

## Kumārila Bhaṭṭa and Pārthasārathi Mīśra on First- and Higher-Order Knowing

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According to the seventh century CE philosopher Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, epistemic agents are warranted in taking their world-presenting experiences as veridical, if they lack defeaters. For him, these experiences are defeasibly sources of knowledge without the agent reflecting on their content or investigating their causal origins. This position is known as *svataḥ prāmānya* in Sanskrit, henceforth the SP principle.

As explicated by the eleventh century commentator, Pārthasārathi Mīśra, this position entails that epistemic agents know things without simultaneously knowing that they know them, or being in a position to know that they know. In contrast, some contemporary Anglo-analytic philosophers<sup>1</sup> argue for the “knows-knows principle” (KK principle), in which if someone knows that  $p$ , then that person also knows that they know that  $p$ , or that person is in a position to know that they know  $p$ . Despite some apparent similarities, the SP principle is not a version of the KK principle, nor would Pārthasārathi’s Kumārila have held the KK principle.

Recently, Daniel Immerman (2018) has argued that the SP principle is a position-to-know version of the “knows-knows principle” (KK-pos principle). By examining Kumārila’s response to his Buddhist opponent, who challenges the veracity of Vedic testimony, we will see that Kumārila understands higher-order knowing as involving an independent check on one’s epistemic processes, through an epistemic instrument known as postulation (*arthāpatti*). This precludes him from holding the KK-pos principle.

1. Pārthasārathi’s Kumārila on *svataḥ prāmānya*

Mīmāṃsā, or “Investigation,” is a Sanskrit tradition interested in epistemology, metaphysics, and the hermeneutics of Vedic ritual material. Kumāṛila famously develops his epistemology in the *Extensive Commentary in Verse (Ślokavārttika, ŚV)*, a dense collection of verses which comments on earlier Mīmāṃsā thought, especially in response to Buddhist philosophical criticism. Kumāṛila’s explanations of philosophical ideas are often terse (in the ŚV he writes in meter), and subsequent Mīmāṃsakas who write independent treatises or independent commentaries on his work often disagree on how to understand him. His discussion of the SP principle is no exception.

One of these thinkers, Pārthasārathi Mīśra, writes a commentary on the ŚV, the *Nyāyaratnākara (NR)*, as well as an independent philosophical treatise, the *Jewel Necklace of Reasoning (Nyāyaratnamālā, NRM)*. John Taber (1994) and Daniel Arnold (2005) argue that of two early commentators, Pārthasārathi is more faithful to what Kumāṛila really meant by the SP principle. Recently, however, Lawrence McCrea (2018) has challenged this position, giving a subtly but importantly different interpretation of Pārthasārathi Mīśra’s views. Agnostic here on the question of fidelity to Kumāṛila, I argue that on both interpretations, Pārthasārathi’s Kumāṛila holds that our cognitions are initially warranted unless and until they are defeated by a further cognition. This helps us see that SP is not KK nor is it KK-pos.

For Kumāṛila, a cognition (*jñāna, pratyaya*) is an agent’s mental event, such as knowing, believing, seeing, or doubting, which aims at some intentional object and has as its content features of that object.<sup>2</sup> Kumāṛila explains the nature of cognition in the ŚV, especially in the *nirālambanavāda (NAV)* and the *śūnyavāda (ŚNV)* sections, in which he explains that cognitions are momentary, are capable of being veridical or non-veridical, can have other cognitions as their content, and they cannot have themselves reflexively as their content. All

occurrent knowledge-events (in contrast to dispositions) are cognitions. Dispositions to believe result from knowledge-events, such as the veridical perception of an object as having a property. Seeing a blue pot generates the belief that the pot is blue. Not all cognitions, however, are knowledge-events, as we'll see below.

As a Mīmāṃsā philosopher, Kumārila defends the authority of Vedic injunctions as a means for knowing one's ritual obligation (*dharma*), and in the context of this defense, in the *codanāsūtra* (CDS) section of the ŚV, he argues that all cognitions have *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, a term often translated as “intrinsic validity,” and here simply labeled “SP.” I return to the importance of this defense later, but right now focus on the SP principle, which I leave untranslated due to ambiguities in the Sanskrit which give rise to some of the interpretive controversy about SP.

In Sanskrit, three important terms are related to what we call “knowledge” in English: *pramā*, *pramāṇa*, and *prāmāṇya*. As used in Mīmāṃsā: a *pramā* is what we might call a “knowledge-event.” It is an occurrent awareness of some content which is true and brought about in the right manner—that is, it is warranted. For example, a genuine perceptual experience of an object is a *pramā*. We could loosely speak about cognitions as “beliefs” but only if we are careful to distinguish between dispositions and occurrent events as noted above. Dispositional beliefs result from cognitions. Their recollection is not a knowledge-event (even if the belief is true and acquired in the correct manner). In contrast, cognitions are mental events. Agents have attitudes such as acceptance or rejection towards their contents. Kumārila's SP thesis focuses on occurrent cognitions.

An agent's cognition results from a *pramāṇa*, or “epistemic instrument” (sometimes also “knowledge source”). Epistemic instruments such as perception, testimony, or inferential

reasoning result in a warranted<sup>3</sup> veridical cognition, a *pramā*. Importantly, in this context, terms like “perception” are success terms: Kumārila argues that a hallucination or other misperception is not an erroneous perception, but a different thing entirely, since it arises from a different basis, not from an epistemic instrument. *Pramāṇas* only give rise to veridical cognitions. Against this etymological background understanding precisely what Kumārila means by *prāmāṇya* is important. The word is often translated “validity.” Strictly speaking, as a secondary derivative of *pramāṇa*, it means “the property of being related to an epistemic instrument (*pramāṇa*).”<sup>4</sup>

There are certain key statements that Kumārila makes that all of his interpreters must explain. There is the appearance of internal tension, if not actual contradiction, in his commitments.<sup>5</sup> He is committed to the following:

1. **SP principle:** All cognitions have (or appear to have) the property of *svataḥ prāmāṇya*.<sup>6</sup>
2. **PA principle:** False cognitions have the property of **non-*prāmāṇya***, extrinsically (*parataḥ*).<sup>7</sup>
3. **Defeater condition:** For an agent who has a cognition ( $c_1$ ) that  $p$  and a subsequent cognition ( $c_2$ ) that not- $p$ ,  $c_2$  is a defeater to  $c_1$  and  $c_1$  has non-*prāmāṇya* extrinsically.<sup>8</sup>
4. **Default acceptance condition:** For an agent who has a cognition ( $c_1$ ) that  $p$  and does not experience a subsequent defeater cognition ( $c_2$ ),  $c_1$  continues to have *svataḥ prāmāṇya*.<sup>9</sup>

On the default acceptance condition, if an agent experiences a cognition of silver, she is warranted in her belief “That is silver,” unless and until she experiences a defeater cognition.

There are two ways that an initial cognition can lose its warrant. First, an agent can experience a *contradicting-defeater*: when one has a cognition, “That is silver,” ( $c_1$ ), then a second cognition ( $c_2$ ) “That is not silver” directly opposes the content of the first. According to Kumārila, it is part of  $c_2$ ’s content that  $c_1$  is false. This is because the second cognition defeats, or opposes the first

cognition (ŚV 57).

Or, she can experience an *alternate-cause defeater* which identifies a faulty cause of the previous cognition, such as the realization that she has forgotten her glasses and is seeing poorly. In either case, her cognition “That is silver” is now taken to have non-*prāmāṇya*, extrinsically (due to the later cognition). Unlike the *contradicting-defeater*, this defeat occurs through implication, or indirectly (*arthāt*). Kumārila says that the alternate-cause defeater “through implication comes to acquire the same object (*artha*)” as the first cognition.<sup>10</sup> Pārthasārathi elaborates on this with an example. Suppose an agent has a cognition of a shell, “That is yellow,” (c<sub>1</sub>), then a second cognition (c<sub>2</sub>) “I have an eye disease.” This then leads to the understanding (c<sub>3</sub>) “The cause of the yellow color is the eye disease, not the shell itself.”<sup>11</sup> Pārthasārathi says such a case is not so easy (*laghu*) as the previous case, of the contradicting-defeater, where the first is understood “rapidly” (*śīghragamya*).<sup>12</sup> For him, in contrast to the contradicting-defeater, an alternate-cause defeater involves at least some cognitive delay (*vilamba*).

Since epistemic instruments only give rise to veridical cognitions, if Kumārila says that all cognitions have *svataḥ prāmāṇya*, we might think he is committed to all cognitions being veridical. But not only is this philosophically dubious, it is textually inconsistent, since, as we have just seen, he talks about the conditions under which cognitions have **non-*prāmāṇya***, or the property of “**not being** related to an epistemic instrument.” One reason many philosophers use “validity” to translate *prāmāṇya* is because there is a question about whether it refers to truth (here interchangeable with “veridicality”) or warrant. If it refers to truth, then *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is a cognition’s correspondence with the world. If it refers to warrant, then *svataḥ prāmāṇya* is a cognition’s capacity to generate a cognition which we are entitled to, or warranted to, treat as true. Both truth and warrant are related to an epistemic instrument, in the sense that they are

aspects of what makes an epistemic instrument result in *pramā*, knowledge, and what makes epistemic instruments authoritative ways of knowing. So, since *svataḥ prāmāṇya* could be truth or warrant, the term “validity” is often used as a neutral translation.

There are two other issues that commentators face: (1) what does *svataḥ* mean, and (2) how does *prāmāṇya* come about in a *svataḥ* manner? The word *svataḥ* is translated as “intrinsically” because *sva* means “itself” and the ablative ending *-taḥ* gives it an adverbial sense. In contrast, *parataḥ* means “from another,” or “extrinsically,” as in the PA principle. According to Pārthasārathi, *svataḥ* means that the cognition itself brings about *prāmāṇya*, so that the cognition  $c_1$  of the silver, and not another cognition  $c_2$ , is responsible for  $c_1$  having *prāmāṇya*.<sup>13</sup> But for false cognitions, such as of a shiny shell being silver, some cognition  $c_2$  which is other than the original cognition of silver  $c_1$  is responsible for  $c_1$ 's having non-*prāmāṇya*.<sup>14</sup> Finally, Pārthasārathi considers how *prāmāṇya* comes about in a *svataḥ* manner. That is, does *prāmāṇya* actually occur from the cognition itself or does it only seem to occur? If the latter, then  $c_1$  appears to have *prāmāṇya*, but may not in fact have it. Bringing these options together, there are four potential interpretations of Kumārila's SP principle:

1. **SP principle, genuine truth.** All cognitions have veridicality which arises just in virtue of the cognition itself.
2. **SP principle, genuine warrant.** All cognitions have warrant which arises just in virtue of the cognition itself.
3. **SP principle, appearance of truth.** All cognitions have the appearance of veridicality which arises just in virtue of the cognition itself.
4. **SP principle, appearance of warrant.** All cognitions have the appearance of warrant which arises just in virtue of the cognition itself.

Discussion in secondary literature—Taber (1994), Arnold (2008), and McCrea (2018)—amounts to whether Pārthasārathi’s Kumārila holds (2) SP principle, genuine warrant, or (3) SP principle, appearance of truth. At issue is what he means by *prāmāṇya*: veridicality or warrant? I argue that both interpretations converge on the question of whether an agent can know that they know: the SP principle does not mean that an epistemic agent must know that they know, or be in such a position.

## 2. The SP Principle is Not the KK Principle or KK-pos Principle

The KK principle is often characterized as

**KK principle.** If a subject  $S$  knows a proposition  $p$  ( $Kp$ ) then  $S$  knows that they know  $p$  ( $KKp$ ).<sup>15</sup>

While there are many formulations of the KK principle, all share the idea that first-order knowledge, knowing  $p$ , entails reflective knowledge, knowing that you know  $p$ . However, Kumārila cannot accept this formulation of the KK principle because he argues that cognitions are not self-cognizing. He is quite clear about this. A subset of his primary opponents, Buddhists, argue for the opposite position, known as “self-luminosity,” or the ability of a cognition to cognize itself.<sup>16</sup> In contrast, Kumārila argues that all of our cognitions are object-directed. While we may be mistaken about which object we are cognizing, none of our cognitions have themselves reflexively as their content.<sup>17</sup> Thus for Kumārila, if I know that  $p$ , that same cognition cannot simultaneously have itself as content such that I know that I know that  $p$ . However, there is another version of the KK thesis which does not require reflexive self-awareness:

**KK-pos principle.** If a subject  $S$  knows a proposition  $p$  ( $Kp$ ) then  $S$  is *in a position to* know that they know  $p$  ( $K_{\text{pos}}Kp$ ).<sup>18</sup>

Qualifying subject  $S$  as being “in a position to know” is important because this version of the KK

principle does not entail that one occurrently has knowledge of one's knowing. Rather, one could have KK without any further empirical inquiry. That is, they are already in possession of the relevant epistemic properties to know that they know. This is the version of the KK principle that Immerman (2018) has recently argued Kumāriila would accept: "*Svataḥ Prāmāṇya* is the idea that whenever one acquires knowledge one is thereby in a position to know one has knowledge" (411). By "Kumāriila," Immerman means Pārthasārathi's Kumāriila, by way of Taber and Arnold's interpretation.

To illustrate, Immerman considers a case where you see your cat on the couch, thereby coming to believe that there is a cat on the couch.<sup>19</sup> Subsequently you wonder whether that belief is knowledge. According to Immerman, Kumāriila would say that, given the SP principle, you have all the necessary epistemic properties from your initial cognition to know that you know your cat is on the couch (412). You do not need to perform any additional checks using additional sources of knowledge, such as inference. Given this claim, Immerman thinks that Kumāriila can offer new replies to some standard arguments against the KK-pos principle. However, Kumāriila's SP principle is also not a version of the KK-pos principle. Further, I argue that he would not accept KK-pos nor would he argue for it. Recall that there are two versions of the SP principle possible from Pārthasārathi's reading.

**SP principle, genuine warrant.** All cognitions have warrant which arises just in virtue of the cognition itself.

**SP principle, appearance of truth.** All cognitions have the appearance of veridicality which arises just in virtue of the cognition itself.

For both Taber and Arnold, a key entailment of the genuine warrant version of the SP principle, is that the most we get is warrant.<sup>20</sup> Taber says, "Pārthasārathi in particular stresses that intrinsic



validity is common to true and false cognitions alike” (214). And following Taber, Arnold says, “we are thus *prima facie* justified whether or not the cognitions in question turn out to have been veridical” (93). In other words, the general warrant version of the SP principle is not restricted to knowledge-events, which it must be in order for it to be either version of KK. Both the standard and position-to-know versions of KK state that when an agent has knowledge, it is necessary that she has reflective knowledge or is in a position to obtain it. But the general warrant version of the SP principle says that when an agent has a cognition (which could be non-veridical), it is necessary that the cognition has warrant.<sup>21</sup>

Neither Taber nor Arnold explicitly take up the KK or KK-pos principle, but Taber says, “If, over the long run, the cognition is not shown to be false, then on the basis of its initial, intrinsic validity one is certainly *justified* in believing that it is not false, that it is really true” (216). This justification comes about when, after a period of time, the cognition continues undefeated and “we may suppose...that the cognition is really true” because we can suppose that the counterfactual situation which would give rise to a defeater does not obtain (215). However, Taber notes that this supposition occurs in a different manner than the initial cognition, since the initial cognition does not have itself as a content of its knowledge (213, n 48). Arnold’s 2008 account tracks closely with Taber’s view, though he uses slightly different language. Arnold speaks in terms of being “entitled” to think that one’s beliefs are really true (97), which might sound as if he’s speaking about higher-order knowledge. However, he is clear that this entitlement is what he is calling “justification,” or a “doxastic account of justification,” on which we are *prima facie* justified in our beliefs in virtue of the phenomenological nature of cognitions—they seem to present us with veridical content. This *prima facie* entitlement applies to all cognitions.

However, there is another reading of Pārthasārathi’s Kumārila: the appearance of truth version of the SP principle, defended by McCrea.<sup>22</sup> This interpretation, on which *svataḥ prāmāṇya* refers to veridicality, seems more promising as a candidate for the KK-pos principle, since KK requires the truth of one’s belief. Unfortunately this version is also not equivalent to the KK-pos principle. On this version of the SP principle, only a genuine perception actually has *prāmāṇya*—understood as veridicality. However, both cognitions of a real cat or a lumpy pillow you mistake as a cat from a distance will initially appear to you as having *prāmāṇya*, or appear as veridical cognitions. Thus, because of the appearance of veridicality, you are warranted in both cases in your belief, “There is a cat on the sofa.” However, in the bad case where you are seeing a lumpy pillow, since you do not know that there is a cat on the sofa, you do not know that you know there is a cat on the sofa—as there is no cat on the sofa, and knowledge requires truth. In contrast, in the good case, when there is a cat, as your cognition continues on with no contradictory cognitions as you get closer to the couch (e.g. of a lumpy pillow), then you continue to be warranted in that belief, since it is undefeated. If the appearance of truth is what Pārthasārathi means by the SP principle, it is not a version of the KK-pos principle. Just because you have the appearance of a true cognition you are not guaranteed your cognition is true. This is despite being warranted in that belief.

On McCrea’s interpretation, too, *Kp* at the first-order level does not require knowing that one knows. However, he states that, for Pārthasārathi, “all awarenesses (even those that are really false) come packaged with an initial conviction that they are valid [true]” (106, brackets mine). Such a conviction, being about the appearance of truth, sounds like a higher-order attitude towards a cognition. But McCrea does not characterize this initial conviction as higher-order knowledge-event that the cognition is true. It cannot be, since the conviction occurs for both true

and false cognitions. Then, for McCrea, does Pārthasārathi think can we have a subsequent knowledge-event that the initial cognition is true just on the basis of that initial cognition, without appeal to any further epistemic properties? He does not directly take up this question. McCrea does observe Kumārila’s expectation that, after a series of cognitions (“awarenesses”) which disclose competing content (something appears silver, then appears not silver, then appears silver again), agents will be in a position where “no further awareness is sought for” (ŚV, CDS vs 61, 111). And in such a case, McCrea says an agent has “a more or less stable validity” (111). Further, the cognition which turns out to be “justified” is “justified *in exactly the same way*, and to exactly the same degree, that one’s initial, uncontradicted awareness was justified” (112, italics mine). The “justification” in question belongs to the initial cognition (first-order) not our belief in that cognition (higher-order). Thus on neither version of the SP principle are we guaranteed a true cognition, and if knowledge requires truth, we are not guaranteed  $KKp$  or  $K_{\text{pos}}Kp$ , as  $p$  could be false.<sup>23</sup>

### 3. Pārthasārathi and the KK-pos Principle

While we now see that the SP principle is not a version of the KK-pos principle, contra Immerman, the question still remains whether Pārthasārathi’s Kumārila could accept the principle on other grounds. In fact, he would not accept position-to-know KK, because confirming that a cognition is knowledge requires a different epistemic instrument to obtain, namely postulation (*arthāpatti*).

Pārthasārathi’s Kumārila discusses knowing that one knows only in certain contexts, those where the agent has been challenged with an apparent contradiction or is in a position of doubt. Doubt (*sandeha*, *saṁśaya*) is thematically important for Kumārila. For instance, the inquiry into *dharma* which spurs Jaimini’s *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* and Śabara’s commentary thereon, is

motivated in part because of doubts (ŚV PJS 125). In that verse, Kumāṛila adds, if there were no doubts about something, then there would not be inquiry (*jijñāsā*) into it. (Another reason for inquiry is something's having a beneficial result, like happiness or bliss.) For Kumāṛila, broadly following Vaiśeṣika thinkers before him, doubt (*saṃśaya*) is a state of indeterminacy about an object's nature. He frequently characterizes it in terms of equal options, such as whether something is a person or a post (ŚV VAA 304-306), is fog or smoke (ŚV AUP 78-79), or is a denoter of classes or individuals (TV at MS 1.3.25).<sup>24</sup> Thus when the nature of something—whether the character of a perceived object or a cognition—is in question, doubt arises. More precisely, they have some information which is in common between the two possibilities, but they do not have a distinguisher, or specifier (*viśeṣa*).

Suppose a Mīmāṃsaka hears a Vedic recitation and has a cognition whose content is “One who desires heaven should perform the *agnihotra* ritual.” On the SP principle, the agent has a cognition, which I'll label “Agni,” which is genuinely warranted (Taber, Arnold) or appears to be true (McCrea). The means of knowing is testimony—or at least if it is veridical, it would be testimony. If it is non-veridical, it would be pseudo-testimony. Thus it is “putative testimony.”

c<sub>1</sub> (by putative testimony): Agni.

No number of subsequent cognitions which agree with the original will increase the initial cognition's having SP—the property is present or is not. However, now a Buddhist questions the Mīmāṃsaka as to why they think their cognition is veridical. The Mīmāṃsaka replies, using putative inference or postulation, giving a reasoned account of the means by which they came to know (putative testimony).

c<sub>2</sub> (by putative inference/postulation): K(Agni)

However, now a Buddhist gives an argument against the Mīmāṃsaka to the effect that they do not know Vedic testimony is genuine. This argument itself is performed either through inference or postulation, and has as its conclusion that the Mīmāṃsaka does not know Agni:

c<sub>3</sub> (by putative inference/postulation): ¬K(Agni)

Such a case brings the Mīmāṃsaka's c<sub>2</sub> into doubt, because they now have a cognition—the conclusion of what appears to be an inference—that is the opposite of their previous position. They are in a position where they have two opposing properties ascribed to c<sub>1</sub>: it is either knowledge or it is not knowledge. This is the paradigmatic case in which doubt arises. For example, Kumāṛila describes such a rhetorical situation in the TV at MS 1.3.25, noting that a challenge to a previous position connects that position to doubt (*saṃśayapratibaddha*).<sup>25</sup> A cognition which is subject to doubt cannot have *prāmāṇya*, as he clearly states later in the CDS (vs 145), focusing on the very question of whether doubtful testimony could be a means of knowing.

Thus, the Mīmāṃsā argument for Vedic injunctions having SP is essentially an answer to the question, “How do you know that you know?” in the face of doubt. If Pārthasārathi's Kumāṛila were committed to the KK-pos principle, we might expect that, to answer the Buddhist, he would need only refer to the content of that cognition, and would not employ any additional checks with other epistemic instruments. In contrast, we will see his response involves reasoning and additional information. It appeals to more than simply the content of the *agnihotra* testimony.

For Mīmāṃsakas, the Vedas, religious texts transmitted orally for many hundreds (to thousands) of years before Kumāṛila, are unauthored (*apauruṣeya*). On a typical understanding of testimony, testimony is an epistemic instrument because of the knowledgeable and

trustworthy speaker (an *āpta*), who utters it.<sup>26</sup> One could defeat a testimonial cognition by showing that the right epistemic virtues (knowledge and trustworthiness) are lacking, or by observing a contradiction to its content. The former would be an alternate-cause-defeater, and the latter a contradicting-defeater. But for unauthored testimony, one can't inquire into whether its speaker is knowledgeable and trustworthy. Further, Vedic testimony is about unobservable future goals, as in the injunction for one who desires heaven that they should perform certain rituals. Thus, one cannot observe contradictions with Vedic testimony. Since it is impossible to have either type of defeating cognition for the Vedas, given the SP principle, a cognition from Vedic testimony is not only immediately warranted (or immediately appears veridical), it is immune to defeat. This, in brief, is the argument for Vedic testimony as an epistemic instrument, which Kumārila takes up in verses 62 to 110 in the CDS.

There are two conclusions we can draw from this response to the Buddhist challenger. First, Kumārila's explicit defense of knowing that he knows through Vedic testimony employs a different epistemic instrument than the one that provided the content of the *agnihotra* command. Depending on how one analyzes his lengthy discussion, we will notice that he uses either inferential reasoning (*anumāna*), postulation (*arthāpatti*), or a combination of the two.<sup>27</sup> On any of these analyses, Kumārila is appealing to more information than the content of the *agnihotra* command: he's involving facts about testimony, facts about the Veda's nature, and he's employing a different epistemic instrument to draw the conclusion that the Vedic testimony is a genuine epistemic instrument. However, this approach in itself is not conclusive, insofar as we might distinguish between ascertaining for myself that I know *p* and demonstrating to an opponent that I know *p*. Since the Buddhists will not take the mere content of Vedic injunctions as evidence, a Mīmāṃsaka needs a different strategy. Thus, the fact of his approach is merely

suggestive that he would not accept KK-pos.

For more conclusive evidence, we should pay attention to the relationship between doubt and defeaters. Kumāriila is committed to:

1. **Sufficiency condition for lack of doubt:** If there is no experience of a defeater to a cognition  $c$ , one should not doubt  $c$  (CDS 60).
2. **Contrapositive of (1), necessity condition for doubt:** If one should doubt a cognition  $c$ , there is an experience of a defeater to  $c$ .

Essentially, were not for the Buddhist interlocutor and their inference to  $\neg K(\text{Agni})$ , there wouldn't be any doubt—nor would it be rational to doubt—that a Vedic cognition might be a non-*pramāṇa* (vs 68). This is because these cognitions never encounter a defeater. However, once doubt about the cognition's being knowledge occurs, then it is rational to reflect on the cognition's epistemic status. This suggests that epistemic agents do not (and ought not) normally reflect on prior cognitions without being faced with some epistemic basis. Presumably Kumāriila would think idly wondering whether one's belief counts as knowledge is irrational, if taken seriously.<sup>28</sup> For Pārathasārathi's Kumāriila, were we not to reject the possibility of global doubt, it could infect every cognition, rendering the world blind.<sup>29</sup> One appropriate basis for doubt is the cognition of a defeater (either an alternate-cause-defeater or an contradicting-defeater).<sup>30</sup>

Finally, we must consider how higher-order reflection on cognitions occurs. As cognitions are not self-reflexive, we attend to their existence only through an epistemic instrument called “postulation” (*arthāpatti*). Kumāriila makes this claim clearly in the previously-mentioned section of the ŚV (the ŚNV) where he argues against a Buddhist view that cognitions are self-cognizing. In this section, which develops Śabara's own discussion in his earlier commentary, Kumāriila argues explicitly that while the content of a previous cognition is

remembered, its existence is known only through postulation (ŚV, ŚNV 118). Suppose an agent is aware of a pot through perception. At one instant, they perceive the pot (c<sub>1</sub>). The next instant, they look away and remember the pot they saw (c<sub>2</sub>). The content of their memory, however, is the pot itself, not the cognition whose content is the pot. However, since having that memory is impossible unless there was a prior cognition, the agent concludes, through postulation, that there was a cognition of a pot (c<sub>2</sub>). This exemplifies the structure of postulation, which is the positing of some entity without which some other experienced or heard thing would be impossible.<sup>31</sup>

While Kumāriḷa differentiates the structure of postulation (*arthāpatti*) from inferential reasoning (*anumāna*), he notes that the terms can be interchangeable, if their differences are kept in mind (ŚV, AP 88).<sup>32</sup> Thus it's important, in Mīmāṃsā texts, to attend to whether *anumāna* is used in its wide sense or narrow sense, where the former includes postulation. Typically, when there is an appeal to what is not possible otherwise, the underlying epistemic instrument is postulation, not inferential reasoning (e.g. ŚNV 182). In his discussion of the SP principle, Pārthasārathi explicitly refers to the principle that it is through inferential reasoning that prior cognitions are known to have occurred by citing the Vṛttikāra's remark in Śābara's commentary: "But when something has been cognized, it is understood through inference (*anumāna*)."<sup>33</sup> Pārthasārathi appeals to this principle to explain how the effects of a genuine epistemic instrument occur without our awareness of being genuine. This is despite not experiencing reflexive awarenesses such as, "This is an epistemic instrument" (ŚV, CDS 83). Pārthasārathi argues that immediately after one obtains an epistemic instrument's result (the cognition of the object which has SP) if a desire to know the epistemic instrument itself arises, this reflection on one's cognition occurs by subsequent cognitions which are characterized as instances of inferential reasoning, *ānumānika*.<sup>34</sup> To support this interpretation, he cites the discussion of how



we reflect on cognitions, which, as we've seen, Kumāṛila explains through postulation in the ŚNV. Here, then, Pārthasārathi likely means inferential reasoning in its wide sense, since he agrees with Kumāṛila that prior cognitions are known by postulation.<sup>35</sup>

### 3. Conclusions

There are two key conclusions we should draw here. First: paradigmatically, reflection on a prior cognition happens when an agent desires to reflect on its nature as originating from an epistemic instrument. Consistent with the above observations about the Buddhist challenge to Vedic testimony as a rational motivation for considering whether one knows that one knows, this reflection is distinguished between cognitions which are “*pramāṇa*-born” and those which are not.

Second: the means for knowing that one knows is postulation (*arthāpatti*), more broadly referred to as inferential reasoning (*anumāna*), despite its distinction, discussed above. Since postulation is necessary for knowing that one knows, e.g. by perception, this entails that there must be an independent check, by another epistemic instrument, to know that one knows. Thus, one is not in a position to know that one knows without further effort. Pārthasārathi's Kumāṛila, it seems, would endorse what Immerman calls the “Independent Check” argument: “in order to come to know that a belief amounts to knowledge you must use a different source from the source of the original belief” (414).<sup>36</sup> This is in contrast to Immerman's position (412) that the SP principle is the basis for a response to this argument insofar as Kumāṛila would claim “one's being in a position to know that one knows comes entirely from one's original source of knowledge.” As I have argued, Pārthasārathi's Kumāṛila would not hold this.

Thus, we've seen that for Pārthasārathi's Kumāṛila, *Kp* does not entail *KKp*, since cognitions are not self-reflexive. But also for Pārthasārathi's Kumāṛila, *Kp* does not entail

$K_{\text{pos}}Kp$  since the sense of “position to know” excludes the use of a different epistemic instrument and the involvement of further information than was part of the original cognition. But knowing that you know  $p$  requires postulation, and thus, in at least some cases, a different *type* of epistemic instrument than was responsible for  $Kp$ .

Further,  $Kp$  also does not entail  $K_{\text{pos}}Kp$  even if the original cognition were obtained by postulation, since it would involve a different *tokening* of postulation. Take the case where one comes to know, through a genuine postulation, that the sun has an intrinsic moving capacity because we have inferred its movement across the sky over time, and such movement is impossible unless the sun has intrinsic moving capacity (ŚV, AP 3). How do we know that the sun-cognition is a result of a genuine postulation? According to Pārthasārathi, who holds that awareness of a cognition (and its properties) requires subsequent reasoning, in the form of a postulation (which he sometimes calls *anumāna*), insofar as it is a property of a cognition, a cognition’s *prāmāṇya* isn’t directly apprehended, but it must be postulated. He does not explicitly state what form such a postulation would take, though it must hinge upon inexplicability otherwise (*anyathānupapatti*) between the sun-cognition and some other fact. A possible approach would be to take the continued absence of defeaters as inexplicable unless the sun-cognition has *prāmāṇya*, against the mention of “three or four” cognitions in verse 61. Of course, for Pārthasārathi, such a higher-order postulation is not necessary for a cognition to have *prāmāṇya*.

This postulation to the knowledge of a cognition’s having *prāmāṇya* is different in its content than the original postulation. However, Immerman argues that one way to understand (Pārthasārathi’s) Kumāriḷa’s opposition to the Independent Check argument might be an appeal to transparency, that “determining whether you know  $p$  just amounts to determining whether  $p$ ”

(416). As we can see here, to determine whether we know that the sun moves involves something other than determining whether the sun moves—it involves reflecting on our cognition that the sun moves. Thus Pārthasārathi's Kumārila would not oppose, but rather accept the Independent Check argument.<sup>37</sup>

In conclusion, for Pārthasārathi's Kumārila, if an agent wants to know that they know, they are not in a position to do so unless they employ an independent check through postulation. Further, in ordinary circumstances, unless presented with some rational motivation, agents do not reflect on whether they know or not, so that typically, most agents merely know  $p$ , without ever knowing that they know  $p$ .<sup>38</sup>

## Abbreviations and References

- AUP *arthāpattipariccheda* of ŚV  
AUP *anumānapariccheda* of ŚV  
CDS *codanāsūtra* of ŚV  
MS *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* of Jaimini  
NAV *nirālambanavāda* of ŚV  
NR *Nyāyaratnākara* of Pārthasārathi Miśra 1898-1899.  
NRM *Nyāyaratnamālā* of Pārthasārathi Miśra 1937.  
PJS *pratijñāsūtra* of ŚV  
ŚNV *śūnyavāda* of ŚV  
ŚV *Ślokavārttika* of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa in Kataoka 2011a, Tailaṅga 1898-1899  
TV *Tantravārttika* of Kumārila Bhaṭṭa 1929-1934  
VAA *vākyādhikaraṇa* of ŚV

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<sup>1</sup> By this term I refer to philosophers, typically writing in English, part of a tradition tracing back to G.E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, and Gottlob Frege.

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Note that Kumāṛila, like other Indian philosophers does not talk in terms of propositions, in the sense of abstract structured entities that are the object of attitudes like knowing. However, some, such as Stephen Phillips (2012), have argued that, since cognitions have structure (an object *o* being qualified by a property *p*), speaking loosely in terms of propositions is acceptable. For more discussion of Kumāṛila’s philosophy of mind, see Taber 2010. I use “cognition” and “awareness” interchangeably.

<sup>3</sup> Or the cognition is justified, if “justification” refers to externalist justification. Kumāṛila does not require the agent to have some internal consistency among reasons or even awareness of her reasons for belief. Contemporary epistemologists use “warrant” and “justification” in a range of different ways. Here, I use “warrant” to underscore the lack of a requirement for access to reasons for belief.

<sup>4</sup> Here we see that it does not mean, contra Immerman (411), “the property of being *knowledge*” (italics added). As we will see, this mischaracterization seems to be the root of his misunderstanding of Kumāṛila, since knowledge entails truth, but the SP principle does not require the truth of a cognition which has SP.

<sup>5</sup> One modern scholar, Kei Kataoka, argues that, in fact, Kumāṛila’s discussion of *svataḥ prāmāṇya* cannot be read consistently: “There is theoretical disproportion and deflection which one can regard as inconsistent or even theoretically unsuccessful” (2011b, 98). In what follows, I will not take a position on this issue as I am focusing on Pārthasārathi’s interpretation which does assume a consistent reading can be found.

<sup>6</sup> ŚV, CDS vss. 33, 47. Kataoka 2011b, 231, 246-47.

<sup>7</sup> ŚV, CDS vss. 56-59. Kataoka 2011b, 264-66.

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<sup>8</sup> ŚV, CDS vs. 53, 59-60. Kataoka 2011b, 256-57, 269-70.

<sup>9</sup> ŚV, CDS vs. 52, 60-61. Kataoka 2011b, 269-71.

<sup>10</sup> ŚV CDS 58, *duṣṭakāraṇabodhe tu siddhe 'pi viṣayāntare | arthāt tulyārthatām prāpya bādho godohanādivat* || Katoaka 2011a:14. “In contrast, even though, when there is a cognition of a flawed cause, another content is established, there is a defeater, after it comes to acquire the same object through implication, just like the [example] of the milking vessel.” Translation with reference to Kataoka 2011b, 266-67.

<sup>11</sup> NR on ŚV CDS 58, p.63.

<sup>12</sup> In this way, Pārthasārathi’s reading of verses 57 and 58 is that it is not that having non-*prāmāṇya* in general is easy to understand, but only a certain type: the one known directly. I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out the use of *laghvy eva* in this section seems to suggest that postulation is unnecessary for understanding non-*prāmāṇya*. NR on ŚV CDS 57, p.63.

<sup>13</sup> A previous philosopher, Umbeka, interpreted *svataḥ* as “from its own,” implying that *prāmāṇya* arises from the cognition’s own cause (the object), not the cognition (of the object). On this view, the silver, which is the cause of our cognition, is responsible for *prāmāṇya*.

<sup>14</sup> Pārthasārathi treats *prāmāṇya* and *aprāmāṇya* as opposites, but there is an exegetical question as to whether we should understand the negation of *prāmāṇya* in *aprāmāṇya* to refer to something else. So SP could refer to, e.g. warrant, where as PA could refer to e.g., non-truth. I will work only with Pārthasārathi’s assumption, that the negation is of the same predicate.



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<sup>15</sup> There are many versions of KK principles in the literature. This paper focuses only on the formulation presented in Immerman (2018). For discussion of other formulations, see e.g. Goodman and Salow (2018) and Greco (2014).

<sup>16</sup> The Buddhists he's referring to are probably Vasubandhu and Dinnāga. See Taber (2010).

<sup>17</sup> See discussion in Taber (1994, 213-214).

<sup>18</sup> This is typically just the "KK principle" in contemporary analytic philosophy, but for the sake of distinguishing, I give two labels.

<sup>19</sup> It not explicit whether Immerman means "see" as a success term (there genuinely is a cat) or neutrally as describing a cognition that could be non-veridical (there is no cat). This does not matter for my argument, since on either account, such a cognition would have SP, but you would not have KK or KK-pos.

<sup>20</sup> Taber uses the term "justified in believing," though he appreciably cites Hilary Putnam's collapsing the distinction between "warranted assertion" and "idealized justification," suggesting he sees resonance in Kumāriila/Pārthasārathi's approach (p. 216, footnote 62). Arnold follows William Alston's "doxastic account of justification" which, as an externalist epistemology, takes justification to be a *prima facie* justification for beliefs based on how things appear in our experience (Chapter Three, and especially p. 109). "Justification" for both is externalist.

<sup>21</sup> The only exception to this is cognitions which are doubts, in the form "Is *x* an F or a G?" Such cognitions, by definition, lack *prāmānya* for Kumāriila, and thus excluded from the SP principle (ŚV, CDS 54). We will return to doubts below.

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<sup>22</sup> This interpretation appeared in print the year Immerman’s article did, so I am not implying that he ought to have considered this view, only that, since Pārthasārathi’s view is open to interpretation, so is whether it supports KK.

<sup>23</sup> Perhaps we could give up the requirement of truth for knowledge for both the SP principle and the KK principle. But in addition to being an unusual theory of knowledge, this would be to give up doing philosophy with Kumārila, who surely has a realist, broadly correspondence-based account of truth, even if our access to truths is difficult to come by. See Arnold 2018:107 and Taber 1992:216. Of course, there are questions about precisely how he understands “correspondence” and “truth” given that Vedic testimony in the form of future-oriented injunctions is an epistemic instrument. Thanks to an anonymous referee for emphasizing this point.

<sup>24</sup> Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing me on this point.

<sup>25</sup> At issue is a postulation (*arthāpatti*) whose conclusion is that words like *gāvī* are eternal because their use and meaning is inexplicable otherwise. Kumārila argues that their use and meaning are explicable otherwise, which opposes the postulation and results in doubt. TV at MS 1.3.25, pp. 210-211.

<sup>26</sup> ŚV CDS 102cd-104ab, Kataoka 2011b, 309-11.

<sup>27</sup> Space precludes a detailed analysis of this section, though see Kataoka 2011b for some remarks. At issue is whether Kumārila’s reasoning depends on an invariable concomitance between Vedic authority and the absence of a cognition of flaws (in which case it would be inferential reasoning) or on the impossibility-otherwise of Vedic instruction being flawed if it

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had a speaker (in which case it would be postulation). See Kataoka 2005 for discussion of related arguments in vss 121-132 of the CDS.

<sup>28</sup> The *Bṛhaṭṭikā*, a lost work of Kumāriḷa known only through its quotation in other texts, says, “For a person who, because of delusion, always suspects an invalidating cognition even though it has not arisen, being full of suspicion in all activities, will go to destruction.” Transl. Kataoka 2011b, 272.

<sup>29</sup> *āndhyam evāśeṣasya jagataḥ prasajyeta*. NR on ŚV CDS 47, p.69

<sup>30</sup> ŚV CDS 6: “If a cognition of bad qualities does not arise with regard to the first cognition, one should not have a doubt for which there is no basis.” Adapted from Kataoka 2011b, 270-271.

<sup>31</sup> *arthāpattir api dṛṣṭaḥ śruto vārtho ’nyathā nopapadyata ity arthakalpanā*. ŚBh quoted in NR on AP 1, p.450.

<sup>32</sup> As Ollett and Freschi (2020:87) note, “As long as the essential differences between inference and *arthāpatti* are maintained, Kumāriḷa has no issue with using the vocabulary of inference to talk about *arthāpatti*.”

<sup>33</sup> *yathā vakṣyati jñāte tv anumānād avagacchati*. NR, p. 71. The Vṛttikāra is a commentator prior to Śabara whose works are no longer extant.

<sup>34</sup> “Thus, immediately after the result that is attained, when a desire to know arises, ‘it is grasped by other cognitions,’ that is, by [cognitions] which are inferential.” *evaṃ kṛtakāryaṃ paścāt samjātāyāṃ jijñāsāyāṃ anumānikaiḥ pratyayāntaraiḥ gṛhyate*. NR on CDS 83, pp.70-71.

<sup>35</sup> See Pārthasārathi’s remarks on ŚNV 118 and 182 especially. Also, Kataoka’s footnote glosses ŚV CDS verse 83, without reference to Pārthasārathi, similarly, saying that “not only a cognition, but also its property, i.e. validity, is known by means of a subsequent cognition...most likely

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*arthāpatti*...but this confirmation is not essential for a cognition to do its own work, i.e. to grasp an object” (Kataoka 2011b, 294, fn. 288). He also connects this point to the Vṛttikāra’s discussion which Pārthasārathi cites, on ŚBh ad MS 1.1.3-5.

<sup>36</sup> Immerman draws on Greco (2014) for his formulation of the Independent Check Argument, though his version is different. Greco eventually rejects Independent Check and offers a limited defense of KK. While it would be interesting to consider what Kumārila might say about this version of KK, it is beyond the scope of this paper. Thanks to Neil Mehta for this point. And thanks to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting I make this more explicit.

<sup>37</sup> Thanks to an anonymous reviewer who suggested I address this aspect of Immerman’s paper.

<sup>38</sup> I thank Daniel Immerman, Neil Mehta, Mark Siderits, and Anand Vaidya for feedback on early drafts of this paper, Daniel Arnold for email discussion of his work, as well as to two anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful remarks which significantly improved the paper.