTERNATIVES?

These critiques do not constitute an attempt to dismiss the Matilal Strategy, but rather an attempt to understand its limitations. Doing so ought to encourage us to think of ways to *add* to the methodologies in our scholarly toolboxes. I consider two possible alternatives here.

##### 4.1. JOINING THE CONSCIOUSNESS CLUB

One promising strategy in recent years has been investigating what classical Indian philosophy might add to contemporary discussions of consciousness in phenomenology and philosophy of mind. I call this strategy “joining the consciousness club.” Several scholars, Christian Coseru in particular, have done much to practice and promote this strategy.<sup>12</sup> These philosophers bring classical debates, such as whether consciousness is self-illuminating, into dialogue with contemporary phenomenology and philosophy of mind. The strategy has been particularly successful with regard to Buddhist philosophy, especially within the tradition following Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, although it has been applied to other Indian schools as well, such as the Yoga school.<sup>13</sup>

This strategy has in recent years brought a lot of visibility to the field. Respected mainstream philosophers such as David Chalmers and Owen Flanagan have taken note of this work. Flanagan has even written a book on Buddhist philosophy.<sup>14</sup>

##### 4.2. EXPANDING THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

Another strategy is to expand what we think of as the history of philosophy to include classical India. Why not take a page from historians of philosophy to offer historically informed, yet philosophically nuanced, readings of Indian texts? A Plato scholar and a Dharmakīrti scholar have much in common: they both read difficult ancient languages, encounter ways of thought that are temporally and culturally distant from themselves, and work with texts that are rich enough to allow for competing plausible interpretations. Engaging in such scholarship may occasionally benefit from comparisons with contemporary thought or with historical Western figures, but this is also the case for many historians of Western philosophy. Gary Hatfield, a prominent historian of early modern European philosophy, has argued in favor of an approach he calls “contextual history,” which both invites comparisons with contemporary interests and takes seriously the historical context of the object of study.<sup>15</sup>

Distinguished historians of ancient Greek philosophy like Martha Nussbaum, Julia Annas, and Pierre Hadot are rightly thought of as interesting philosophers, not *despite*, but rather *because* of their historical interests. Expanding the history of philosophy would encourage us to form professional and intellectual connections with our colleagues in the various periods of Western philosophy<sup>16</sup> as well as colleagues in Islamic philosophy, Latin American philosophy, African philosophy, East Asian philosophy, and so forth.

Amber Carpenter (2014) has done some work in the direction of expanding the history of philosophy. My own work is moving in this direction as well. In particular, I think we have much to learn from comparisons between Hellenistic and classical Indian philosophy.<sup>17</sup> Hadot’s claim that Hellenistic philosophers considered philosophy to be a way of life has a lot in common, for instance, with the *Nyāya Sūtra*’s articulation of the importance of philosophy for one’s pursuit of the highest good.<sup>18</sup> The similarity between the goals of Nāgārjuna and Sextus Empiricus might help us understand whether Nāgārjuna defends a philosophical position or whether Sextus had any beliefs. We might reevaluate the typical view of Cārvāka hedonism through a comparison with Epicureanism. Like all good history of philosophy, such projects should also be thought of as philosophy *per se* insofar as they may provide new insights regarding our concerns today, often by juxtaposing contemporary assumptions and understandings with ancient ones.

Few contemporary philosophers doubt that Hellenistic philosophy is a worthwhile area of study. In particular, there is a great deal of interest in Stoicism, both within and without the academy.<sup>19</sup> A future in which the study of classical Indian philosophy occupies a similar place within the discipline as a respectable historical interest is a modest and attainable goal.<sup>20</sup>

#### 5. CONCLUSION

I think of both of these alternatives more as *extensions* of the Matilal Strategy than *replacements* for it, with the consciousness strategy moving toward the comparative side of Matilal’s diagonal approach and the history strategy moving toward the historical side.

While Matilal's work tends to focus on logic, epistemology, and metaphysics, he did occasionally discuss issues in philosophy of mind. There's no reason one could not simply extend the Matilal Strategy to work on consciousness that often goes beyond traditional analytic philosophy (indeed, the borders of analytic philosophy are probably more porous today than they were in Matilal's lifetime).

As for expanding the history of philosophy, it may be that Matilal was in favor of this approach all along.

"comparative philosophy" in this minimal sense may be seen as falling within the discipline of the history of philosophy in the global sense. Since it has already been argued that the history of philosophy is philosophy primarily, the above task should also fall within the general discipline of philosophy.<sup>21</sup>

And

Many of those who are doing Greek or scholastic philosophy today are also regarded as philosophers in their own right. The same should hold for the Indian philosophers.<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps the Matilal Strategy, as a means of challenging false and harmful Orientalist dogmas about Indian thought, need not be dogmatically wedded to mainstream analytic philosophy. Matilal's real concern was to secure a place for classical Indian philosophy within the discipline that befits the richness of the tradition and makes our picture of Indian philosophy visible and accurate enough so that all philosophers might have the chance to learn from it. I am confident that he would be in favor of continuing discussions—such as those taking place in this newsletter—about the best ways to accomplish these aims.

## NOTES

1. For more on Matilal's biography, see the introduction to this issue as well as the articles by Ganeri, Ram-Prasad, Bilimoria, and Hayes.
2. Matilal, *Perception: An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*, 2.
3. Ibid., "Acknowledgements."
4. Matilal, "Analytical Philosophy in Comparative Perspective: An Introduction," 1.
5. Matilal, *Perception*, 4-5.
6. Matilal, *Mind, Language, and World: The Collected Essays of Bimal Krishna Matilal*, Ch. 25.
7. Ibid., 373, italics in original.
8. For just a few examples, see the work of scholars such as Jonardon Ganeri (who also edited Matilal, *Mind, Language, and World* and *Ethics and Epics: The Collected Essays of Bimal Krishna Matilal*), Dan Arnold, Jay Garfield, Arindam Chakrabarti, and Stephen Phillips as well as anthologies such as Tanaka et al., *The Moon Points Back*.
9. Matilal, *Perception*, 4. For a Matilal-inspired response to this objection and other objections to the very idea of comparative philosophy, see Ram-Prasad 1995.
10. Bilimoria and Mohanty, *Relativism, Suffering, and Beyond: Essays in Memory of Bimal K. Matilal*, 11.

11. This phrase is found in a comment on the cited blog post (Freschi, "A Plea for More Mutual Knowledge and Cooperation Among Scholars"). Mohanty discusses a similar objection (Bilimoria and Mohanty, *Relativism, Suffering, and Beyond*, 8-9).
12. See, for example, Coseru, *Perceiving Reality: Consciousness, Intentionality, and Cognition in Buddhist Philosophy*; Thompson, *Waking, Dreaming, Being: Self and Consciousness in Neuroscience, Meditation, and Philosophy*; and Albahari, "Nirvana and Ownerless Consciousness."
13. See the contribution from Neil Sims in this issue for an example of this strategy with regard to Yoga and phenomenology.
14. Flanagan, *The Bodhisattva's Brain: Buddhism Naturalized*.
15. Hatfield, "The History of Philosophy as Philosophy," 101–106.
16. Julia Annas (personal communication) has expressed her personal interest in Indian philosophy, and scholars of Pyrrhonian skepticism are aware of historical Greek-Indian interactions as a possible inspiration for Pyrrho.
17. See also Dreyfus and Garfield, "Madhyamaka and Classical Greek Skepticism."
18. Ganeri ("A Return to the Self: Indians and Greek on Life as Art and Philosophical Therapy") makes an interesting comparison of Greek and Nyāya philosophers on the role of philosophy in the pursuit of the highest good. See also the contribution from Kisor K. Chakrabarti in this issue.
19. See for instance, the popular blog, *Stoicism Today* (<http://modernstoicism.com>), which promotes "Live Like a Stoic Week" every autumn.
20. Similarly, Alex Watson has written, "It is my hope—and there are some signs that it is not an unrealistic one—that Indian philosophy will soon begin a similar trajectory to that taken by Greek philosophy in the middle of the twentieth century, when it moved from being restricted to Classics syllabi to becoming a mandatory part of every philosophy degree" (Watson, "India's Past, Philology, and Classical Indian Philosophy").
21. Matilal, *Mind, Language, and World*, 356.
22. Ibid., 435.

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of voluntary action, mainly pleasure, pain and their causal conditions), cognitive states, the inner sense, volition, failings, rebirth, fruits of voluntary actions, suffering, and liberation.<sup>3</sup> *NBH* 1.1.1 glosses that true awareness of the knowables beginning with the self leads to the highest good.<sup>4</sup> Thus, though knowledge of all sixteen topics listed in *NS* 1.1.1 is useful for the highest good, knowledge of the knowables such as the self, the body, volition, failings, and so on are directly relevant for the highest good. Of the knowables, again, the self is the most important and it is knowledge of the self that is the most directly relevant for the highest good (though knowledge of all knowables and indirectly of all sixteen topics is useful for that purpose). It is significant that for Nyāya knowledge of specifically sources of knowing, the method of proving, faulty reasons, and so on are critically relevant for the highest good. False beliefs about the self and so on are for Nyāya among the chief impediments to the highest good. Such false beliefs may be corrected by reliable beliefs (especially about the knowables above) grounded in accepted sources of knowing including inference. Accordingly, the study of the appropriate sources in which knowledge claims may be based, the fallacies to be avoided in making an inference, and so on is crucially important for that goal.

What is liberation, the highest good? According to *NS* and *NBH* 1.1.22, liberation is the absolute relief from suffering and this is the highest good.

### NYĀYA ETHICS: CONSEQUENTIALISM

Similar ideas are voiced in what is often regarded as the sister philosophical school called the Vaiśeṣika. The *Padārthadharmasamgraha* (*PDS*, fifth century CE?), an influential work of this school, says that true awareness of similarities and differences of the six categories of substance, quality particular, motion, universal, ultimate differentiator, and inseparable inherence (on the part of at least one of the two *relata*) is the causal condition of the highest good.<sup>5</sup> This early Vaiśeṣika work (among others) emphasizes the importance of generally binding (*sāmānya*) obligations like non-violence, care giving, truthfulness, etc. (and other observances and restraints) as well as true awareness for achieving the absolute end of suffering as the highest good (*śiṣṭisamhāraprakaraṇam*, *dharmaprakaraṇam*, etc.). That knowledge is the means to the highest good is further the view of the Sāṃkhya, the Advaita Vedānta, and others, though the highest good and the nature of knowledge are conceived differently. The connection between knowledge and virtue is also central in Buddhism and Jainism; also, that virtue is knowledge is famously discussed in Plato's *Meno* and that the highest Form is the Form of the good that is the object of the highest knowledge is mentioned in Plato's *Republic*.<sup>6</sup>

That liberation is the highest good is part of the widely held view in traditional Hinduism that there are four basic goods or values or purposes (*puruṣārtha*), viz. (in the ascending order) wealth, pleasure, righteousness, and liberation.<sup>7</sup> These are basic values in the sense that all our voluntary actions are taken to be aimed directly or indirectly at some of these values. Other values like employment or marriage are means to some of these values. Among the four basic values, liberation is the highest value for the

## Nyāya Ethical Theory

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### INTRODUCTION

B. K. Matilal observed that Indian philosophers very seldom discussed what is called moral philosophy now and labeled this as a *lacuna*.<sup>1</sup> Matilal was a leading authority on Indian and comparative philosophy with in-depth knowledge of the original sources of Indian philosophy in Sanskrit. His writings are numerous and set a very high standard for others to try to follow. Without any doubt his remark about the lack of adequate development of moral philosophy in the Indian tradition and that this is a *lacuna* deserves serious consideration. The question is not whether moral dilemmas and ethical issues are discussed in the Indian tradition. Matilal himself has shown that there is plenty of such discussion. The question is whether classical Indian philosophers have made significant contribution to moral philosophy. For this we turn to selected philosophical writings. Since the space is limited, we confine ourselves mostly to the Nyāya that is one of the six orthodox systems of Hindu philosophy (though the focus of the Nyāya is on logic and epistemology and to a lesser extent on ontology, and a fuller discussion should address contributions to moral philosophy in other Indian schools). Our brief account is based on the original sources in Sanskrit.

We first turn to the *Nyāya-sūtra* (*NS*), the founding work of the Nyāya school. The oldest available commentary is called the *Nyāya-bhāṣya* (*NBH*).<sup>2</sup> According to *NS* 1.1.1, true awareness of sixteen topics like sources of knowing, the knowables, doubt, purpose, the steps of demonstration, the pseudo-probantia, and so on leads to the highest good. *NS* 1.1.9 gives a list of twelve knowables, viz., the self, the body, the external sense organs, the objects (i.e., objects

following reason. It is part of a person's nature to seek relief from suffering. The other three values do bring relief from suffering. Thus, wealth can bring relief from suffering due to starvation, lack of shelter, etc. Similarly, pleasure provides relief from suffering and does take place in intervals of suffering as NS 4.1.55 explicitly says. In other words, although suffering is pervasive, pleasure in intervals of suffering is directly experienced by us and cannot be denied as *NBH* 4.1.55 clarifies.<sup>8</sup> This is important, for it would be a mistake to think that pleasure reduces to relief from suffering. NS 4.1.51 says that since pleasure belongs to the self, there can be no denial of pleasure and implies that pleasure cannot be denied as a fruit or end (*phala*) of effort. NS 4.1.52 acknowledges that children, possessions, etc., too are commonly spoken of as fruits or ends. NS 4.1.53 clarifies that these other things are fruits or ends in an extended sense because of being related to pleasure. Thus, pleasure is accepted not only as an end but also as a basic end so that some other things that are means to pleasure may also be called ends in a derivative sense. Still, the Nyāya points out, pleasure never lasts long enough and is inseparable from and replaced by suffering and accordingly is not accepted as the highest good. (More on why pleasure is not the highest good later.) Again, righteousness is a necessary means to the absolute eradication of suffering and, being the means, is not the highest good.

While true awareness helps to set us free, false awareness traps us into bondage and suffering. A basic kind of false awareness is wrongly identifying the self with what is not the self, such as the body, the sense organs, etc. Statements like "I am dark," "I am blind," and so on are common examples of such misidentification. Mistaking what is not the self for the self is the root cause of egotism (*ahamkāra*); true awareness of the body and so on is needed for removal of such false awareness and egotism. False awareness leads to attachment to those that appear to be favorable and detestation for what appears to be inimical.<sup>9</sup> Such attachment and detestation leads to failings (*doṣa*) such as untruthfulness, jealousy, deception, and greed. Such failings lead to external and internal bad actions/dispositions. First, there are three kinds of external bad actions/dispositions by the body, viz. violence, stealing, and sexual promiscuity. Second, there are four kinds of external bad actions/dispositions by speech, viz. telling what is not true, speaking harshly, harping on the faults of others, and speaking incoherently. Third, there are three kinds of internal bad dispositions, viz. enmity towards others, coveting others' property, and faithlessness. Side by side with these ten bad deeds/dispositions, there are ten external and internal good deeds/dispositions. First, there are three kinds of external good deeds/dispositions by the body, viz. giving, saving someone, and serving others. Second, there are four kinds of external good deeds/dispositions by speech, viz. speaking the truth, speaking what is beneficial, speaking what is pleasant, and speaking about the (true) self or self-study (that includes reciting and studying the scriptures). Third, there are three kinds of internal good dispositions, viz. compassion, ungreediness, and faith.<sup>10</sup>

*NBH* 1.1.18 goes on to say that besides attachment (*rāga*) and detestation (*dveṣa*) another third kind of failing is confusion (*moha*). All these three kinds of failings (and all failings are included in these three) lead to activities that are causal conditions of pleasure or suffering.<sup>11</sup> Is one of these three kinds of failings more harmful than the other two? NS 4.1.6 answers the question in the affirmative and identifies confusion or false awareness as the most harmful kind of failing. *NBH* 4.1.6 clarifies that attachment and detestation that are the two other kinds of failing do not arise unless there is confusion; hence the latter is more harmful than the other two.<sup>12</sup> In other words, confusion is the root of the other failings and is more fundamental.

How can one overcome the failings to pave the way for liberation that is the end of all suffering? According to NS 4.2.46, the right step in that direction is purification of the self (*ātma-saṃskāra*) with the help of restraint (*yama*) and observance (*niyama*). What is restraint and observance? According to the highly influential account in the *Yoga-sūtra* 2.30.32 (also endorsed by Nyāya), the restraints are non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-possession while the observances are cleanliness, contentment, penance, self-study, and devotion (surrendering one's actions) to God. The moot point is that building a virtuous character through repeated and continued practice of restraint, observances, and control of failings is necessary for moral and spiritual progress.

We have seen that what is right, according to this ethics, is true awareness (that removes false awareness that is a causal condition of attachment, detestation, and confusion) and purification of the self through restraint and observance (that help to eradicate failings through various acts of commission and omission, reduce the burden of demerit, and increase the stock of merit). We have also seen that liberation as the end of all suffering is the highest good or value in this ethics. Thus, this ethics includes a theory of the right and a theory of the good as the key ingredients of an ethical theory. What is right is viewed and justified as being instrumental to achieving the goal of liberation as the highest good. In other words, the case for true awareness as what is right is in this ethics based on its being viewed as the means to liberation as the ultimate end and so is also the case for purification of the self that involves eradication of failings. Not only are these justified as the means to the accepted end, but further these different acts of commission and omission are accorded high moral status because of being the means to the same end. Since in this ethics what is right is justified as the means to the end and different acts are given similar or the same (depending on how directly or indirectly these are related to the end) moral values because of being the means to the same end, this ethics is consequentialist.

The main thrust of this ethics is on individual morality. Still, consideration for others is essential for individual moral progress. This is clear from the moral precepts mentioned above. Thus, the ten bad acts/dispositions that are causal conditions of demerit include violence, stealing, sexual transgression, false speech, harsh speech, harping on others' faults, speaking incoherently, enmity towards others, and coveting others' possessions that

are not only detrimental to oneself but are also harmful to others. While one has an obligation not to indulge in bad acts/dispositions, these may also imply that others have rights to life, property, and so on. That is, the point of these admonitions may very well be that one has an obligation to safeguard the rights of others and violation of these rights comes at a high moral cost. Further, the ten good acts/dispositions that are causal conditions of merit include giving, saving, service, true speech, beneficial speech, pleasant speech, and kindness that are not only beneficial to oneself but are also for the benefit of others. Again, failings include infatuation for the other sex (*kāma*), unwillingness to share with others what is not depleted by use (*matsara*), greed for others' possessions, and deception that all have adverse consequences for oneself as well as others.<sup>13</sup> Mention is also made of compassion (*kāruṇā*), understood as willingness to relieve the suffering of others without regard to one's own interest.<sup>14</sup> Thus, this ethics is also an ethics of engagement. The engagement is for relieving suffering not only for oneself but also for others, and one cannot reach the highest goal without engaging in the service of others. If altruism means that everyone should give up one's interest for others, this ethics is not altruistic. However, if altruism involves that serving others is beneficial for everyone including oneself, that in some situations one should sacrifice one's possessions, even life, etc. for others (and in a sense this is beneficial for oneself too) and that sometimes working as a group helps everyone including oneself more than working individually alone (for example, NS and NBH 4.2.47-48 speak of the value of fellowship), this ethics has an altruistic dimension as well.

We have seen that liberation as the highest good is conceived minimally as the absolute end of suffering and not as a state of bliss or happiness or pleasure (even in a sublime sense, though pleasure is often taken by some to be the highest good, as NBH 4.1.57 acknowledges). This is so because pleasure (even in an elevated sense) is inseparable from suffering.<sup>15</sup> Pleasure and suffering are inseparable (1) in the sense that wherever there is pleasure there is suffering and wherever there is suffering there is pleasure. They are also inseparable (2) in the sense that they both arise from the same causal conditions: whatever is a causal condition of pleasure is also a causal condition of suffering and vice versa. (This holds even though merit is a causal condition of pleasure and demerit, of suffering). They are further inseparable (3) in the sense that both are co-located: both pleasure and suffering are invariably located in the same person. They are again inseparable (4) in the sense that both are experienced together: whoever experiences pleasure also experiences suffering and vice versa (successively or simultaneously even if cognitive states are non-simultaneous).<sup>16</sup> NBH goes on to clarify that pleasure breeds hankering (*paryeṣaṇā*) that can never be fulfilled. Sometimes pleasures come but are short lived. Sometimes pleasures do happen but fall short of the mark. Sometimes pleasures come at a very high price of burdensome suffering. Further and more importantly, pleasures typically lead to the need for more pleasure and often for other pleasures; all these eventually turn into an insatiable thirst (*tṛṣṇā*). NBH cites an old saying: even when one who seeks pleasure finds it, one is quickly entrapped

for another pleasure.<sup>17</sup> NBH cites another old saying: even if one succeeds in acquiring the whole earth all the way up to the ocean with all cows and horses, one is still not satisfied (and thirsts for more). How can there be pleasure (or happiness or satisfaction) from desire for possession?<sup>18</sup> The point is well taken. If it is the very nature of pleasure to drive us for more, pleasure inevitably leads to unfulfillment and dissatisfaction and thus suffering. The paradox of pleasure stares at us with ominous certainty. The irony is that we often find pleasure when we do not pursue pleasure but pursue other things, such as fishing, philanthropy, and so on; but if we pursue pleasure itself, we end up empty handed. Even if we find pleasure, there is always thirst for more that brings dissatisfaction and suffering.

Since pleasure is inseparable from suffering, pleasure must be discarded, just as milk mixed with poison must be discarded to put an absolute end to all suffering.<sup>19</sup> Those who think that liberation as the highest good is not only devoid of suffering but also a state of pleasure or happiness suffer, in this view, from a dangerous clinging for pleasure and a serious delusion. Pleasure or happiness can only come with suffering and, therefore, is not the highest good. This is not to deny that pleasure is a fact of life and can be achieved. Our philosophers readily admit that pleasure is a common experience, is real, and the body, etc. do serve as the causal conditions of pleasure. Nevertheless, the claim is that the causal conditions of pleasure are also invariably the causal conditions of suffering. We naturally abhor suffering and nothing that involves suffering can be accepted as the ultimate good or goal. Thus, a state without suffering is higher than a state that includes pleasure and also suffering.

Our philosophers are not here making a transition from X is desired to X is desirable (and something is not desired to something is not desirable) as Mill did.<sup>20</sup> Philosophers repeatedly point out that pleasure, etc. are commonly desired but deny that these are desirable. Similarly, various things enjoined in moral and spiritual progress may not be desired by many, but that does not make them undesirable. In fact, NBH grants as an example of false belief that liberation as explained may appear to be terrifying (for being shorn of things we commonly like) and not desired by even some who are intelligent.<sup>21</sup> Still, there is a gap between what is desired and what *should* be desired as also between what is not desired and what *should not* be desired, and one does not follow from the other. Suffering is undesirable not because it is not desired. If this were so, pleasure would have been desirable because it is desired (as Mill supposed). For our philosophers, both suffering and pleasure are undesirable though the former is not desired and the latter is (commonly) desired. Thus, being actually desired or not being desired is not the proper basis for being desirable or undesirable for our philosophers. Rather, the proper basis for both pleasure and suffering being undesirable is that both are harmful (*ahita*) and our failings, *viz.* attachment, detestation, and confusion, are causal conditions of both. Thus, being rooted in our failings neither suffering nor pleasure can be desirable in a moral sense. Accordingly, for moral as well as logical reasons liberation or the ultimate good not only cannot be a state of suffering but also cannot be a state of pleasure.



The above viewpoint is similar to negative utilitarianism<sup>22</sup> that the moral standard is minimizing suffering and not maximizing pleasure and that there is no symmetry between suffering and pleasure. Clearly, Nyāya holds that the highest good is the absolute end of suffering and rejects that this is a state of pleasure. However, for Nyāya pleasure is real and a good and even a basic good, though not the highest good as we have seen. To a limited extent, the Nyāya moral standard of being beneficial without causing more harm than good (see below) can accommodate pleasure. In other words, the Nyāya standard does exclude pleasure in the ultimate analysis but does not exclude necessarily pleasure in ordinary situations. (Although all pleasures are inseparable from suffering and fall short of the highest end) one in the householder stage (*gṛhastha*), for example, is not disallowed from enjoying good things in life such as food, children, etc. if these do not cause greater suffering.<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, an objection against negative utilitarianism that a benevolent world exploder, if capable of achieving it with minimal pain, is duty bound to destroy all human life to eliminate suffering altogether does not apply to the Nyāya position.<sup>24</sup> Further, generally binding obligations such as non-violence, care giving, and other restraints and observances preclude the hypothesis of such a benevolent world exploder.

### INJUNCTION AND OBLIGATION

Nyāya consequentialist ethics has faced challenge from the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā school of Indian philosophy based on the analysis of the meaning of injunctions, especially with regard to the meaning of the verbal suffixes and verbal noun endings that provide the Sanskrit equivalents of English expressions like “should” or “ought to” in such imperatives as “one should tell the truth,” “one should treat the guest/the teacher/the father/the mother as God,” etc.

Both Nyāya and Prābhākara agree that injunctive suffixes and endings (injunction for short) induce one to act. The debate is over the exact nature of inducing awareness and the precise meaning of an injunction (*vidhi-artha*). In the Nyāya view such awareness is primarily that of the means of getting what is desired or beneficial. That is, an injunction induces primarily through the state of awareness of the means of achieving an end. For example, “one should tell the truth” as well as “one should treat the guest as God” may be said to induce one to tell the truth or treat the guest as God as the means of realizing the ends of social cohesion (*loka-saṃgraha*),<sup>25</sup> individual merit (*dharma*), and so on.

Prābhākara disagrees and holds that the inducement is primarily from the state of awareness of what is to be done or should be done (Sanskrit expressions like *kārya*, *karaṇīya* are ambiguous; Prābhākara also links what is to be done or should be done with what can be done or is achievable (*kṛti-sādhyā* that may remind one of Kant’s linking “ought” with “can”).<sup>26</sup> Thus, an injunction primarily means and conveys what is to be done or should be done and not what is the means to the end. The inducement is not directly from the state of awareness of the means to the end but from that of what is to be or should be done and the right thing to do. For example, “one should tell the truth” primarily means that telling the truth is what is to be or should be done

and the right thing to do and exhorts through the state of awareness of that.

Prābhākara argues that when a state of awareness serves as the causal condition of volition, what that state of awareness needs to produce is the desire to act or do or make something. In such desire, what is or should be done or being achievable is the qualifier and the achievable act is the qualificand. And for such desire the state of awareness of being achievable is the causal condition, for the qualifier in the state of awareness that is the causal condition of a given desire is always the same as the qualifier of that desire. That is, a desire in which something is the qualifier is caused by a state of awareness in which that same something is also the qualifier.<sup>27</sup>

The argument may be explained further as follows. When one has the desire for a mango, a causal condition of that is the state of awareness of a mango. No one has a desire for something unless one has experienced it (or something similar) before and is aware of it. In Nyāya terminology in the desire for a mango, the latter is the qualificand and mango-ness is the qualifier, i.e., this is a desire for what has or is qualified by mango-ness. In the same way, in the causally connected state of awareness of a mango, mango-ness is the qualifier. Thus, the qualifier is the same in the state of awareness that is a causal condition and the desire that is the effect. Prābhākara points out that when a state of awareness leads to volition, it first leads to desire to act or do or make in which what is to be done or should be done or being achievable is the qualifier. What is to be done then should also be the qualifier in the state of awareness that is the causal condition. It follows that what is to be done is the primary meaning of an injunction the state of awareness of which may lead to volition.

Prābhākara argues further that the state of awareness of being the means to what is desired or beneficial is not the causal condition as Nyāya claims, for then the desire to act or do or make could arise even for something that is not achievable. Indeed, one does not, for example, have the desire to make rain (even if there is drought); though rain is then desired and beneficial, it is still beyond one’s means.

Nyāya could reply that the state of awareness of being the means to what is desired or beneficial is still the appropriate causal condition. In such cases as rain above it does not lead to the said desire because of an obstruction, viz. the state of awareness of not being achievable.

However, if the above is accepted, absence of such obstruction too would have to be accepted as a causal condition and that is uneconomical. In the Prābhākara view the state of awareness of what is to be done or should be done or achievable is the causal condition. But in the Nyāya view the state of awareness of being the means to what is desired or beneficial as well as absence of the state of awareness of not being achievable are then accepted as causal conditions. Clearly, compared to the Prābhākara view the Nyāya view incorporates many more components and lacks economy. Thus, the reply is without merit.<sup>28</sup>

The Prābhākara view is highly developed as presented in TCM that remarkably happens to be a Nyāya work and a philosophical masterpiece. Since, however, a fuller treatment will take more time, we move on to how the Nyāya position can be defended.

One main argument offered against the Prābhākara view and for the Nyāya position is that it is an undeniable fact that although one may be aware of what is to be done or should be done or achievable, one may not always have volition for that. For example, one may not always have volition for telling the truth, although one may be aware that telling the truth is what is to be done. This suggests that the state of awareness of what is to be done or should be done or achievable is not the sufficient condition for such volition. It may be granted that the state of awareness of what is to be or should be done or achievable is a necessary condition for such volition to account for cases where there is lack of volition for things one desires or is beneficial but are unachievable (such as rain). It may also be granted that the state of awareness of what is desired or beneficial is not the sufficient condition for such volition. Thus, the reasonable position is the following: both the state of awareness of what is to be done or should be done or achievable and the state of awareness of the means to what is desired or beneficial are necessary conditions for such volition. As the common saying goes, even a dull person does not make an effort without a purpose (*prayojanam anuddiśya mandaḥ api na pravarttate*).<sup>29</sup> "Indeed, the mere awareness of what is to be done, even if derived from the Vedas, does not suffice for motivation; without awareness of the means to what is desired or beneficial to one's own self a thousand such states of awareness would fail to motivate."<sup>30</sup> It should be noted, however, one does not always have volition for something that is achievable as well as desirable or beneficial if that thing causes more harm than good. For example, one does not (usually) strive to get food that is mixed with poison. Accordingly, the causal condition of such volition should be amended as follows: the state of awareness of what is to be done or should be done or achievable and the state of awareness of the means to what is desired or beneficial that does not cause more harm than good.<sup>31</sup> However, for a negative injunction (such as one should not have illicit sex, etc.) the causal condition should be reformulated as follows: the state of awareness of what is to be done or should be done or achievable and the state of awareness of the means to what is desired or beneficial that causes more harm than good.<sup>32</sup>

Further, what is desired or beneficial and achievable should be understood as what appears to be so to someone at a given time. Thus, though a kingdom may be a big attraction, an infant prince does not (usually) care for it: the kingdom is neither what is desired or beneficial nor achievable to that infant prince at that time.<sup>33</sup> Again, one who may be overpowered by emotion and unable to think clearly may strive for what causes more harm than good (such as having illicit sex, etc.) for to that person at that time that choice appears not to cause more harm than good.<sup>34</sup> The above account also helps to show why one is not held to be culpable if, for example, someone accidentally drowns and dies in a well that one has dug up to relieve thirst, or if someone dies due to choking from the food served, or

if a bystander dies from injury from a spear thrown at an enemy. In such cases there is no volition caused by a state of awareness of digging the well or serving the food or throwing the spear as the means to such death.<sup>35</sup>

Now, in the Hindu tradition certain activities (such as offering daily prayers) are viewed as constant (*nitya*) obligations fulfillment of which do not produce any merit. Do such injunctions motivate merely from the state of awareness of what is to be done (as Prābhākara holds) without necessarily requiring the state of awareness of these activities as the means to a desired or beneficial end? No, says Nyāya. Even for constant obligations non-fulfillment is viewed as a sin and demerit. Thus, one is also motivated towards such fulfillment as the means to the desired and beneficial end of avoiding sin and not adding to the burden of demerit. Indeed, not adding and reducing the burden of demerit is accepted as necessary for making spiritual and moral progress towards the highest goal, viz., the absolute end of all suffering. Thus, fulfillment of constant obligation is a means to the ultimate goal of liberation as well. But again, though some Vedic injunctions mention a goal (such as one who seeks heaven should perform the sacrifice X), others (such as those that merely say that one should perform the sacrifice X) do not. Should the latter be held to motivate merely from the state of awareness of what is to be done as Prābhākara says? Not so, says Nyāya. Even in the latter cases either heaven or liberation should be taken to be understood as the implicit goal or purpose.<sup>36</sup>

## RESPONSE TO WESTERN MORAL THEORY

Before concluding this short survey, we shall look at how some issues in major classical Western ethical theories may be addressed from the perspective of Nyāya ethics; this may also throw more light on the latter. There are three influential ethical theories in the West. First, there is Kant's deontological theory that promotes duty for the sake of duty regardless of the consequences; claims that moral imperatives are categorical, unconditional, universal, and absolute truths of reason independent of observation; and holds further that each rational agent is an end in himself and never merely a means to an end. One well-known objection to this theory is that sometimes exceptions to such moral imperatives as that one should tell the truth should be allowed because not making the exception would likely cause more harm. For example (adapted from Kant himself who would argue that telling the truth is binding even in such a case), suppose that a Nazi officer asks one regarding the whereabouts of a Jewish family hiding in one's basement. Since telling the truth is more than likely to lead to the loss of innocent lives, one should, many argue, make an exception and not tell the truth, though that would be in violation of an absolute moral imperative as maintained by Kant.

However, for Nyāya ethics, moral imperatives are neither categorical nor independent of experience. Further, not only human beings but also animals and even trees and plants have "rights," not as ends in themselves but as the means to the common good. Again, in the above situation of one being confronted by a Nazi officer, not telling the truth is morally right. The standard of what is enjoined (*vaidha*) is being the means to what is desired or beneficial

and does not cause more harm than good and being achievable. Since telling the truth in that situation is likely to cause more harm than good by way of loss of innocent lives (including possibly one's own and even members of one's own family), it is not enjoined in that case; at the same time, since not telling the truth is more likely to be the means of what is desired or beneficial and is achievable, not telling the truth is enjoined in such a case.

Matilal has pointed out that a similar moral issue is presented in a story in the great epic *Mahābhārata*.<sup>37</sup> In the story, a hermit takes the vow to always tell the truth. The hermit is approached by some bandits about the location of some travelers whom the bandits intend to loot and kill. The hermit tells the truth and the travelers are murdered. Although the hermit keeps his vow, he is eventually denied entry into heaven for this action. The moral of the story seems to be that although telling the truth and keeping the promise are high moral priorities, saving innocent lives is a still higher moral priority; accordingly, one should make an exception to the duty of telling the truth in some situations, and making the exception in such cases is the right moral choice in this viewpoint that, as Matilal observes, is significantly different from that of Kant.

Second, there is utilitarianism that is a form of consequentialism developed by Bentham and Mill. In the utilitarian view, we naturally seek pleasure or happiness, which is the ultimate end. Pleasure should not be understood in the egoistic sense, for anyone's pleasure counts as much as anyone else's pleasure. The moral standard is choosing an act or a policy that makes life bearable or pleasant for as many people as possible and causes less harm to as many people as possible. Mill claimed that some pleasures are of higher quality than others as testified by those who are experienced in both higher and lower pleasures and we should choose to maximize higher pleasures for the greatest number of people. Morality is not based on a priori rational intuition that, according to some, is mysterious and also not on sentiment or feeling, which would make morality subjective. Rather, moral choices proceed from empirical cost-benefit calculations based on the best information we have and are subject to revision as more information becomes available. One powerful objection to utilitarianism is that it may fail to safeguard minority rights. Suppose that enslaving a small fraction of the population would ensure greater productivity and competitiveness and bring more prosperity to the vast majority of a nation. It seems that from merely utilitarian analyses it would not be easy to rule out that such slavery would not be morally wrong, though it would be in clear violation of the principles of equality, liberty, and justice for all.

Utilitarians have responded to the objection and a proper discussion would take a lot of space. Irrespective of whether this objection is fatal to utilitarianism, this objection, however, has no force against Nyāya ethics. First, such an institution of slavery will create an irreparable division and undermine the goal of social cohesion (*loka-saṃgraha*) and thus cause more harm than good. Second, such abuse of fellow human beings is precluded by the rules of restraint (*yama*) and observance (*niyama*) as well as the admonition of our failings (*doṣa*).

Third, there is virtue ethics that focuses not on right or wrong actions as the Kantian and utilitarian theories do but on the agent's character. In Aristotle's view people can build a firm, virtuous character by following the lead of the wise and repeatedly doing the right thing (and similarly, a vicious character by repeatedly doing the wrong thing) and one's action should proceed from virtuous character. A virtuous choice is rational choice from the disposition to choose the golden mean that can vary from person to person and avoids the extremes of excess or deficiency (e.g., bravery is the mean between rashness and cowardice) by responding in the right way, in the right amount, for the right reason, and not too much or too little. In this way one can achieve the highest good where one can flourish and excel in what one is meant to do and find happiness. One possible objection to this view is that some choices that appear to be extreme may be morally right. Suppose that a freedom fighter is promised by a corrupt and oppressive ruler a life of luxury and fame in return for his/her support, but the fighter turns that down and is executed. Has the fighter failed to make a rational choice from the disposition to choose the mean, made an extreme choice and, if so, a morally wrong choice? Another objection is that a clever and renowned lawyer, for example, who stays within the law and seems to be happy with his life but is not significantly concerned with helping others or the common good may fulfill Aristotle's definition of moral virtue. Such a lawyer may embody the vision of success for some, but for many is not morally virtuous. If Aristotle's account does not exclude such a lawyer, for many, it is too wide.

So far as Nyāya is concerned, it shares with Aristotle the importance of building a strong and virtuous character through practice. Much of the rules of restraint and observances and eradication of failings bears precisely on that. However, when it comes to some choices that may or may not be extreme for Aristotle's theory, they would not be excluded from the Nyāya perspective. Thus, the choice of the freedom fighter in the above case would be consistent with the norms of non-violence, non-stealing, and self-discipline emphasized in Nyāya ethics and would be an act of merit (*dharma*). Had that freedom fighter compromised with the unjust ruler that would have been inconsistent with these norms and been an act of demerit (*adharma*). Such acts of demerit are believed to lead to suffering in the hell (*naraka*) in the afterlife. Accordingly, they would cause more harm than good and fail to meet the standard of the means to what is desired or beneficial without causing more harm than good. The above norms of discipline would also exclude the lawyer in the given case from being accepted as morally virtuous. Talk about the hell, of course, is rare in contemporary ethics. However, such talk may be, for the limited purpose of ease of communication with the contemporary thinkers, interpreted, *mutatis mutandis*, to be about self-discipline.

It may now be seen that though Nyāya ethics is consequentialist, it may be labeled as soft consequentialism that is broad enough to incorporate aspects of both deontological ethics and virtue ethics. It recognizes a salient point of deontological ethics by accepting what is to be done or should be done as a necessary condition for inducement. It also gives credit to an important feature

of virtue ethics by emphasizing the crucial role of building a good character through restraint and observances and control of our failings.

## CONCLUSION

We have seen in this brief study of Nyāya ethics in what sense liberation as the absolute end of suffering is the highest good and true awareness and purification of the self are the means to it. We have also seen in outline how the kind of consequentialism developed by our philosophers has been defended against criticism and how such consequentialism may be useful for addressing some issues in modern moral philosophy. In Nyāya works ethical issues are intertwined with epistemological, ontological, religious, social, political, linguistic, and other issues. Nevertheless, if one carefully sifts through the vast literature produced by great thinkers, the ethical theory that would emerge is powerful and further exploration may yield new insight, clarity, rigor, and depth in ethical studies. Matilal, who wrote extensively and brilliantly brought out excellence of classical Indian philosophies in various fields, would certainly welcome such development.

## NOTES

1. Matilal, "Moral Dilemmas: Insights from the Indian Epics," 5.
2. Different scholars have estimated the date of NS to be between the sixth century BCE and the second century CE and that of NBH between the second century BCE and the fourth century CE.
3. NBH, vol. 1, 197.
4. NBH, vol. 1, 22.
5. PDS, 15.
6. Plato, *Meno*, 86–96; Plato, *The Republic*, 508e2-3.
7. NBH, vol. 1, 4, 30.
8. NBH, vol. 4, 316-17.
9. NBH 1.1.2.
10. NBH, 1.1.2, vol. 1, 68–79.
11. NBH, vol. 1, 127.
12. NBH, vol. 4, 12–14.
13. NV, 424–26.
14. PDS, 635.
15. NBH 4.1.54.
16. NV 1.1.2.
17. NBH 4.1.56.
18. NBH 4.1.56, vol. 4, 316.
19. NBH 4.1.54, vol. 4, 314.
20. Rosenstand, *The Moral of the Story: An Introduction to Questions of Ethics and Human Nature*, 234.
21. NBH 1.1.2, vol. 1, 69.
22. Sometimes attributed to Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 548.
23. NS and NBH 4.1.44, 4.1.52, NBH vol. 4, 328, etc.
24. Smart, "Negative Utilitarianism," 242-43.
25. BSS, 462-63; NBH, vol. 5, 237–40.
26. 'Kāryatā-jñānam pravarttakam iti guravaḥ' (TCM, 6-7).

27. 'Tathā hi jñānasya kṛtau janyāyām cikīrṣā-atiriktam na kartavyam asti.... Cikīrṣā ca kṛti-sādhyatva-prakārikā kṛti-sādhyā-kriyā-  
viśaya-icchā....sā ca sva-kṛti-sādhyatā-jñāna-sādhyā icchāyāḥ sva-  
prakarāka-dhī-sādhyatva-niyamāt' (TCM, 7-16).
28. TCM, 18.
29. TCM, 239.
30. BSS, 565-66.
31. BSS, 560. *Kṛtisādhyatve sati balavadaniṣṭa-ajanaka-iṣṭajanakatvam*. It may be noted that the Prābhākara-Nyāya debate is analogous to the so called is-ought controversy in modern moral philosophy. Prābhākara may roughly be interpreted to hold that the ought cannot be derived from the is while Nyāya may roughly be interpreted to hold the counter position that the ought can be derived from the is. But the issues are complex and a proper discussion will take much more space and must be left out.
32. TCM, 197ff.
33. TCM, 172-73.
34. TCM, 197.
35. TCM, 212–20.
36. TCM, 224–51.
37. Matilal, "Moral Dilemmas," 9–14.

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## *Bimal Krishna Matilal and the Enduring Significance of the Constructive Engagement Between Contemporary Analytic and Classical Indian Philosophy*

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Insofar as one can say that twentieth-century Western philosophy was dominated by the analytic tradition in England, America, and Australasia, one should also say that the dominant paradigm for engaging in comparative Indian philosophy with the Western tradition required engaging comparisons between analytic and Indian philosophy. B. K. Matilal was by far the greatest architect of this approach. However, one might ask, was it a good thing? Looking to the future, should it continue to be this way? I think there are good reasons to go beyond this approach and perhaps embrace reflections on Indian philosophy through the continental traditions, such as phenomenology, or even through the history of philosophy by looking at ancient Greek philosophy through a comparative lens with classical Indian traditions. Nevertheless, I want to argue that there is an enduring significance that exists in the constructive engagement between analytic philosophy and Indian philosophy that is impossible to move beyond.

My first point for retaining the engagement derives from taking note of the fact that the terms “Indian philosophy” and “contemporary analytic philosophy” do not function in exactly the same way.

“Indian philosophy” refers to a set of doctrines that have been reinterpreted and can continue to be reinterpreted in a number of different ways. In other words, “Indian philosophy” is what we might call an *anchor term*. Specific texts from the Indian subcontinent are anchored. What floats on the tether to that anchor are the many schools of interpretation that anchor on those texts.

“Contemporary analytic philosophy” can also be interpreted to be an anchor term for specific texts, but it can also be interpreted as an anchor term to a certain methodology that is not tied to any single tradition.

On the anchor to text notion what one would be anchoring on to is the Anglo-American philosophical tradition that grew out of Frege, Russell, Moore, Wittgenstein, and various members of the Vienna Circle and the Oxford Ordinary Language School of philosophy. While it is clear that one can go in for comparing Indian philosophy to that notion of analytic philosophy, one need not, when they say that they are engaging in comparing analytic philosophy to Indian philosophy. For there is another notion of analytic in which what one means to single out is that a certain kind of style of philosophy is being done, something where arguments are made clear and they are analyzed in various ways. One that uses conceptual analysis, but does not take on conceptual analysis in anything like the way it was conceived of in the early twentieth century by figures in the

“analytic” tradition. In addition, the use of “contemporary” in “contemporary analytic philosophy” makes it the case that the phrase must be time sensitive. What is contemporary now was not twenty years ago and won’t be thirty years from now. So there is a sense in which one cannot really move beyond engaging comparatively with contemporary analytic philosophy since what is being engaged is shifting on one side. The only sense in which one can move beyond engaging comparatively with contemporary analytic philosophy has to derive from some kind of push against the methodology which stays constant while what is developed in that methodology shifts. So, unless we are prepared to say that we want to move beyond engaging the analytic methodology when we compare Indian philosophy with shifting contemporary work, we should not. But why hang on to that methodology?

My second point for retaining engagement derives from an answer to this question. The answer is simple, yet powerful. The analytic methodology we find in contemporary analytic philosophy, which derives from Anglo-American philosophy, but moves beyond it, through divorcing itself of certain claims, is also found in classical Indian philosophy. So, if we want to move beyond comparisons between contemporary analytic philosophy and classical Indian philosophy, we would, in effect, simply want to move beyond classical Indian philosophy altogether. If we reject the methodology of contemporary analytic philosophy, we reject the methodology of classical Indian philosophy. They are both analytic.

Some scholars of Indian philosophy might reject my argument by pointing out that analytic methodology is not at the heart of classical Indian philosophy. And that the idea that it rests on taking certain schools, perhaps even ones that Matilal was partial to, such as the Nyāya, more seriously than others, such as Yoga. I have two responses. First, one can simply guard the claim and say that a majority of classical Indian schools accepted the analytic methodology, and concede that, in fact, there were some that did not use this methodology. Second, and more powerfully, one can argue that even the schools that one thinks are non-analytic are, in fact, engaging in analytic methodology as part of their way of doing business, even if it was not the only way they did business. The *Yoga Sūtras* are full of aphorisms, but those aphorisms, when analyzed, contain powerful analytic arguments. In addition, *āsana* practice is, in fact, analytical, when one thinks of the relation of “analytic” as taking not only statements or concepts, but also body and breath.

Matilal was a great architect of comparisons between analytic philosophy and classical Indian philosophy. Perhaps we simply do go beyond the comparisons that he did because the terrain has been exhausted. But I doubt we can go beyond comparisons between classical Indian philosophy and contemporary analytic philosophy. While the former is anchored textually and the latter is shifting, both share a common methodology whereby moving beyond analytic philosophy would lead to the end of contemporary Indian philosophy. They used to say Indian philosophy is just history. Let’s not make that true by moving beyond comparisons between contemporary analytic and classical Indian philosophy.

## Expanding Matilal's Project through First-Person Research

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B. K. Matilal (1935–1991) believed that Indian logic and epistemology had not received the recognition they deserve, and that Indian philosophy has too often been “presented as mystical and non-argumentative . . . at best poetic and at worst dogmatic.”<sup>1</sup> To correct these views, he developed a strategy of making important comparisons between Indian and Western thought, and engaged modern analytic philosophy using Indian insights and argument, showing their relevance to modern discussions.

Matilal's interest in continental philosophy developed late in his career, and thus the potential of his promising strategy for engagement with that tradition remained largely unexplored. Engaging with this modern tradition, of course, requires considerable emphasis on phenomenology, and Indian phenomenological insights are often even more likely to be criticized as “mystical” than other aspects of Indian philosophy. Here, as elsewhere, this criticism is often largely mistaken, and Matilal's kind of corrective response seems especially appropriate.

Phenomenological descriptions are regularly used as data supporting positions in debates within and between Indian traditions. These descriptions are often based on experiences gained through systematic meditation procedures not often considered in the West. Thus contemporary philosophy of mind would benefit from a critical evaluation—using modern scientific and philosophical tools—of the relevant meditation procedures, phenomenological reports, and arguments found in Indian sources, especially since some of these procedures appear to avoid well-known criticisms of first-person research methods.

What follows is a brief illustration of how this phenomenologically oriented expansion of Matilal's overall project might look. Examples of the proposed methodology are offered, with suggestions of how it might be applied, in this case to a specific experience central to Patanjala Yoga, often referred to as “pure consciousness.”<sup>2</sup> Section I suggests criteria for evaluating the experiential reports. Section II considers a potential criticism of this kind of first-person approach: concerns that the experiences in question are “mystical,” deviating too far from standard discourse to be philosophically useful. Section III suggests potential applications of the phenomenological insights gained, using the experience of pure consciousness to bring new perspective to two related philosophical problems.

### I

Bringing meditative procedures and associated experiential reports into modern philosophical discourse effectively will require scientific evaluation of the traditional claims. To assess the objective value of such claims, we ask standard scientific questions such as the following: Which meditative practices aim at which experiences? Which reach their

aim, and how can we tell? Of the ones that do, which are most effective? Are different procedures more suitable to different populations? How does the *yogin* arrange her instruments, in this case her mental and physical tools, in order to have the experience in question? Are there consistent physiological correlates of the experience? Does the experience lead to changes in the *yogin's* ability to report her experiences afterward? If so, are these changes neutral, negative, or positive? Many of these questions are addressed in the ancient literature, and often in ways that are testable using the tools of modern science.<sup>3</sup>

Patañjali's first three sutras, along with Vyāsa's commentary,<sup>4</sup> make it clear that a central aim of Yogic practices is the cultivation of a state of pure consciousness, devoid of mental fluctuations,<sup>5</sup> where all phenomenological content (including affect, etc.) has been removed from the *yogin's* awareness.

While this experience seems highly unusual, a variety of reasons exist to take reports of it seriously. One is that the experience appears to have unique physiological markers. It is, for example, traditionally associated with significant reduction of various markers of metabolic activity, including complete cessation of perceptible breathing, an association corroborated by various laboratory studies.<sup>6</sup> Other physiological markers unknown to pre-scientific societies, such as an EEG signature apparently characteristic of pure consciousness, have also been noted in the modern literature.<sup>7</sup> We also find strong agreement among meditative traditions about the existence of this phenomenologically contentless experience and its observable physiological correlate, despite the traditions' varied and often competing metaphysical contexts and interpretations. This suggests that the experience can be separated from, and is not the product of, mere metaphysical speculation. Thus, for example, Yoga's “pure consciousness” appears phenomenologically identical to the experience often referred to by Buddhists<sup>8</sup> as “pure emptiness,”<sup>9</sup> and correlated with respiratory suspension.<sup>10</sup> We can also note that the experience, as completely contentless, appears to be unimaginable before one has had it, since anything one might imagine would necessarily involve content foreign to the experience itself. Such phenomenological and physiological agreement across competing metaphysical systems, especially when the experience cannot be imagined beforehand, seems unlikely to have been fabricated.

The eight “limbs” of Yoga (ethical constraints, physical postures, etc.) are offered as means for tuning our objective instrument for experiencing, the nervous system, to have and stabilize this contentless experience, and others leading to it. Further, Patañjali's third chapter describes a practice called *sam̐yama* that incorporates the last three limbs of Yoga together into one practice. *Sam̐yama* is described as 1) *dhāraṇā* (directedness of attention), 2) *dhyāna* (unwavering flow of attention inward), and 3) *samādhi* (states without extraneous fluctuations, moving from grosser through subtler object-oriented states, and culminating in non-fluctuating, contentless experience).

The potential benefits of this kind of practice are easily imagined. Practice directing attention internally might well be expected to improve one's ability to focus on internal contents. Habitual experience of states without extraneous fluctuations might help minimize noise within one's experiential and cognitive mechanisms, especially if, as Patañjali suggests, these states eventually become stabilized, persisting throughout ordinary activity. Such putative effects are, of course, testable using modern scientific protocols.

## II

The above discussion of Patañjali's text suggests that Yogic practice might well be able to address some of the general criticisms raised against introspective psychology by logical positivists and behaviorists at the beginning of last century.<sup>11</sup> They questioned the very possibility of systematic, scientifically significant introspection. One major concern was that introspective practices modify, and therefore necessarily distort, the objects or states they are meant to explore.

Yoga is one of many traditions to suggest that regular experience of pure consciousness makes one's experience in general clearer, along with one's capacity to report one's experience, by removing potentially distorting noise from one's experiential and cognitive mechanisms. Even if some distortions turn out to be inevitable, the traditions reporting pure consciousness often suggest that such distortions can be minimized by reducing (and perhaps eliminating) extraneous fluctuations in one's awareness through proper training.<sup>12</sup> This suggestion, as noted above, is objectively testable, using precisely the kinds of research—supplemented by modern neurophysiological insights and technology—that led many at the beginning of last century to conclude that introspection must be unreliable. If research supported the traditional claims that one can minimize potential distortions of experience, the question would become not *whether* meditation and the associated phenomenology could ever be a valuable first-person research modality for exploring consciousness, but where, and to what degree they might be. Further, since the relevant experiences are said to lead to greater clarity of mind, the additional question arises whether training in techniques shown to effectively produce the experience of pure consciousness might serve scholars as a valuable adjunct to other phenomenological procedures.

Matilal's observations about how Indian philosophy is commonly presented might lead us to anticipate complaints here of mysticism, even from scholars engaged with Asian philosophy. For instance, in his *Buddhism as Philosophy*,<sup>13</sup> Mark Siderits quotes a major Indian Buddhist commentary, where Sthiramati describes an "extra-mundane non-conceptual cognition that is alike without object and without cognizer."<sup>14</sup> Though this may be a description of an experience of pure consciousness, it is the thrust of Siderits's objection, not the specific experience he is considering, that is my interest here.

Siderits's objection does not appear to be to the phenomenological description, but to the "extra-mundane" character of the purported experience. He suggests that

this extra-mundane character takes us beyond what most of us can evaluate, saying,

Are we brushing up against the mystical here? Are we being told to take on faith what only *yogins* can actually know through their faculty of non-rational intuition?<sup>15</sup>

What does he mean by "brushing up against the mystical"? He seems to emphasize three factors: 1) whether we are being asked to accept some claim on "faith," because 2) only some restricted population (*yogins*) has access to the requisite "intuition," which is 3) "non-rational." Let's consider each of these, starting with point two.

A *yogin* is a kind of specialist, engaging in specific practices for the sake of gaining specific experiences. Specialists exist in many fields, and no in-principle argument against their claims arises due to this fact. Moreover, no barrier prevents scientists and philosophers from participating in Yogic practices, especially with the dissemination of many such practices in the last half century or so. Practicing many of the relevant procedures requires no more "faith" than replicating any other scientific study. Once the experience is (presumably) gained, the phenomenological description need not be taken on "faith," either.

Next, it is not clear that an intuition's being "non-rational" is a problem, especially in cases like this where "intuition" appears to simply mean "experience." Take the experience of a red patch. Is that experience rational? It seems not. And it would seem odd if someone were to suggest that a test subject who reported experiencing a red patch was somehow deviating from the proper discourse of science or philosophy by reporting something "non-rational." The content of an experience may *relate* to some rational procedure, such as when one does a math problem in one's head, but the fact that the content is experienced *at all* is not a product of this rational procedure. All experiences, insofar as they are *experiences*, involve something other than, in fact more than, cognitive rational content. If this were not the case, empiricism would offer us nothing extra over and above reasoning, and our attempts at knowledge could rely on old-style rationalism.

A semantic issue related to the word "mystical" seems to be at issue here. When we talk of experiences, be they mundane or extra-mundane, we make empirical claims. We have sophisticated, objectively useful tools to help us interpret the significance of any given experience, and standards of reasoning to ensure that our claims do not unreasonably leap beyond what the evidence supports. In the case of such unreasonable leaps, we might call the *conclusions* "mystical," but then we mean irrational, rather than merely non-rational. Many modern concerns over "mystical" claims seem to conflate these two uses of the term.

## III

Once they have been critically evaluated in modern terms, experiential claims drawn from the Indian traditions can be applied to questions in modern philosophy in ways that, while sometimes inspired by Indian analyses,

nevertheless remain in accord with modern criteria. For instance, we still debate questions of the existence and nature of the self. The *Yoga Sūtra*<sup>16</sup> says that the experience of pure consciousness is the experience of self. Rarely are arguments made explicit in the *sūtra* form, but one supporting Patañjali's claim is not hard to construct.<sup>17</sup> For it seems natural to think that for an experience to be *mine*, I must be present at the event, especially if I can remember the experience afterward. Since there is no thing, no content in the experience, it also seems natural to conclude that this no-thing-ness must somehow reflect what I am as an experiencing being, independent of the kind of content my experience is ordinarily filled with.

We can also look to well-known philosophical analyses of self for clues.<sup>18</sup> For instance, Kant logically (rather than phenomenologically) concluded that the self must be without qualities. When discussing his transcendental unity of apperception, Kant argued that it must be a "pure" or original, unchanging consciousness, without any "special" empirical designation.<sup>19</sup> Phenomenologically, the experience of pure consciousness seems uniquely capable of fulfilling Kant's criteria.<sup>20</sup> Only one experience can be completely devoid of empirical content. Any other experience, to be distinguishable from pure consciousness, would have to have some content.<sup>21</sup>

The character of pure consciousness might also help explain why Hume could not find his "self."<sup>22</sup> In his *Treatise*<sup>23</sup> he wrote, "I can never catch myself at any time without a perception," and that he was "certain there is no such [simple and continuous] principle in me."<sup>24</sup> He was left with his famous bundle-theory, associating self with whatever bundle of perceptions he encountered upon introspecting.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps access to an effective procedure for experiencing pure consciousness might have led him to a different conclusion.

Similar analyses might prove useful for other problematic notions in Western philosophy. For instance, while offering his line of reasoning about self in the appendix of his *Treatise*, Hume makes a link between the notion of self and that of substance. He says,

But 'tis intelligible and consistent to say, that objects exist distinct and independent, without any common *simple* substance or subject of inhesion.<sup>26</sup>

And a few paragraphs later,

Is the *self* the same with *substance*? If it be, how can that question have place, concerning the substance of self, under a change of substance? If they be distinct, what is the difference betwixt them? For my part, I have no notion of either, when conceiv'd distinct from particular perceptions.<sup>27</sup>

He concludes that

Philosophers begin to be reconcil'd to the principle, *that we have no idea of external substance, distinct from the ideas of particular qualities*. This must

pave the way for a like principle with regard to the mind [or self], *that we have no notion of it, distinct from the particular perceptions*.<sup>28</sup>

Hume's discussion here proceeds on phenomenological grounds, moving from the general notion of substance, which he relates to external objects, to the particular notion of a substantial self. This link between the third-person and first-person problems, in terms of the notion of substance, offers a new starting point from which we might begin to re-address his problem. The experience of pure consciousness arguably seems well suited to help us phenomenologically ground the notion of a substantial self, and thus ground the notion of substance in general, independent of qualities.

## CONCLUSION

Similar methodology can be used to explore numerous meditative experiences reported in the relevant literature. Even limiting the discussion above to one experience, and touching only on a couple of interrelated philosophical questions, the potential usefulness of this approach should be clear. Matilal's project, with his interest in overcoming misunderstandings about Indian philosophy, has informed me throughout. If our aim is to develop philosophy—especially a philosophy of mind/consciousness—to include the insights and lived experience of everyone, approaches like this will be necessary.

## NOTES

1. Matilal, B. K. *Perception: An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 4-5.
2. The Sanskrit phrase for the experience is "*asamprajñāta samādhi*." "Pure consciousness" is a modern phrase useful to abstract discussions of the experience from the many religious and philosophical contexts within which it is considered important. See the work of R. C. K. Foreman, Jonathan Shear, etc., cited below. Also see Walter Stace's discussion of what he calls the "introvertive mystical experience," in Feinberg, J. *Reason and Responsibility: Readings in Some Basic Problems in Philosophy*, sixth edition (Wadsworth, Inc.), 77-85, originally published in W. Stace, *The Teachings of the Mystics* (New American Library of World Literature, 1960), 12-28.
3. Thousands of studies have now been published in various scientific venues. See, for example, E. Cardeña and M. Winkelman, eds., *Altering Consciousness: Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, Volumes I and II (Praeger, 2011).
4. Vyāsa is the name traditionally associated with the major commentary. Though there is considerable scholarly debate on this point, I will not engage that debate here.
5. *Yoga Sūtra* 1.2.
6. For research on respiration, see: J. T. Farrow and R. Herbert, "Breath Suspension During the Transcendental Meditation Technique," *Psychosomatic Medicine* 44 (1982): 133-53; and J. H. Austin, *Zen and the Brain: Toward and Understanding of Meditation and Consciousness* (The MIT Press, 1998), 96-98.
7. For EEG changes, see F. Travis and R. K. Wallace, "Autonomic Patterns During Respiration Suspension: Possible Markers of Transcendental Consciousness," *Psychophysiology* 34, no. 1 (1997): 39-46; and A. E. Berman and L. Stevens, "EEG Manifestations of Nondual Experiences in Meditators," *Consciousness and Cognition* 31 (2015): 1-11. See also J. H. Austin, *loc. cit.*, 86-87, 162-63, 171, 236, 270, etc.
8. The Buddhist Jhānas (progressively deeper stages of meditation), as described in the *Vissudhimagga*, culminate in a state that is said to be "without perception or non-perception" (B. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga – The Path of Purification: The Classical Manual of Buddhist Doctrine and Meditation*, trans. B.



- Nanamoli [Buddhist Publication Society, 2011], 330). Buddhists do not generally refer to this as the experience of "self," because they reserve that term for the ego/personality, and deny its existence as more than a construct. Zen Buddhists are a notable exception, since they will use the term "self," or "self-nature" to refer to the experience in question. The general Buddhist denial of a continuing self can arguably be related to technical aspects of Buddhist soteriology. I will not explore this point here.
9. Some scholars will insist that the experiences had within different traditions must for that very reason be different experiences. One example of this is Steven Katz who, taking a Neo-Kantian perspective, insists that the content of one's experiences are built up of conceptual and sensory artifacts from one's acculturation (S. T. Katz, "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism," in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. S. Katz [Oxford University Press, 1978]). But the pure consciousness experience has no content to be built up of anything, and any instance of it would thus have to be identical with any other. These facts seem to provide *prima facie* evidence against any universalized form of Katz' claim. He seems to have accepted that no such rule can be applied to experiences at the most "infantile and sensate" level (S. Katz, "On Mysticism," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LVI, no. 4 [1988]: 755). For an extended discussion of many of these points, see J. Shear, "On Mystical Experience as Empirical Support for the Perennial Philosophy," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* LXII, no. 2 (1994). See also, R. K. C. Foreman, ed., *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 1990).
  10. Compare C. C. Chang, *The Practice of Zen*, (Rider & Co., 1960), 163-64, where the author says, "Another major characteristic of *Samadhi* is the stoppage of breath. Without complete cessation of breathing, the progressive thought-flow will never cease its perpetual motion." The term for this is "stopping the breath (*chih shi*)." His italics.
  11. G. Güzeldere, "Problems of Consciousness: A Perspective on Contemporary Issues, Current Debates," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 2, no. 2 (1995): 112-43.
  12. Compare *Yoga Sūtra* 1.2-3, 4.33-4.
  13. M. Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy: An Introduction* (Hackett Publishing Company, 2007), 176.
  14. Siderits refers to Sthiramati's commentary on verse 28 of the *Triṃśika* ("30 verses") section of Vasubandhu's *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*. Part of the description here, "no cognizer," suggests nobody is present to even have the experience.
  15. Siderits, *loc. cit.*, 176.
  16. *Yoga Sūtra* 1.3.
  17. Here I follow J. Shear, interview for "Towards a Science of Consciousness X," University of Arizona, April 2012.
  18. For a deeper analysis of self and pure consciousness in terms of Western philosophy, see J. Shear, "Experiential Clarification of the Problem of Self," in *Models of the Self*, ed. S. Gallagher and J. Shear (Imprint Academic, 1999), 407-20.
  19. I. Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. P. Guyer and A. Woods (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1781/1999), A343/B401.
  20. Kant, of course, believed that because there was nothing in this "pure consciousness" for the mind to represent, it could not be experienced by humans. He seems to have simply been wrong. To his credit, he left open the possibility that some other type of mind might be capable of the experience. *Critique of Pure Reason*, B138-9.
  21. Or at the very least a spatial structure within which content might appear.
  22. Stace hints at a similar analysis, saying: "But now a vast body of empirical evidence, that of [the experiences of] mystics from all over the world, affirm that Hume was simply mistaken on a question of psychological fact, and that it is possible to get rid of all mental content and find the pure self left over and to experience this." (Stace, *loc. cit.*, 82).
  23. D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. with analytical index by L. A. Selby-Bigge, 1888. 2nd edition revised by P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1888/1978), 252.
  24. Here Hume also accepts that some other person may be able to find such a "principle," but that he could then "no longer reason with him."
  25. Hume makes it clear in the appendix of his *Treatise* (634-36) that his bundle-theory must be inadequate, because it fails to account for the unity of experience.
  26. *Ibid.*, 634. All italics here and in the two quotes that follow are part of the original.
  27. *Ibid.*, 635.
  28. *Ibid.*