

Abridgments: G.R. Malkani's "Examination of the Main Realistic Argument"; Chandrodaya Bhattacharya's "The Theories of Drishti-Srishti and Srishti-Drishti"
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The Idealist's challenge: knowledge can prove only simultaneous existence, never the un-knownness that independence requires

Knowledge reveals the self-existent — answered as begging the question

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Holding back, naming, then the illusion of otherness

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Drishti-Srishti ("I perceive, therefore the world exists") against Srishti-Drishti ("the world exists, therefore I perceive")

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Abridgment of Chandrodaya Bhattacharya's "The Theories of Drishti-Srishti and Srishti-Drishti"

D.S.: the existence of the world is its knowledge. S.D.: its existence is independent of finite cognitive acts

S.D. and common sense: the chair existed before I saw it

D.S.: an appearance cannot precede or succeed the consciousness to which it appears

S.D.'s counter: the object remains dependent on the eternal and transcendental knowledge grounding the world

D.S.: no evidence for an unperceived object; the inner/outer distinction presupposes what it would prove

S.D. on the transitive character of cognition, persistence and identity, and the sense organs

D.S.: cognition needs no prior object; the world as a series of cognitive acts; the charge of circularity

The unknown object as the Absolute concealed by ignorance; illusory objects can never remain unknown

The triple division of maya: sense organs and their functioning are themselves illusory, to be understood on the analogy of dream

Both doctrines as expressions of the Advaita fundamental: the world is only apparently real, the sole reality being Mind or Brahman

S.D. allows distinctions within the apparent sphere; D.S. denies them, accepting only two grades of reality

ARTICLES QUOTED FROM OR REFERENCED:

- G.R. Malkani, "Examination of the Main Realistic Argument" (in Philosophical Quarterly 24, 1952)
- Chandrodaya Bhattacharya, "The Theories of Drishti-Srishti and Srishti-Drishti" (in Philosophical Quarterly 26, 1953)

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- This is **1974 10/13b, Epistemology; Perception and Existence Book Notes, and the second entry associated with this date. 1974 10/13a = Epistemology; Perception and Existence Class.**
- This document comprises abridgments of two articles: G.R. Malkani's "Examination of the Main Realistic Argument" (Philosophical Quarterly 24, 1952) and Chandrodaya Bhattacharya's "The Theories of Drishti-Srishti and Srishti-Drishti" (Philosophical Quarterly 26, 1953).
- These Book Notes are read and discussed in WG Class 1974 1013a, the third of five classes in the 1974 "Epistemology Review" series. See also WG Classes (and related papers) 1974 0929(a, b), 1006(a, b), 1020(a, b), and 1027(a, b).
- The lecture heading in the source PDF reads "Lecture Four"; it has been corrected here to "Lecture Three," and applies to both abridgments together, which were presented as a single lecture.
- All spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and similar errors have been silently corrected.

ABRIDGMENT OF G.R. MALKANI'S "EXAMINATION OF THE MAIN REALISTIC ARGUMENT"

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EPISTEMOLOGY LECTURES: Lecture Three

(in the form of a dialogue between the Realist and the Idealist)

Main arguments of the Realist: Knowledge is of the real, and the real is what exists prior to and independent of the knowledge of it. Knowledge is true when it is determined by the real.

I [Idealist]: Let us consider what is the evidence for the independence of the object? The prior existence of the object and what will that be...some sort of knowledge. But all that knowledge can prove is the simultaneous existence of the object known. How about the independence of the object? A something in the knowledge relationship. The knownness of the thing is an essential part of the existence of the thing so far as evidence from knowledge is concerned. How can any knowledge provide for the un-knownness of a thing! Which is what is meant by its independence, and how could it prove its existence when it was not known?

Realist tries again: Let's try this way. Knowledge itself is the evidence because it is knowledge. Knowledge reveals the self-existent, the independently real.

I: This is begging the question. This very conception we are trying to justify. Does knowledge reveal the self-existent? *What* knowledge does this?

Realist again: An object is related to a subject in many ways, i.e., conceiving an object, willing it, feeling it, etc. Now knowledge is one such function. When we know, we accept an object, we do not make it or imagine it. It follows that the object must be there. This is the deliverance of a specific kind of activity we call knowledge. We merely establish contact and it is revealed in our consciousness. *There is more to the object known...* it is in itself.

I: Let's take sense-awareness which is supposed to deliver to us this independent object. Logically even the vaguest kind of perception is mediated. There is no direct contact with the thing as it is. It (the thing as it is) is literally not given in knowledge. That alone is given that is put there by the mind, imagined or conceived. I give to myself the things I'm supposed to perceive. It is not quite evident that we exactly know the thing as it is. It constructs through the mental forms the things it knows...and apprehends that form, not the real thing.

It will be said by the realist: There is only one kind of knowledge we all possess and if that is not knowledge the term should have no meaning in our experience.

If I sensibly perceive anything, then for that reason alone the thing in question is or exists.

I: We have given up one form of the creativity of sensible knowledge, i.e., imagination, conceptualization, for another more insidious and subtle when we create an image (sensible object) by holding back and then naming what we hold back. Then we move on and create the illusion of otherness — independent reality.

What has knowledge done?

1. Made the object known to the subject.
2. Subject is knowing, i.e., enlightened.
3. Imports into it a new meaning. It goes beyond simple presentation to me...but produces in the object the character of prior existence. How else can the reality of the object emerge, and without this emergence would reality have been revealed? So this independent existence or existence as unknown.

No amount of analysis of sensible knowledge will reveal this trait. For it is no part of the object as such. It belongs exclusively to our *perceiving or knowing* activity as such. The quality of unknown existence does not belong to what is perceived, which can only be as it is perceived — (but) can be traced to our perception of it.

To know is to create in the object the appearance of prior unknownness — and with it otherness and reality.

Do we then really know? To say that the thing is independent and therefore we perceive it is uncritical assertion. (No evidence can transcend itself.)

We perceive it and therefore it is independent.

What are the implications? It is our sensible knowledge that has created the appearance of independence, otherness, etc. Has it not created an illusion for us? What is not independent appears so through our very perception of it.

“I perceive and therefore the world exists” (Drishti-Srishti theory of Vedanta) opposed to: “The world exists and therefore I perceive it” (Srishti-Drishti theory of Vedanta).

The world-mystery can be solved in this way — there is no self-evident or certifying reason for saying that in knowledge the world exists. It *appears to exist*.

Existence is never created, appearance is, and if anything is created it is this appearance of reality. The real is never created.

And so there is only one way in which anything else can be said to have been created: perception.

The Lord has created it in perceiving it. We too perceive a world. Do we not thereby create the world? If no piece of knowledge was ever canceled that would constitute evidence for the independence and reality of the world. All knowledge would have to be true for the very reason that it is knowledge.

But we find it otherwise. It can be declared and seen as false. No perceptual knowledge can make this claim. If a doubt arises one must give it its full value.

If an object perceived turns out to be illusory — anything else perceived is equally illusory. In Vedanta, anything that is perceived is for that reason alone illusory. We are confined within the four walls of our thought (knowledge), imprisoned by our knowledge.

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ABRIDGMENT OF CHANDRODAYA BHATTACHARYA'S "THE THEORIES OF DRISHTI-SRISHTI AND SRISHTI-DRISHTI"

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Theories of S.D. and D.S.

Theory of D.S. maintains that the existence of the world is its knowledge, and S.D. maintains that it has an existence which is different from and independent of its knowledge. Note the meaning of knowledge here is in terms of finite cognitive acts (thoughts)...that is to say that the things of the world are independent of the mental acts (thoughts) by which they are known — the other (D.S.) is contrary.

Common sense supports the second (S.D.). The chair I am seeing now existed before I saw it and will exist after the seeing it. It is outside...while the act of seeing it is inside my mind. The object therefore must be different from and independent of the (knowing) act.

(D.S.) But matter or object is an appearance and must not precede or succeed the consciousness to which it appears.

S.D. counters this (the fundamental tenet of Advaita) by saying that the object (existence independent of perception) still is not independent of the eternal and transcendental knowledge which is the ground of the world...and which reveals it as long as it exists. Really speaking it is the same eternal intelligence which knows the table sometimes transcendently and sometimes empirically (with modes or without modes), although the modes are different from each other.

But is not the cognition (perception) of the table and table different from its cognition (perception)?

D.S. points out there is no evidence for existence of object in an unperceived state. To say one is inner and the other outer is not valid, for this distinction is already implied in outer and inner.

(S.D.) It would not be proper to think that the act of seeing the table knows also the distinction between act and table. For in knowing this distinction the act must also know itself — this seems impossible. An act of cognition is transitive and must be directed to an object other than itself. (Knowledge of the act is no finite and particular act.)

The specific and determinate character of cognition must be due to the object. Otherwise how is one cognitive act different from another?

Finally D.S. answers this objection: a piece of knowledge must have some object which is different from it.... Is it being said that unless there be some object to a cognitive act it is incapable of originating at all?

Now a cognition comes into being as soon as all its preconditions are fulfilled and the object of a cognitive act is not found to precede the act invariably. It is admitted that the apparent object of an illusory piece of knowledge is not a precondition of that knowledge, and also it is possible that an act of cognition is self-differenced from itself in order to maintain its distinction from other acts, or the knowledge of the object can be supposed to have a qualitative distinction which falls wholly within its own nature and is not relative to and derived from the object. Thus this world can be regarded as nothing but a series of cognitive acts (or thoughts) forming the mental history of the subject.

(S.D.) Then there is nothing in the world that persists and judgments of identity would be invalid.

(D.S.) But these judgments are no more valid than those in dreams, etc.

(S.D.) Since the sense organs need the physical snake which must be prior to and simultaneous to knowing, thence the object of knowledge must be different from its knowledge whatever may be the case of an apparent object of illusion.

(D.S.) The above is a circular argument. The validity of a cognitive act (thought) is sought to be determined by the presence of sense activity; while the presence of the latter is sought to be determined by the validity of the act.

Object which is believed to exist even when it remains unknown must be considered to be the Absolute itself, for the word “unknown” in this connection means concealed by ignorance and it is the Absolute alone that can be concealed by ignorance.

Things originate only after maya has done its work of concealing the true nature of the Absolute...i.e., they are illusory, being products of maya, and there is no sense in saying that they are concealed by ignorance. For illusory objects can never remain unknown; as long as they exist they must appear to some consciousness. Since the esse of maya itself is its perception which is the Absolute, it follows that the existence of objects which are the products of this ignorance is their perception.

In the triple division of maya — sense-organs and their functioning in regard to chairs are all illusory and should be understood on the analogy of dream experience. Their being too, just like the being of dream objects, depends on their knowledge.

These two doctrines are different expressions of the Advaita fundamental. Both maintain that this world is not absolutely real but only apparently so and that the only reality that there is is Mind, Brahman, etc., which is absolutely simple and unitary in nature. Now S.D. holds that within this sphere there is a legitimate distinction between what is empirically false and/or true, what persists in time, what is momentary, what is mental, what is extra-mental. In contrast, D.S. maintains that such distinction within apparent reality is not ontologically legitimate and significant, that appearance and illusion are identical, nothing persists in time, everything is mental, the entire world of experience is a series of successive and momentary mental states.

D.S. is simpler, it accepts only two grades of reality, but that may make it seem that the complexity of human experience is not given its due, as for instance the distinction between empirical and illusory.

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