



RELATION BETWEEN EPISTEMOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS - IN THE CONTEXT OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

Philosophy is the pursuit of knowledge. It is the knowledge of the eternal and essential nature of things. Aristotle says that 'Philosophy begins in wonder' or man's instinct of curiosity. Indian philosophy is one of the richest philosophical traditions of the world. Epistemology is a systematic reflection concerning knowledge and which takes knowledge itself as the object of science. Metaphysics can engage in the study of 'being as such' or 'the first cause of things'. Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with various theories of knowledge. Indian epistemology is rich in terms of its content and logical reasoning. Metaphysics emphasizes on structures of reality, time and eternity, being and nothingness, time hood and personhood, space and time, freedom and determinism, mind and body, thing hood and personhood, and a Supreme Being and nature. It basically encompasses everything that exists, fundamental concepts and beliefs.

KEYWORDS :

INTRODUCTION

Indian philosophy is the systems of thought and reflection that were developed by the civilizations of the Indian subcontinent. They include both orthodox (astika) systems, namely, the Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya, Yoga, Purva-Mimamsa (or Mimamsa), and Vedanta schools of philosophy, and heterodox (nastika) systems, such as Carvaka, Buddhism and Jainism. Indian thought has been concerned with various philosophical problems, significant among which are the nature of the world (cosmology), the nature of reality (metaphysics), logic, the nature of knowledge (epistemology), ethics and the philosophy of religion.

Indian Philosophy the first systematic treatment of the means of knowledge (Pramanas) is to be found in Gautama's Nyaya-Sutra's which also deals with the objects of knowledge (prameya). Nyaya as a science lays down the rules and methods which are essentially necessary for a clear and precise understanding of all the materials of our knowledge. With this end in view, the science of Nyaya deals with all the processes and methods that are involved either directly or indirectly, in the right and consistent knowledge of reality. That this is so appears clearly from the common use of the word 'anviksiki' as a synonym for the Nyaya-Sastra.

Indian epistemology or the theory of knowledge attempts to provide a rational basis for an intelligible discourse on matters of common, everyday experience, on the one hand, and in concentrating on the subject of cognition, it attempts to offer insights into the real, that is, essential, nature of this subject, the being who cognizes. In this sense, the concern with epistemology in Indian philosophy may be said to represent a philosophy of being and knowing involving, thereby, the metaphysical concern implicit in epistemology, where the subject-object distinction in the case of knowledge of the subject breaks down.

The term "epistemology" in the Greek means "episteme" and "logos". "Episteme" meaning "knowledge", and "logos" meaning "reason" or "account". Epistemology is that branch of philosophy that involves the study of knowledge acquisition. It is based on reality, facts, rationality, justification, and belief. This branch of philosophy addresses cognitive sciences (the study of learning, thought, and mental organization), cultural studies (teaching that investigates the different ways in which "culture" develops and transforms experiences of different individuals, their day to day life, power and social relations).

Epistemology in the arena of Indian Philosophy is developed as an aid to metaphysics. It provides the method for the proper

understanding of the metaphysical investigations regarding the nature of the ultimate reality and the relation between the ultimate reality and the empirical self as well as the objective world. Though, every system of Indian Philosophy devotes a considerable part of discussion to the epistemological and logical problems, yet their chief aim was to provide methodological explanation for metaphysical investigations. Gautama, the first systematic exponent of Epistemology in Indian Philosophy, discusses the question whether it is possible to conceive the means of knowledge independently of knowledge and the objects of knowledge.

The term "metaphysics" apparently comes from an anonymous first century editor of Aristotle's work, who collected certain entries under the heading "*ta meta ta phusika*," which literally means "after the Physics," with reference to another of Aristotle's works. Ever since, the major topics characterizing metaphysics have been the already mentioned ontology (what does or does not exist), the nature of identity and change, the nature of space and time, the nature of causation, and the difference between necessity and possibility.

The branches of Epistemology

- **Agnology:** The study of ignorance, sceptical situations or doubt, particularly the publication of imprecise or deceptive scientific data.
- **Alethiology:** It is a branch of logic that involves the study of the truth and evidence.
- **Formal epistemology:** It makes use of [formal](#) methodologies (knowledge and reasoning) from probability theory, logic, and computability theory to elucidate traditional epistemic issues.
- **Meta-epistemology:** It is the branch of epistemology which involves the study of methodologies and objectives of epistemology, matter, subject, (the study of first-order epistemological questions) and of approaches to understanding and structuring our knowledge of knowledge itself.
- **Social epistemology:** It is the philosophical study that construes knowledge about social dimensions of human knowledge as a collective achievement.

The branches of metaphysics:

- **Ontology:** It is the philosophical study of the nature of being. It includes studies concepts and categories that directly associate to being, in particular existence, reality, and the [domain](#) that exhibits properties of being and the relations between them.
- **Theology:** Religious beliefs of the nature of God. It is constituted by a triple aspect: what does God teach

teachings of God and leads to God. Types of theology include; Moral theology (Christian ethics and casuistry), Ecclesiology, Pastoral theology, and Missiology.

- **Universal science:** The study of first principles of reasoning and logic, such as the law of non-contradiction – contradictory propositions cannot both be true in the same sense at the same time.

RELATION BETWEEN EPISTEMOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS

The connection between epistemology and metaphysics is that epistemology justifies what otherwise would be 'improvable' knowledge, moving concepts into reality. Without epistemology, nothing in metaphysical study would have any sort of authority or weight. This is critical because metaphysical beliefs or concepts cannot depend on traditional scientific methods to be proven true.

To understand the connection between epistemology and metaphysics, an individual must grasp what each subject is. Metaphysics is the study of all things not in the physical realm physical studies are handled through true sciences. It is a philosophy that investigates why things exist. It uses concepts to explain the realities people experience.

An examination of knowledge, which epistemology undertakes, provides a method of metaphysical enquiry and criticism. The sages who expound different systems of philosophy realized the nature of ultimate reality, through yogic practices. They tried to convey their supernatural and mystic experience through the words of various agamas precisely and methodologically. Epistemology was sought as a method for correct understanding of the metaphysical experience handed down to us; and we find that, in the history of philosophy, it has been used as such. This is most true of our own times, when all metaphysical problems are attacked through an analysis of knowledge; and again, all philosophical criticism is usually based upon epistemological ground. The same conception is implied in the term 'pramana' in Indian Philosophy which signifies both means of knowledge and means of proof.

The study of epistemological and logical problems of Indian Philosophy under the heading 'Nyaya' which aims at discussing the process of knowing and argumentation cannot be called 'Logic' in the strict sense of the term. The scope of Nyaya is wider than that of logic. 'Nyaya' is the study of the means of knowing and the means of testing this knowledge and does not restrict its scope only to formal logic.

In Indian epistemology, the Buddhists adopt the pragmatist theory of truth and error. The Nyaya theory of truth combines the correspondence, the coherence and the pragmatist theories with certain modifications. The Nyaya defines truth of all knowledge as a correspondence of relations. The Vedanta view of truth is that it is un-contradicted experience. This logically implies the coherence theory of truth.

The explanations of error offered by the different schools of Indian Philosophy present an interesting inquiry into the metaphysical presuppositions of those systems. As realists, the Naiyyayikas maintain that the object of illusion exists, but that it is seen in the form (Prakara) of something else. So the cognition of the illusory object is the cognition of one thing in the form of another (anyathakhyati).

The Yogyakarta school of Buddhism advocates atmakhyati, since it insists on the sole reality of Ideas and looks upon objects as cognitions wrongly taken for external things. The Madhyamika School of Buddhism which negates all existence holds the asatkhyati view of error according to which consciousness is the manifestation of the non-existent as existent.

If man has to rely on his consciousness, and there is no other

go for him to know the world, then reliability of consciousness has to be accepted by all epistemologists. So both Kumarila and Prabhakara maintain the Advaitins follow the Mimamsa at this point - that all knowledge is by itself valid. This doctrine is called the self-validity of knowledge (Svatah - Pramanyavada).

According to Samkhya, truth and falsity are inherent in knowledge. Knowledge is both made true or false and known to be true or false by the conditions of the knowledge itself. Hence, knowledge must have validity or invalidity on its own account. Hence, the validity of invalidity of cognitions must be regarded as somehow inherent in the cognitions.

The most important epistemological Doctrine that invited as many divergent views as there are systems is the nature and number of pramanas. The doctrine of determining the different valid forms of knowledge is called the doctrine of pramanas. The word prama means the exactly measured, and so valid or exact knowledge or cognition. Pramana is the measure, that is the measure of reality, and so the ways or the means of valid cognition. For the Carvakas, who are radical empiricists, perception is the only valid source of our knowledge. The Buddhists hold that perception and inference are the two ultimate sources of true knowledge. According to Samkhya and Yoga systems, verbal testimony also should be recognized as an independent source of knowledge like perception and inference. According to the Vaisesikas, there are four kinds of true knowledge. According to the Jainas, perception, inference, testimony, pratyabhijna or recognition and memory are all independent sources of knowledge.

As the Mimamsa accepts the reality of the world and of the individual and his actions, it built up an epistemology for separating its realism. Its contributions to epistemology are accepted even by followers of Advaita so far as this world goes. In addition to the four Pramanas accepted by Nyaya, the Prabhakara Mimamsa holds that postulation should be accepted as an Independent source of knowledge.

The Bhatta and the Advaitins add non-cognition to these five Pramanas and maintain that there are six distinct Pramanas. The pauranikas go further than this in holding that probability (Sambhava) and tradition (Aitihiya) are also to be recognize as separate sources of knowledge like the six Pramanas admitted by the Bhattas and the Vedantins.

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