

Course Title: Epistemology without Borders
Instructor: Nilanjan Das

Course Description

In recent years, debates in Western epistemology have revolved around two opposing views: *internalism* and *externalism*. The internalist takes knowledge and justification to depend on the internal perspective of the agent, while the externalist denies this. While many plausible arguments have been given on both sides, the defenders of either view do not seem to have much dialectical traction on their opponents.

To break this logjam, I suggest we look at close analogues of this debate that took place in classical India. The main protagonist here would be the Nyāya school of philosophy which occupies a position that we could roughly identify with externalism. Focusing on Sanskrit texts, we are going to explore a wide range of philosophical encounters between the adherents of Nyāya and other schools, like Buddhism, Advaita Vedānta, and Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā. Topics will include sceptical arguments, the nature of knowledge, foundational role of non-conceptual perceptual awareness, reduction of testimony to inference, and the KK thesis, i.e., the thesis that anyone who knows something knows that she knows. Our main task will be to ask whether these debates can help us make progress on unresolved questions in the internalism-externalism controversy.

Course Requirements

The course will be divided into fifteen weeks of classes. The final grade will be based on class participation, reading responses, and three short papers.

1. Class participation: 10 % of the final grade.
2. Reading responses 15 % of the final grade.
3. First paper 15 % of the final grade.
4. Second paper 25 % of the final grade.
5. Third paper: 35 % of the final grade.

Module 1: Introduction to Pramāṇa Theory (Week 1)

Bimal Krishna Matilal, *Perception: An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), Chapter 1.

Module 2: The Sceptical Challenges (Weeks 2-4)

1. The Argument from Circularity
 - (a) The Buddhist Argument from Circularity: Nāgārjuna, *The Dispeller of Disputes* (*Vigrahavyāvartanī*), Excerpts. [Translation: Jan Westerhoff, *The Dispeller of Disputes: Nāgārjuna's Vigrahavyāvartanī*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).]
 - (b) The Nyāya Response: Vātsyāyana, *Commentary on the Nyāyasūtras* (*Nyāyasūtrabhāṣya*), 2.1.16-19, with Uddyotakara's gloss (*Vārttika*) [Translation: Ganganath Jha, *Nyāya-Sūtras of Gautama* (4 vols.) (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999).]

- (c) Commentary:
 - i. Matital, *Perception*, Chapter 2.
 - ii. Jan Westerhoff, *The Dispeller of Disputes* (commentary on the relevant sections of text.)
- (d) Western counterpart:
 - i. William P. Alston, "Epistemic Circularity", *Epistemic Justification: Essays in the Theory of Knowledge* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 319-349.
 - ii. Michael Williams, *Groundless Belief: An Essay on the Possibility of Epistemology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

2. The Argument from Illusion

- (a) The Buddhist Argument from Illusion: Vasubandhu, *Twenty Verses (Viṃśatikā)*, excerpts. [Translation: Thomas Kochumuttom, *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogacarin* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1982).]
- (b) The Realist Reply: Vātsyāyana, *Commentary on the Nyāyasūtras (Nyāyasūtrabhāṣya)*, 2.1.33, 3.1.1 and 4.2.26-37, with Uddyotakara's gloss (*Vārttika*). [Translation: Ganganath Jha, *Nyāya-Sūtras of Gautama* (4 vols.) (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999).]
- (c) Commentary:
 - i. Joel Feldman, "Vasubandhu's Illusion Argument and the Parasitism of Illusion upon Veridical Experience", *Philosophy East and West*, 55(4): 529–541 (2005).
 - ii. Matthew Dasti, "Parasitism and Disjunctivism in Nyāya epistemology", *Philosophy East and West*, 62(1), 1-15 (2012).
- (d) Western counterpart:
 - i. Barry Stroud, "The Problem of the External World", *The Significance of Philosophical Scepticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).
 - ii. M. G. F. Martin, "The Reality of Appearances", in Alex Byrne and Heather Logue (eds.) *Disjunctivism: Contemporary Readings* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).

Module 3: The Nature of Knowledge (Week 5)

1. Śrīharṣa, *The Sweetmeat of Refutation (Khaṇḍana-khaṇḍa-khāḍya)*, excerpts from Chapter 1. [Translation: Ganganath Jha, *The Khandana Khanda Khadya of Shri Harsha* (New Delhi: Satguru Publications, 1986).]
2. Commentary: Matital, *Perception*, Chapter 4.
3. Western counterpart:
 - (a) Edmund Gettier, "Is 'Justified True Belief' Knowledge?" *Analysis*, Vol. 23, No. 6 (Jun. 1963), pp. 121-123.
 - (b) Linda Zagzebski, "The Inescapability of Gettier Problems", *The Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 174 (Jan. 1994), pp.65-73.

Module 4: Foundationalism (Weeks 6-8)

1. Buddhist Foundationalism

- (a) Dharmakīrti, *An Epitome of Philosophy (Nyāya-bindu)*, with Dharmottara's *Tīka*. [Translation: Dan Arnold, "Dharmakīrti and Dharmottara on the intentionality of perception: Selections from *Nyāya-bindu* (an epitome of philosophy)", Jay Garfield William Edelgass (eds.), *Buddhist Philosophy: Essential Readings* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 186–196.]
- (b) Ratnakīrti's *Demonstration of Exclusion (Apoḥasiddhi)*, excerpts. [Translation: Parimal Patil, "Without Brackets: A Minimally Annotated Translation of Ratnakīrti's *Demonstration of Exclusion*" (unpublished manuscript).]
- (c) Commentary:
 - i. Siderits, *Buddhism as Philosophy* (London: Ashgate, 2007), chapter 10.
 - ii. Parimal G. Patil, "The Theory of Exclusion, Conceptual Content, and Buddhist Epistemology," *Against a Hindu God* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).
 - iii. Dan Arnold, *Buddhists, Brahmins and Belief: Epistemology in South Asian Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), chapter 1 and 2.

2. The Nyāya Theory of Non-conceptual Awareness

- (a) Gaṅgeśa, *The Debate on Bare Perception Nirvikalpakavāda* [Translation: Stephen Phillips and N.S. Ramanuja Tatacharya, *Epistemology Of Perception: Gaṅgeśa's Tattvacintāmaṇi, Jewel Of Reflection On The Truth (About Epistemology): The Perception Chapter (Pratyakṣa-khaṇḍa)* (New York: American Institute of Indian Studies, 2004).]
- (b) Commentary:
 - i. Arindam Chakrabarti, "Against Immaculate Perception: Seven Reasons for Eliminating Nirvikalpaka Perception from Nyāya," *Philosophy East and West* 50 (1) (January 2000): 1–8.
 - ii. Stephen H. Phillips, "There's Nothing Wrong with Raw Perception: A Response to Chakrabarti's Attack on Nyāya's Nirvikalpaka Pratyakṣa", *Philosophy East and West* 51 (1) (January 2001), pp. 104–113.

3. Western counterpart: Wilfrid Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Robert Brandom (ed.), (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

Module 5: Testimony as a Source of Knowledge (Weeks 9-11)

1. Testimonial Knowledge as Inferential Knowledge

- (a) The Buddhist view: Dignāga, *An Array of Epistemic Instruments (Pramāṇasamuccayaṅgī)*, Chapters II and V (Translation: Richard Hayes, Dignaga on the Interpretation of Signs (Dordrecht: Springer, 2012), chapters 6 and 7.

- (b) The Vaiśeṣika view: Śrīdhara, *Nyāyakandalī*, on Vaiśeṣikasūtra 9.19. [Translation: Ganganath Jha, *Padārtha-dharma-sangraha of Prasastapada with Sridhara's Nyayakandali*, (Benares: Lazarus, 1916).]
 - (c) Commentary: Richard Hayes, *Dignāga on the Interpretation of Signs* (Dodrecht: Springer, 2012), chapter 5.
 - (d) Western counterpart: Coady, “Testimony, Observation, and the Reductive Approach”, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
2. Testimonial Knowledge as Non-Inferential Knowledge
- (a) The Nyāya View:
 - i. Vācaspati Miśra, Commentary (*Tātparyā-tīkā*) on Uddyotakara’s *Vārtika*, excerpts. [B.K. Matilal, “Summary of *Nyāyavārtikatātparyatīkā*”, in Karl H. Potter (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, Volume 2: Indian Metaphysics and Epistemology: The Tradition of Nyaya-Vaisesika Up to Gangesa* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).]
 - ii. Jagadīśa Tarkālaṅkāra, *An Exposition of the Power of Words (Śabdaśakti-prakāśikā)*, Chapter 1. [Translation: Satish Chandra Vidyabhusana, *A History of Indian Logic: Ancient, Mediaeval, and Modern Schools* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1920).]
 - (b) Commentary: Gopikamohan Bhattacharyya, *Śābdabodha as a separate type of pramāṇa*, *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 5(1), 73-84 (1977).
 - (c) Western counterpart: Jennifer Lackey, *Learning from Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), Chapters 5 and 6.

Module 6: Knowing that One Knows (Weeks 12-13)

1. In favour of KK: Kumāri, *Exposition of the Verses (Śloka-vārttika)* with Pārthasārathi Miśra’s commentary *The Jewel-mine of Philosophy (Nyāyaratnākara)*, 1.1.30-61. [Translation: Ganganath Jha (trans.), *Śloka-vārttika* (Delhi: Satguru Publications, 1983).]
2. Against KK: Gaṅgeśa, *Prāmāṇyavāda*, excerpts. [Translation: Jitendranath Mohanty, *Gaṅgeśa’s Theory of Truth: Containing the Text of Gaṅgeśa’s Prāmāṇya (jñapti) Vāda with an English Translation, Explanatory Notes, and an Introductory Essay* (New Delhi: Motilal Banaridass, 1989).]
3. Commentary:
 - (a) Mohanty, “Introductory Essay”, *Gaṅgeśa’s Theory of Truth*.
 - (b) Dan Arnold, *Buddhists, Brahmins and Belief: Epistemology in South Asian Philosophy of Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), chapter 3.
4. Western counterpart:
 - (a) Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits*, Chapters 4 and 5.
 - (b) Daniel Greco, “Could KK Be OK?” *Journal of Philosophy* 111 (4):169-197 (2014).