

PHIL0179 Topics in Classical Indian Philosophy

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Office Hours: By appointment

Overview:

The aim of this module is to study a debate in Indian epistemology. The topic of the debate: Is it possible for us to do epistemology at all? A group of Indian Buddhists---the Mādhyamikas (literally, the followers of the Middle Way)---said, “No.” On their view, if epistemology is construed as the positive project of explaining how we acquire different kinds of knowledge, then it is impossible, since we cannot really show that there is any way for us to know anything. A group of non-Buddhists---all part of the Nyāya tradition (literally, the science of critical inquiry)---resisted this claim. In this module, we will look a close look at the arguments that these philosophers offer. Along the way, we will see how they have important connections with a number of live questions in epistemology, e.g., about Humean scepticism, easy knowledge and epistemic bootstrapping, the knowledge norm of assertion, and the KK principle.

Texts:

1. Siderits, M., & Katsura, S. (2013). *Nagarjuna's Middle Way: Mulamadhyamakakarika*. New York: Simon and Schuster. [Selections]
2. Westerhoff, Jan (2010). *The Dispeller of Disputes: Nāgārjuna's Vīgrahavyāvartanī*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. Dasti, M., & Phillips, S. (2017). *The Nyāya-sūtra: Selections with Early Commentaries*. Indianapolis, MN: Hackett Publishing. [Chapters 1-3]
4. Gangopadhyay, Mrinal Kanti (1967-72). *Nyāya Philosophy: A Literal Translation of Gautama's Nyāya-sūtra and Vātsyāyana's Bhāṣya*. Vols. I-V. Calcutta: Indian Studies Past and Present.
5. Das, Nilanjan (2020). *Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara on Nyāya-sūtra 2.1.8-20: The Text and the Translation*. Unpublished Manuscript.

Course Requirements:

This course can only be taken by M.Phil.students.

- (i) Every week, the student should post three questions on the readings for that week on the online forum on Moodle.

(ii) At the beginning of next term, the students have to submit a 4,000 word-essay on a topic of their choice. (I will put some sample questions on the Moodle website, but these are just templates.)

Schedule:

Week 1: An Introduction to Indian Epistemology

Primary Text:

Dasti, M., & Phillips, S. (2017). *The Nyāya-sūtra: Selections with Early Commentaries*. Hackett Publishing. [Chapter 1-2]

Secondary Reading:

1. Matilal, B. K (1986). *Perception: An Essay on Classical Theories of Knowledge*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. [Chapter 2]
2. Das, Nilanjan (2020). An Introduction to Nyāya Epistemology. Unpublished Manuscript.

Week 2: Introduction to Madhyamaka

Primary Text:

1. Siderits, M., & Katsura, S. (2013). *Nagarjuna's Middle Way: Mulamadhyamakakarika*. New York: Simon and Schuster. [Chapters 1, 7, and 15]

Secondary Readings:

1. Siderits, M., & Katsura, S. (2013). *Nagarjuna's Middle Way: Mulamadhyamakakarika*. New York: Simon and Schuster. [Introduction]
2. Westerhoff, Jan, 2009. *Nagarjuna's Madhyamaka: A philosophical introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Chapter 2]

Optional Readings:

1. Ames, William, (1982). "The notion of *svabhāva* in the thought of Candrakīrti", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 10: 161–177.
2. Burton, David (1999). *Emptiness Appraised*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarasiidass. [Chapters 2 -4]

3. Garfield, Jay, 2001. "Nāgārjuna's theory of causation: implications sacred and profane", *Philosophy East and West*, 51(4): 507–524.
4. —, 1994. "Dependent co-origination and the emptiness of emptiness: why did Nāgārjuna begin with causation?", *Philosophy East and West*, 44: 219–250.
5. Siderits, Mark, 2004. "Causation and emptiness in early Madhyamika", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 32: 393–419.
6. Spackman, John, 2014. "Between nihilism and anti-essentialism: a conceptualist interpretation of Nāgārjuna." *Philosophy East and West*, 61(1): 151–173.

Weeks 3 and 4: The Impossibility of Epistemology

Primary Text:

Westerhoff, Jan (2010). *The Dispeller of Disputes: Nāgārjuna's Vīgrahavyāvartanī*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [The text, pp. 19-43]

Secondary Reading:

Westerhoff, Jan (2010). *The Dispeller of Disputes: Nāgārjuna's Vīgrahavyāvartanī*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Commentary]

Optional Material:

1. Burton, David (1999). *Emptiness Appraised*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarasi Das. [Part II contains a commentary on *Vīgrahavyāvartanī*]
2. Oetke, C. (1991). Remarks on the Interpretation of Nāgārjuna's Philosophy. *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 19: 315-323.
3. Oetke, C. (2003). Some Remarks on Theses and Philosophical Positions in Early Madhyamaka. *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 31(4), 449-478.
4. Seyfort Ruegg, D. (2000). *Three Studies in the History of Indian and Tibetan Madhyamaka Philosophy* (Studies in Indian and Tibetan Madhyamaka Thought, Part 1). Vienna: Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde. [Section II, pp. 113-156]
5. Siderits, M. (2016). *Studies in Buddhist philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Chapter 4.1]
6. —, 1989. "Thinking on empty: Madhyamaka anti-realism and canons of rationality", in Shlomo Biderman and Ben-Ami Scharfenstein (eds.), *Rationality in Question*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, pp. 231–249.

7. Westerhoff, J. (2019). Nāgārjuna and the Philosophy of Language. *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 47(4), 779-793.

Week 5-7:

Primary Texts:

1. Das, Nilanjan (2020). Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara on Nyāya-sūtra 2.1.8-20: The Text and the Translation. Unpublished Manuscript. [Week 5: Sections A and B, Week 6: Section C and D, Week 7: Section E]
2. Dasti, M., & Phillips, S. (2017). *The Nyāya-sūtra: Selections with Early Commentaries*. Indianapolis, MN: Hackett Publishing. [Chapter 3]
3. Gangopadhyay, Mrinal Kanti (1967-72). *Nyāya Philosophy: A Literal Translation of Gautama's Nyāya-sūtra and Vātsyāyana's Bhāṣya*. Vols. I-V. Calcutta: Indian Studies Past and Present. [Selections from Vol. IV]

Secondary Material:

1. Matilal, B. K (1986). *Perception: An Essay on Classical Theories of Knowledge*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. [Chapter 3]
2. Das, Nilanjan (2020). Vātsyāyana on the Argument from the Three Times. Unpublished Manuscript.
3. Das, Nilanjan (2020). Uddyotakara on Denying the Epistemic Instruments. Unpublished Manuscript.
4. Das, Nilanjan (2020). The Argument from *Kāraṅka Theory*. Unpublished Manuscript.
5. Das, Nilanjan (2020). Allowing Instrument Circularity. Unpublished Manuscript.