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The Revelation of Tradition:
Śruti, Smṛti, *and the Sanskrit Discourse of Power* [*]

> 'It is the Veda —the sacred knowledge of sacrifice, ascetic acts, and holy rites— that ultimately secures the welfare of the twice-born'
> (*Yājñavalkyasmṛti*, 1.40)

In some recent papers that consider the nature and role of *śāstra* viewed as a genre, the character of the rules it articulates, and the denial of history its worldview entails, I have tried to clarify some of the ways in which social-cultural practices come to be legitimated (or de-legitimated), and how 'authoritative resources' —that is, knowledge generating and sustaining social and cultural power— are allocated and concentrated (Pollock 1985; 1989b; 1989c).[1] I would like to continue this analysis here by examining one set of higher-order categories of Sanskrit discourse, an apparently narrow topic that I nonetheless believe may contribute directly to this process of legitimation. This set of categories is in itself, moreover, basic to the formation and self-understanding of Sanskrit culture, and yet it has often been misunderstood in Western (and western-ized) Indology.

I want to examine here the significance of the terms *śruti* and *smṛti,* and their relationship with one another, as explained in the

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[*] This is a corrected version of an essay originally published in S. Lienhard, I. Piovano 1997 (the essay was submitted to the editors in 1988 and reflects the scholarship up to that date). Had I rewritten it for the present collection I would have modified some of the inter-pretive framework —I have long since sought to nuance the logic of 'legitimation' in pre-modernity, for example see Pollock 1996; 2006, chap. 13— but the review of the historical semantics would have remained largely unchanged.

[1] I thank Eli Franco for calling my attention to several errors in an earlier draft of this paper. For the others I have since introduced he is in no way responsible.
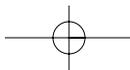
Sanskrit tradition. At the same time, I am interested in the implications these issues have for Indian intellectual history. At stake in this discussion is not just an epistemological, let alone philological, clarification, of *śruti* and *smṛti*, although I do direct attention to both matters since in my view they have never been convincingly explicated. What is really important here, I think, is that we are encountering a basic component in the construction of the legitimacy of a vast range of Sanskrit elite representations (Pollock 1989a).

I would lay emphasis on the matter of 'construction'. While the fact of ideological power in Sanskrit culture may by now be something of a banality to Western Indology, little or no systematic analysis has been directed toward this ideology in its character as discourse, toward the history of its formation, the techniques it employs, the categories it develops and presses into service. It is as a modest contribution to this analysis that I want to try to clarify the indigenous conception of the relationship of *śruti* and *smṛti* —a complex question I can only outline in the brief space available to me here— for it is here we confront, I suggest, one elementary form of ideological power in Sanskrit culture.

1. 'Tradition' and 'Revelation'?

A review of some standard scholarly and popular reference works published over the past fifty years or so reveals a virtually unanimous consensus on the definitions of the terms *śruti* and *smṛti*, which has been unquestioned despite the fact that these definitions are confusing and problematic, if not plain wrong. Here are some samples.

Winternitz: "[...] the *śruti*, the 'Revelation', i.e. that literature to which, in the course of time, divine origin has been ascribed [...] in contrast to [...] *smṛti*, 'memory', i.e. tradition, [which] posses[es] no divine authority" (Winternitz 1927: 161); Renou and Filliozat: "[...] ce que les Indiens désignent par *smṛti* '(tradition fondée sur la) mémoire', l'opposant à *śruti* 'revélation' […]" the latter in turn being defined by them as "[...] une '*audition*' *(śruti)*, c'est-à-dire une révélation: [les textes védiques] passent pour émaner de Brahman, avoir été 'expirés' par le dieu sous forme de 'paroles', tandis que leurs auteurs humains, les *ṛṣi* ou 'sages inspirés', se sont bornés à les recevoir par une '*vision* directe'" (Renou, Filliozat 1947: 381, 270); Basham: "[...] *Smṛti* ('remembered'), as distinct from the earlier Vedic literature, which is *śruti* ('heard'), which was believed to have been directly revealed to its authors, and therefore of greater sanctity than the later texts" (Basham 1954: 112-113); Radhakrishnan and Moore: "[...] *smṛtis*, that is, traditional texts, as contrasted with the literature of the Vedic period, which is known as *śruti*, revealed scriptures or 'authoritative texts'" (Radhakrishnan, Moore 1973: xix); Raghavan and Dandekar: "[...] semi-canonical scriptures called Smriti, '(human) Tradition' —as opposed to the Vedas, which are

Shruti '(divine) Revelation'" (Raghavan, Dandekar 1958: 217)[2]; Singer: "The cultural tradition which in India is thought of as being transmitted from what has been revealed to the seers (*śruti*) and through that which is remembered (*smṛti)* by pandits and storytellers [...]" (Singer 1959: 151); Gonda: "Die Śrautasūtras beanspruchen, auf der *śruti* —d.h. auf 'dem Hören' der ewigen Wahrheit durch inspirierte Weise in der Vorzeit— zu beruhen, die Gṛhya- und Dharma-sūtras beruhen auf der *Smṛti* —'der Erinnerung', d.h. dem Herkommen [...]" (Gonda 1960: 107); or again, "[...] in contradis-tinction to the [Vedic texts] which are regarded as 'heard' or 'revealed', and from the beginning orally transmitted (the eternal and infallible *śruti* [...]), [the *ṣaḍaṅga*] were —like the epics, *purāṇas* and especially the *dharma* texts— looked upon as remembered and handed down by human intermediaries (*smṛti* [i.e., 'transmitted by human memory'])" (Gonda 1975: 34, 46); Botto: "La tradizione indi-gena riconosce quali fonti del *dharma* la 'rivelazione' (*śruti),* ossia l'insieme dei testi vedici in quanto *rivelati* direttamente dalla divinità; la 'tradizione' (*smṛti),* cioe i testi considerati opera umana e tramandati per via umana, mnemonica" (Botto 1969: 294); van Buitenen: "*śruti* (literally 'learning by hearing') is the primary reve-lation, which stands revealed at the beginning of creation. This rev-elation was 'seen' by the primeval seers [...] *Smṛti*' (literally 'recollection') is the collective term for all other sacred literature [...] which is considered to be secondary to *śruti* [...]" (van Buitenen 1974: 932-933)[3]; von Simson: "Nicht mehr zur Offenbarung (Śruti), sonder zur autorativen Überlieferung (Smṛti) gerechnet wird die vedische Sūtra-Literatur [...]" (von Simon 1979: 54 [in Bechert et al.]); Deutsch: "Ancient Indian religious literature was formally clas-sified as either a 'revelation' (*śruti* —that which has been sacramen-tally 'heard', the eternally existent Veda), or a 'tradition' (*smṛti* —that which has been 'remembered' from ancient times)" (Deutsch 1987: 125 [in Eliade: vol. 2]).

Let us critically juxtapose 'revelation' and 'tradition' as formula-tions of these two keywords of Sanskrit culture, and consider for a moment some of the problems they cause. What, for example, war-rants the easy equation 'memory, *i.e.* tradition'? These two categories are no more co-extensive in India than in the West. In what sense does *smṛti* literature *qua* memory disqualify it for 'divine authority', or diminish its 'sanctity', as something standing in fundamental contrast to *śruti*? Is it true that *smṛti* is so called because it is handed down in the 'memory' of 'human intermediaries'? If it is, how is *smṛti* thereby distinguished from the Veda? For Vedic texts were not committed to

[2] In de Bary et al. 1958. In the second edition this becomes: «the body of semicanon-ical scriptures called *smṛti* (remembered) tradition —as opposed to the Vedas, which are *śruti* (revealed) tradition» (de Bary et al. 1988: 214).

[3] As cited in Coburn 1984: 439.

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writing until the medieval period (beginning probably no earlier than the fifth century), and even then were never thought to retain their sacral efficacy if they were not learned according to the oral tradition (*Tantravārttika*, vol. 2, p. 123, l. 20). And anyway, why should memory, which is operative in both cases, serve to differentiate the degree of authority in the two genres? Furthermore, isn't the Veda as much a part of 'tradition' —more than a part, the actual foundation of Brahmanical tradition— and as much the object of traditional transmission —in fact, its very paradigm— as any other text of ancient India? Conversely, if the Veda is 'heard', and only 'heard', so is *smṛti* and every other form of discourse in pre-literate Sanskrit culture. What is 'heard', consequently, is also 'remembered', and what is 'remembered' is also 'heard'. If, however, *śruti* is taken with Renou to mean 'audition as revelation', how are we to make sense of the tenacious belief, however variously it has been elaborated, that the Veda was 'seen' by the *ṛṣi*s, a belief which Renou adduces in the very same passage?

I do not want to make too much out of this distinction between 'hearing' and 'seeing', let alone deny that 'seeing' may have a figurative signification. But the Indian tradition, that part which accepts revelation to begin with (contrast below), is rather clear: 'the *ṛṣis* 'saw' *dharma*' (*sākṣātkṛtadharmāṇa ṛṣayo babhūvuḥ* [i.e., *mantradraṣṭāraḥ*, Durga]) (*Nirukta*, 1.6.20 [p. 52]); "[...] '*ṛṣi*' is derived from the verbal root *dṛś*; 'the sage *saw* the *stoman*s', as Aupamanyava glosses it" (*Nirukta*, 2.3.11 [p. 83]); "the *ṛṣi*s had visions of the *mantra*s" (*ṛṣīṇāṃ mantradṛṣṭayo bhavanti*) (*Nirukta*, 7.1.3 [p. 348]). See also Pāṇini in *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, 4.2.7: "*sāman*s 'seen' by particular sages are named after them, e.g., the *sāman* 'seen' by the sage Kali is called the '*kāleya*' *sāman*" (though Kaiyaṭa *ad loc.* rationalizes 'i.e., 'seeing' means 'knowing' the particular ritual application of the *sāman*'). The *ṛṣi*s are not normally said to have 'heard' *mantra*s.[4]

Similarly, according to Gonda, van Buitenen, and many others, *śruti* was something 'heard' in a mythic past, and this is the fact that certifies its authority. But for one thing, the idea of a unique revelation in the past contradicts a dominant —and certainly ancient— representation of the 'beginninglessness' of the Veda in the Pūrvamīmāṃsā. In this system the Vedic texts could not have been 'heard originally' by the *ṛṣi*s, since there is thought never to have been an origin. This is likely to have been the position of Jaimini himself (*uktaṃ tu śabdapūrvatvam* [*Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra*, 1.1.29, especially as understood by *Nyāyasudhā*, p. 269]). This important *sūtra* deserves special study in its own right. For most commentators, it refers to the beginninglessness of Vedic recitation, e.g., *Adhvaramīmāṃsākutūhalavṛtti*: "'The ritual recitation of the Veda, which is

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[4] Note that 'fifth Veda' texts such as the *Mahābhārata* are also 'seen'. See *Mahābhārata*, 18.5.33.

here the matter at issue, has *always* depended on a previous recita-
tion, precisely because it is ritual recitation, just like present-day
recitation' —this syllogism demonstrates that there can never have
been a first reciter of the Veda, whereby the Veda might have been
said to have had an author".[5]

For another thing, what are we to suppose to be the origin of what
smṛti remembers? Where, that is, does Gonda's *Herkommen* come from,
and when, and how? If the term *śruti* is supposed to connote that cer-
tain texts are 'directly revealed', does *smṛti* connote that other texts
are somehow 'indirectly revealed', or not 'revealed' at all? And what
does either position entail practically speaking, that is, with regard to
the *Enstehungsgeschichte* of these texts as indigenously conceived?

It would be easy to multiply these questions, but this should suf-
fice to show that a number of conceptual difficulties, to which long
acquaintance and acquiescence may have inured us, beset the defini-
tions of these basic terms current in Western scholarship. And these
are, I should stress, the definitions that Indology believes to be inter-
nal to the Sanskrit tradition, and intended by it, and not external and
analytically constructed. Contrasts of the latter sort between the two
genres of texts are possible and available (for instance, we might char-
acterize *śruti* as 'indirect', 'symbolic', as opposed to the 'direct', 'ratio-
nalist' *smṛti* etc. [Renou 1960: 27]), and with these contrasts I do not
take issue, for they are not pertinent to the problem I am raising here.
They tell us nothing about Indian self-understanding, about indige-
nous representations of culture and society, and it is there that the
origins, nature, and function of ideological discourse are located.

Can it be that this self-understanding, as reflected in these cul-
turally central categories, is as confused as Indology's representation
makes it appear to be? A matter of equal importance is the implica-
tion for us of the *opposition* of *śruti* to *smṛti* explicitly drawn in every
one of the explanations quoted above and suggested by the invari-
able translations divine 'revelation' and human 'tradition'. Difficult
as both of these two Western terms may be to conceptualize satisfac-
torily, when paired they constitute for us nearly a bipolarity: two sep-
arate realms of knowledge/practice, distinct in origin, in the
manner in which they derive their legitimacy, and in degree of

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[5] *Adhvaramīmāṃsākutūhalavṛtti,* vol. 1, pp. 16-17 (which expands on *Ślokavārttika,*
vākyādhikaraṇa v. 366, and largely reproduces *Śāstradīpikā,* p. 162). See, further, *Ślokavārt-
tika, codanāsūtra* vv. 143 ff. (with *Kāśikā* ad loc.); *saṃbandhākṣepaparihāra,* vv. 41 ff. Such is
also the view, though from a slightly different perspective, of Uttaramīmāṃsā. See Śaṅkara
on *Brahmasūtra,* 1.3.30 (on *saṃsārasya anāditvam*). As for Jaimini's *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra*
itself, contrary to what the commentators claim, however, or indeed the *sūtra* itself —if in
fact this is what it means— Jaimini has not yet said any such thing; he has only established
the beginningless of language, not that of the Veda. If this were not the case, why would
Kumārila have to establish this in the *vākyādhikaraṇa*? The difficulty is evident in
Parameśvara's *Jaiminīyasūtrārthasaṃgraha* ad loc., and especially in the *Jaiminīyanyāyamālā*
of Mādhava, whose analysis is quite at odds with standard Mīmāṃsā theory, as represented
by Kumārila above. Prabhākara does not comment on the *sūtra* directly.

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authority. Dichotomized as 'revelation' and 'tradition', *śruti* and *smṛti* almost come to represent for us the Indian equivalent of divine (or natural) law on the one hand, and common (or even positive) law on the other.

I am not convinced that these terms mean, or ever meant, what their common Western translations tell us they mean. When we explore the domain in which they are likely to have originated and certainly retained a special centrality, we find something rather different, and instructive. It is in Mīmāṃsā that *śruti* and *smṛti* seem first to have been clearly conceptualized in their relationship to one another, an inaugural conceptualization that suggests to me the terms may have been coined in Mīmāṃsā, though I do not have enough evidence to argue that here. And what the terms signify in Mīmāṃsā, first of all, reveals a coherent if increasingly complex ethno-representation, and, second, helps us to recover the potential in this representation for expressing and reproducing an element of the ideology of Sanskrit culture. My argument is that the bifurcation required by such dichotomous concepts as 'revelation and tradition' is precisely what the categories *śruti* and *smṛti* reject; that this rejection is established in the very terminology that constitutes these categories; and that, formulated first weakly and narrowly in 'early' Mīmāṃsā,[6] it was subsequently more strongly and broadly argued out by Kumārila, whereupon it was generalized throughout Sanskrit culture as one trope of the Sanskrit discourse of power.

2. The Origin of 'Tradition'

The elaboration of the concept *dharma* beyond its primary field of reference —Vedic ritualism, or 'sacrifice, recitation, and gifts', as for instance the *Chāndogyopaniṣad* (2.23.1) defines the three components of *dharma*— was a development of crucial, if as yet apparently unappreciated, significance in Sanskrit social-cultural history. Far from accepting the paradox as Jan Heesterman has formulated it —that the Vedas have really nothing to do with *dharma*, and so have 'ultimate authority over a world to which they are in no way related' (Heesterman 1978)— we should rather, in keeping with actual historical sequence, reverse the paradox and so cancel it: the 'world' outside of ritualism had originally little to do with *dharma*.[7] I won't address this question any further here except to note that when *dharma* ultimately spilled over the conceptual confines of 'sacrificial ritualism' and came to encompass virtually the entire range of activities of Sanskrit society —and, by reason of its very exclusion, of non-

[6] For 'new, later' (and thus 'old, early') Mīmāṃsā, see e.g., Nāgeśa on *Mahābhāṣya*, 4.3.101.

[7] I consider the expansion of the realm of *dharma* at somewhat greater length in Pollock 1990.

Sanskrit society— some explanation of the relationship of the two domains had as a consequence to be provided by the custodians of *vaidika dharma*.

This is the context within which the analysis of the terms *śruti* and *smṛti* take on importance for intellectual history. The signification of these categories is dependent upon the relationship in which they were held to stand to one another. In fact, this relationship determines the choice of technical terms used to refer to these entities, and their use would appear to postdate the conceptualization of their relationship. The first discussion of the topic in Indian philosophical history illustrates these points. While many of the arguments developed in this discussion have long been familiar to Indology, their significance for the meaning of *smṛti* has clearly not.

The *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra*,[8] after having shown *dharma* to be that which is known by means of the Veda alone, and established the Veda's transcendent and inerrant nature (1.1), and then argued that these traits apply to the entire Vedic corpus, narrative and hymnic portions no less than commandments (1.2), has to address the problem posed by the fact that texts other than the Veda —and practices other than what is explicitly enjoined by the Veda— had come to count as *dharma* in daily life (this for example is the explanation of the *saṃgati* in the *Śāstradīpikā*, 1.3.1). What legitimacy can be claimed by such texts and practices that are not part of the Vedic canon, that is, not explicitly enunciated in Vedic sources?

"The basis of *dharma* is sacred word, and therefore what is not sacred word has no relevance [vis-à-vis *dharma*]" (*dharmasya śabdamūlatvād aśabdam anapekṣaṃ* [v.l. -*kṣyam*] *syāt* [*Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.1]), is the *prima facie* view necessitated by the postulates previously established. As Śabara explains it, texts and practices relating to *dharma* that have no foundation in the Veda can have no valid foundation at all. Nor can some memory of the Veda provide the necessary foundation, because such a memory is not possible: "Something [phenomenal] that has not been experienced, or [something transcendent] that is not transmitted in Vedic texts cannot be the object of memory. These [other texts and practices in question], which relate to the transcendent and yet are not in the Veda, cannot truly be *remembered* since they can never have been previously cognized". The *smṛti*s cannot be based on sheer 'memory' (*smaraṇa*) because memory presupposes experience, and the only previous experience of something that counts as *dharma* is, as proven in *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* (1.1.2), the Veda. Furthermore, it is not just the continuity of cultural memory that authenticates it; our 'memory' of the Vedas themselves is not validated merely by its unbroken tradition, but by the fact that the Vedas are actually perceptible to us. It is this actual perception of Vedic texts

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[8] Within this essay, Jaimini *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* is cited by number, while *Śābarabhāṣya* and *Tantravārttika* are usually cited by volume, page, and line number.

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—their existing during recitation— that constitutes the 'prior cognitive experience' necessary to substantiate the memory of them (*pratyakṣeṇopalabdhatvād granthasya nānupapannaṃ pūrvavijñānam*); no such prior cognition is available to underpin 'non-Vedic' texts and practices. And no tradition founded on such sort of ignorance can become true simply by being beginningless (the *jātyandhaparaṃparānyāya*, or the principle of the 'tradition of those blind from birth', that is, whose knowledge is founded on ignorance and does not cease to be ignorance for being held to be immemorially transmitted) (*Śābarabhāṣya,* vol. 2, pp. 72-74).

The *siddhānta* is offered in the next *sūtra*: "On the contrary: By reason of the fact that the agents involved are the same, 'inference' could be a 'source of valid knowledge" (*api vā kartṛsāmānyāt pramāṇam anumānaṃ syāt* [*Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra*, 1.3.2]). Insofar as the same people who perform the acts of *dharma* required by the Veda also perform acts of *dharma* 'not based on sacred word', we must assume that the authority for these other actions is conferred, not by directly perceptible Vedic texts, but by texts inferentially proven to exist. As Śabara adds, it is not unreasonable to hold that the knowledge of these texts is remembered, while the texts themselves (i.e., their actual wording) have been lost.[9] In brief, the authority for practices not validated by Vedic texts perceptible to us can be validated by Vedic texts inferred to have once existed.

The text of *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* (1.3.2) I find a little awkward to translate, not so much in itself but in view of the reading of it that is implicitly offered by Śabara, and more explicitly elsewhere, e.g., in *Mīmāṃsākaustubha* and *Adhvaramīmāṃsākutūhalavṛtti*.[10] For *anumāna* in this context comes to suggest, it seems, not only the log-

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[9] 'Therefore it stands to reason that this prior cognition exists in the case of members of the three highest social orders doing the remembering [i.e., insofar as the people who are remembering are participants in Vedic culture, they are connected with the Veda, and thus can have had a 'prior cognition' of Vedic texts that would substantiate their memory], and likewise it stands to reason that they could have forgotten [the actual texts]. For these two reasons we can infer the existence of texts [now lost], and thus *smṛti* is a source of valid knowledge' (*tad upapannatvāt pūrvavijñānasya traivarṇikānāṃ smaratāṃ vismaraṇasya* [*sc., granthasya*] *copapannatvād granthānumānam upapadyata iti pramāṇam smṛtiḥ* [*Śābarabhāṣya*, p. 77, lines 7-8, mispunctuated in the original]).

[10] See *Mīmāṃsākaustubha*, vol. 1, p. 12 (which in part is also arguing that the logical operation at issue here is *arthāpatti* rather than *anumāna*; this is Kumārila's main concern, see below at n. 22 *infra*): 'The meaning of the *sūtra* is as follows: *smṛti* [and practice], insofar as it arises 'after' [*anu-*], i.e., after perception, is referred to as the source of knowledge termed '*anumāna*,' consisting of the fact that people in the Vedic tradition would otherwise have never so firmly accepted [the *smṛti*s] [were they not derived from the Vedas, which in turn] necessarily entails the assumption that their basis is *śruti*. For this reason *smṛti* would be 'valid'' (*sūtraṃ tu smṛtyādi yato mūlabhūtaśrutikalpakaṃ dṛḍhavaidikaparigrahānyathānupapattirūpam anu paścāt pratyakṣottaraṃ pravṛttatvād anumānapadābhidheyaṃ pramāṇaṃ vidyate ataḥ pramāṇaṃ syāt*). See also *Adhvaramīmāṃsākutūhalavṛtti*, vol. 1, p. 60: 'Insofar as it is based on *śruti*, '*smṛti* would be valid,' for there is an inferential sign prompting the inference of the *śruti* text that forms the basis of *smṛti*, namely *smṛti* itself' (*śrutimūlakatayā smṛtiḥ pramāṇaṃ syāt yataḥ smṛtimūlabhūtaśrutāv anumāpakaṃ liṅgam asti smṛtir eva*).

ical operation of inference itself, but also the Vedic text that is thereby inferred. In this latter sense *anumāna* can be substituted for what is elsewhere called *smṛti*, precisely as *pratyakṣa*, 'sensory perception', can take on the signification 'Vedic texts perceived' (or even, *tout court, pramāṇa*, 'source of valid knowledge'), and replace *śruti* both in Mīmāṃsā and elsewhere.

The semantic weight that I think can be felt in *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*, which helps us toward a historically more accurate understanding of *smṛti*, is corroborated by other usages in the *sūtra*s, of which I shall discuss only two. The *Holākādhikaraṇa* of the *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* concerns the generalizability of regional texts and customs. A convenient example is cited by *Bhāṭṭadīpikā*: "The *Gautamadharmasūtra*s are read only by members of the Chāndogya *śākha*. Are its injunctions restricted to them or not?" (*Bhāṭṭadīpikā*, p. 61). The *prima facie* view of the *sūtra*s is: "Insofar as the inference [sc., of a *śruti* basis] can be restricted/localized, the source-of-valid-knowledge [thus inferred] would be implicated in that [i.e., would have to be considered restricted/localized in applicability]" (*anumānavyavasthānāt tatsaṃyuktaṃ pramāṇaṃ syāt* [*Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra*, 1.3.15]).[11] Here, as *Nyāyasudhā* clearly explains, "'inference' refers to *smṛti* (and *ācāra)*, while 'source of valid knowledge' has reference to *śruti*".[12]

The *devatādhikaraṇa* of the *Brahmasūtra*s addresses problems connected with the hypothesis of the corporeality of the gods. The *prima facie* view holds that, since their corporeality would entail mortality and this in turn would be inconsistent with the eternality of the Vedic texts (for these refer to the gods, and eternal texts can make no reference to the 'historical'),[13] the gods cannot be corporeal. The answer: "As for the [argument based on the eternality of] sacred word —it is false, because [the gods etc.] 'are produced from' these [words], as is proved by 'perception' and 'inference'" (*śabda iti cen nātaḥ prabhavāt pratyakṣānumānābhyām* [*Brahmasūtra*, 1.3.28]). The commentaries here unanimously and correctly identify the reference of the technical terms, 'perception' connoting *śruti*, and 'inference' *smṛti.* This interpretation is corroborated further by the 'responsion' in *Brahmasūtra*, 1.3.30 (*darśanāt smṛteś ca*), and by a wide range of additional variations of the formula in the *Pūrvamīmāṃsā-*, *Vedānta-*, and *Dharma- sūtra*s.[14]

[11] See *Adhvaramīmīṃsākutūhalavṛtti*, ad loc.: [*anumānasya*] *vyavasthānāt deśabhedena vyavasthitatvāt tatsaṃyuktaṃ deśabhedasaṃyuktam eva śrutirūpaṃ pramāṇam.*

[12] *Anumānaśabdasya smṛtyācāraviṣayatvaṃ pramāṇaśabdasya ca śrutiviṣayatvam* (*Nyāyasudhā*, p. 245, l. 29 [commenting on *Tantravārttika*, vol. 2, p. 173, l. 20]). See also *Adhvaramīmāṃsākutūhalavṛtti*, vol. 1, p. 85; *Jaiminīyasūtrārthasaṅgraha*, p. 106.

[13] What is at issue is the *mantrārthavādānityasaṃyogaparihāranyāya*, though this is not mentioned in any of the discussions ad loc. See, also, Pollock 1989c: note 25.

[14] *dṛṣṭasmṛtibhyām; darśayati cārtho 'pi smaryate; pratyakṣānumānābhyām; śabdānumānābhyām; darśayataś caivaṃ pratyakṣānumāne* (*Brahmasūtra*, 3.1.8; 3.2.17; 3.2.24; 3.3.31; 4.4.20); *pratyakṣasaṃyogāt* (i.e., *pāṭhasya pratyakṣatva* in *Śābarabhāṣya* on *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 5.2.21). See *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra*, 3.4.28 [*vedasaṃyogāt*]; 3.1.13 [*śrutisaṃyogāt*]; also *Pūrva-*

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How is it that 'perception' and 'inference' imply what at the same time is embraced by the terms *śruti* and *smṛti*? Śaṅkara on the *Brahmasūtra* passage just cited argues from the analogy between the concepts: "'Perception' refers to *śruti* because *śruti* is independently valid [with respect to transcendent things, as perception is with respect to perceptible things]; 'inference' refers to *smṛti* because it is dependently valid [like inference, which originates only in dependence on perception]". While this figurative interpretation may be doctrinally sound epistemology (sound for the Mīmāṃsā system, at least), I am not so sure that, historically viewed, it is a convincing explanation.

It seems to me that there is more than analogy at work in the use of the term *pratyakṣa* to refer to *śruti*, and *anumāna* to refer to *smṛti*. Both sets of terms appear to emerge out of the same complex of ideas represented in the Mīmāṃsā reflections on the authority of texts and practices not explicitly warranted by the Veda. These texts and practices, insofar as they relate to *dharma*, secure validity by way of their claim to be based on Vedic texts —there exists no other source of *dharma*— but Vedic texts for one reason or another not accessible to us. Those that are indeed accessible are *perceptible*, they are something we can actually *hear* during instruction in recitation (when a student repeats what is pronounced in the mouth of his teacher [*gurumukhoc-cāraṇānuccāraṇa*]) and in daily repetition (*svādhyāya)*. This is what, in the eyes of Śabara, validated *Vedic* memory (*pratyakṣenopalabd-hatvād granthasya* etc., see above). And this, finally, is what the word *śruti* actually means according to the etymology still current among traditional teachers: "The Veda, insofar as it is audible to everyone, is called '*śruti*'" (*vedasya sarvaiḥ śrūyamāṇatvāt śrutitvam* [*karmādau ktin*]).[15] Yet other texts and practices relating to *dharma* can have validity in the realm of Sanskrit thought inasmuch as they necessarily lead us to *infer* the existence at some other time or some other place or in some presently inaccessible mode, of Vedic texts as their basis; we no longer hear (recite) these texts word-for-word, but their sense is *preserved in memory*: "*Smṛti* is so called because by means of it the *dharma* of the Veda is remembered" (*smaryate vedadharmo 'nena* [*karaṇe ktin*]), again according to traditional etymology.[16] In short,

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mīmāṃsāsūtra, 7.3.4 [*pratyakṣāt*]; 1.4.14 [*pratyakṣa-vidhānāt*]; 3.5.33 [*-upadeśāt*]; 5.4.22 [*-śiṣṭatvāt*]). Compare *Baudhāyanadharmasūtra*, 1.1.6, where *śrutipratyakṣahetavaḥ* is juxtaposed to *anumānajñāḥ*.

[15] Panditaraja K. Balasubrahmanya Sastry, personal communication. This is the understanding of *Vācaspatyam*, which is what I translate in the text (s.v., p. 5155). No doubt the original signification of the verbal root *śru* and of *śruti* in this context is hearing/learning (*sc.*, from one's teacher); this connotation is pervasive in Sanskrit, and its antiquity is shown in the Buddhist fossil *evaṃ mayā sutaṃ*, part of the *nidāna* of a *sūtra*, which furnishes what (in stark contrast to the Brahmanical use of *śruti*) I would call the historical authentication of the text (see, also Lamotte 1958: 142-43). The *Pali Dictionary's* translation 'inspired tradition, sacred lore', raises its own set of problems.

[16] Panditaraja K. Balasubrahmanya Sastry, personal communication. See again, *Vācaspatyam*, s.v., p. 5373; *Śabdakalpadruma*, s.v., vol. 5, p. 464.

śruti means nothing other than '(Veda) actually now perceived aurally (in recitation)', i.e., extant or available; *smṛti*, nothing other than '(Veda) that is remembered', i.e., material that, having once been heard in recitation, no longer is, but remains inferentially recoverable from present reformulations (in language or practice) as having once existed as part of a Vedic corpus. Both refer in their primary connotation to one and the same thing —the Veda, whether as something actually recited or as something whose substance only can still be recalled; *paṭhyamānasmaryamāṇavedaḥ*, as Kumārila puts it (*Tantravārttika*, vol. 2, p. 94, l. 2).

This historically original and radical signification of *śruti/smṛti* has considerable implications for our understanding of Sanskrit intellectual history, and I will try below to spell out some of these.

I have been concerned in this section with reviewing Mīmāṃsā's epistemological analysis of *śruti* and *smṛti* in order to reclaim the original signification of these terms, which is dependent on such an analysis. This reclamation stands, I think, even if the semantic distinction I draw for *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna* is found to be overly fine. A thorough analysis of all the terms in the early literature is desirable, but not easily done with the research tools available. It has not been possible to conduct a sufficiently thorough lexical study; the evidence at hand only suggests that the technical use of the term *smṛti* and its being paired with *śruti* belong to the very latest stratum of Vedic literature, and became current only in the post-*sūtra* period. Since the epistemological background presupposed in the original meanings of *śruti* and *smṛti* is provided by Mīmāṃsā, one might hypothesize that Mīmāṃsā itself was responsible for this currency.[17]

The controversy over how we are to explain the unavailability of the Vedic texts whose memory *smṛti* preserves is long and complex, with Pūrva and Uttara Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya, and Vyākaraṇa all contributing to the discussion. There is no space for a detailed presentation here. Two of the prominent arguments are reasonably well-known. Early Mīmāṃsā holds that the *smṛtis* are derived from Vedic recensions now forgotten or geographically or otherwise inaccessible to us. Nyāya reasons that these recensions must have actually disappeared (this position is best articulated in *Nyāyakusumāñjali*, but it is far earlier than Udayana). Kumārila concurrently maintains that the *smṛtis* may derive commandments inferred from *mantras* and *arthavādas* that exist in extant recensions but are scattered randomly through-

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[17] *smṛti* in the relevant sense appears not to occur before *Taittirīyāraṇyaka* 1.2.1 (*smṛtiḥ pratyakṣam aitihyam anumānaś catuṣṭayam*) where it is significantly listed with *śruti, itihāsa-purāṇa*, and (according to commentaries) *ācāra*, though this last equation could use additional supporting evidence; *śruti* perhaps not before *Mānavaśrautasūtra*, 182.4. These conclusions are based in part on as yet unpublished materials collected for the *Sanskrit Dictionary on Historical Principles* of the Deccan College of Pune, for which I thank Dr. Prakash Joshi. Note that the word *smṛti* (*sati*) never appears in Buddhist texts, Pali or Sanskrit, in the sense it develops in the Mīmāṃsā tradition. For *śruta* (*suta*), see n. 15 *supra*.

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out them, or beyond our powers to interpret properly.[18] We may assume that this position was formulated in opposition to Nyāya and thus must be relatively late.

The third view, that of Prābhākara Mīmāṃsā, may be less familiar. It argues that the Vedic texts from which *smṛti* derives were never actually extant, but are only infinitely inferable. Thus Śālikanātha:

> In the case of the word *śāstra* [=Veda], likewise [as in the case of the word *pramāṇa*, see p. 192], there are two meanings: 'knowledge' and 'that by which knowledge arises', i.e., holy word. As for the latter, it is of two sorts, perceptible or inferable. What leads us to infer holy word? A statement of *smṛti*, such as 'the *aṣṭakā*s [the eighth-day ancestral rites] are to be performed'. How do we infer holy word? First of all, this *smṛti* is accepted as valid by all members of the three highest *varṇa*s unchallenged. This would be inexplicable unless the statement had some foundation. Perception and the other sources of valid knowledge cannot supply this foundation, because they do not operate on what is potential action. On the other hand, *śāstra* can be the source of this *smṛti* statement, since it is through this *smṛti* that we gain knowledge about a transcendent potential action [*apūrvakārya,* knowledge that we can gain only through *śāstra*].
> A possible objection here is that *śāstra*, too, cannot legitimately be posited as its source, since however zealously one examines *śāstra*, one cannot perceive any such statement. A scriptural statement that is not perceived cannot communicate anything, and if it cannot communicate anything, it cannot function as the source.
> It is true that Manu and the rest [of the compilers of the *smṛtis*] did not actually perceive that scriptural statement any more than we can today. But, like us, they could make an inference. They observed that a given *smṛti* text was accepted by the *mahājana*s, and so they could infer as its source a scriptural text, which had likewise been inferred by the compiler of the *smṛti* in question on the basis of some prior *smṛti*. Thus the *smṛti*-tradition that provokes the inference [of scriptural foundation] is beginningless, and given the possibility of this, the inference [of the *smṛti*'s scriptural foundation] cannot be invalidated.[19]

In any case, it should be clear that in Sanskrit intellectual history the dispute about *smṛti* focused largely on the precise nature of its derivation from *śruti*; the fact of its being so derived was not questioned, nor consequently the primary signification and implication of its reference.

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[18] See, respectively, *Śābarabhāṣya*, vol. 2, p. 77; *Tantravārttika*, vol. 2, p. 76, ll. 4-5 (with *Nyāyasudhā*, p. 123, ll. 19 ff.); *Nyāyakusumāñjali,* chap. 2 (see, also, *Āpastambadharmasūtra*, 4.1.10 + 1.4.8); *Tantravārttika*, vol. 2, p. 76, ll. 4-5; p. 105, ll. 5, 10 ff; p. 112, ll. 12-13; p. 113, ll. 14 ff; p. 145 (inferring *smṛtimūla* from *ācāra*, and thence *śrutimūla*; possibly also Śabara on *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra*, 1.3.2, pp. 78-79 [*darśana = śruti*]). See also, more generally, *Vākyapadīya*, 1.7, p. 173; Govindasvāmi on *Baudhāyanadharmasūtra*, 1.3.

[19] *Prakaraṇapañcikā*, pp. 249-250. On *mahājana*, see n. 28 *infra*. Kumārila's reasonable response (see *Tantravārṭṭika*, vol. 2, p. 75, ll. 21-22) to such a position is to ask how a Vedic text never articulated can ever have been perceived, so as to become an object of memory.

This primary signification is confirmed in an important passage from the *Nyāyamañjarī*, which is noteworthy also in reminding us that, for all the differences in their analysis of Vedic 'revelation', Nyāya and Mīmāṁsā, like the entire Brahmanical tradition, agree in their understanding of the authority of *smṛti*:

> At all events, however we are to explain it [i.e., the loss of the texts from which *smṛti* derives], the Veda alone must be assumed to form the basis of these [*smṛti*] texts, and nothing else, since nothing else functions as a valid source of knowledge [with respect to *dharma*]. Moreover, only on this assumption are we doing justice to the term universally employed for these texts, namely '*smṛti*'. For were they based on perception [e.g., the perception of a *yogin*], they would be Veda-like [since according to Nyāya, the Veda is derived from the perception of God], and then what would be the point of using the word 'memory' to refer to them? [...] The Veda is two-fold, that which is available for us to hear and that which we must infer. *Śruti* is that which is currently audible [*śrūyamāṇaś ca śrutir ity ucyate*], *smṛti* is that which is inferable.[20]

Nowhere in any shastric analysis of the nature of *smṛti*, then, do we find it juxtaposed to *śruti* the way Indology has always juxtaposed it, as inherently more recent, less authoritative, somehow independent and human in origin, and standing in opposition, or subordinate, to *śruti*.

What *smṛti* means in classical Sanskrit culture emerges vividly in the *Tantravārttika*. Kumārila summarizes his view of the relationship of *śruti* and *smṛti* in the context of discussing one of the problems I raised above and left unanswered: how the memory of the Veda (*smṛti*) and the Veda remembered (*śruti*) may be ultimately distinguished, inasmuch as when reciting texts we are remembering them, and when remembering them we perforce do so in some stable and, at least potentially, recitative form. Pertinent to this problem is the question whether the actual sequence of phonemes (*varṇānupūrvī*) of *śruti* is eternal, a long and complex controversy that must await analysis elsewhere. This feature of text-invariability, along with transcendence (*apauruṣeyatva*) and 'autonomous authoritativeness' (*svatantraprāmāṇyam*), continues undoubtedly to characterize the Vedas and the Vedas uniquely in the minds of all later Mīmāṁsakas. They address all such features in their derivation of *smṛti*; what concerns us now is the general doctrine of its nature and authority, which receives its classical and orthodox formulation from Kumārila:

[20] *Nyāyamañjarī*, vol. 1, p. 372, l. 9 - p. 373, l. 6. The last two sentences are contained in a *pūrvapakṣa* (the position of the Prābhākara school), but its provisionality relates to the controversy recounted above (at n. 19 *supra*); there is no reason to suggest that Jayanta doubts the Prābhākara philology. His source, incidentally, is likely to have been *Prakaraṇapañcikā*, p. 249 (*sa ca* [*śabdaḥ*] *dvividhaḥ, pratyakṣo 'numeyaś ca*).

[A *smṛti* text] condenses rules encoded in a desultory fashion in Vedic recensions other [than those commonly met with], and which are still actually available to other men.[21] Since they are not recited in the course of the non-*śrauta* rites to which they refer, they were made available in compilations that reproduce their sense —their literal forms were not reproduced for fear that [such a digest] might adversely affect the tradition of Vedic recitation [see vol. 2, p. 76, l. 6] [in the schools that preserve the recitation of these texts]. Although the actual Vedic texts are now hidden to our eyes, these [*smṛti*s] 'manifest' them, in the same way that [the *śruti* texts themselves are manifested] by the various articulatory sounds.

[The argument that mediation of the Veda via the compilers of the *smṛti* weakens the claim of Vedic status could apply likewise to mediation via the teacher of Vedic recitation. However:] Viewing their teacher [of Vedic recitation] as trustworthy, students accept his claim that a given passage is recited in the Vedas whether or not it is recited [by the students themselves]. The statements of the authors of the [*kalpa*- and/or *dharma*-] *sūtra*s are exactly like those of such a teacher. They do nothing more or less than communicate the Vedic statements in their own particular form. They are consequently not to be devalued as mere human creations, being no more human creations than [*śruti* texts themselves, which require for manifestation the human effort of] the expulsion of palatal and the rest of the articulatory sounds.

For it is one and the same Veda, of equal validity, that men make known whether they do so by remembering it or by reciting it.

Even the Veda, when not being recited, exists in the reciters merely in the form of latent impressions it leaves behind, or in memory traces these impressions generate [and thus the memory of the Veda is ontologically no different from the Veda as remembered in *smṛti*].

Consequently, when the content of a Vedic passage is related by someone, this content is identical as remembered in *smṛti* to that recited in *śruti*, and so cannot be invalidated by any reasoning.[22]

3. 'Tradition' *Is* 'Revelation'.

In the very construction of *smṛti* as a category is encoded its transcendent legitimacy. In early Mīmāṃsā, however, this construction is

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[21] Here *viprakīrṇa* refers to the fact that rules relating to *puruṣadharma* (as opposed to *kratvartha vidhi*s) are encoded in extant Vedas in a *desultory* way, and it is the purpose of *smṛti* to make these easily accessible. See, especially, *Tantravārttika*, vol. 2, p. 145, l. 23; *Nyāyasudhā*, p. 214 *infra.*

[22] *Tantravārttika*, vol. 2, p. 104, ll. 15 ff. See, also, Śālikanātha: 'This [inferred holy word] is Veda, because it is transcendent speech, and that is all the word 'Veda' signifies' (*Prakaraṇapañcikā*, p. 251). For *Ajitā* (the earliest commentary on the *Tantravārttika*), the difference between *smṛti* and *śruti* is that in the former, the memory and the perception it presupposes belong to a second party; in the latter, they belong to oneself (*Ajitā*, pp. 32-33). In the context of discussing the question whether, when contradicting *śruti*, *smṛti* is cancelled or constitutes a legitimate option, Bhavanātha critiques Kumārila's *vārttika* 'For the very Veda [...]' saying: 'Just as *śruti* is manifested by articulation (*pāṭha*) [the way *smṛti* is], so *śruti* itself [like *smṛti*] is inferred, and thus [on neither account] is there any difference between the two. For even when *śruti* is articulated, the fact that it *is śruti* is something we must infer. Such is

marked by a certain tentativeness. Not all the texts and acts of the members of Vedic culture, simply because they are members (*kartṛsāmānya*), may be legitimated by the logic of their derivation from *śruti*. A number of conditions are introduced into the equation of *śruti* and *smṛti* that would work to disqualify a text or practice for canonization and scriptural authority. Such include 1) a *smṛti*'s contradicting *śruti*, 2) its exhibiting evidence of self-interest or 3) an absence of transcendental content, or 4) its falling outside what in a concrete and narrow view could be included within the Vedic 'canon'. But all of these limitations are ultimately eliminated in late-classical Mīmāṃsā.

Each of these topics is large and important, and Mīmāṃsā discusses them at length and with complex arguments that again it is not possible to recapitulate here. Only a few important lines of development can be schematically indicated here.

1) *The Movement from Contradiction to Non-contradiction.* Contradiction between *smṛti* and *śruti* would inhibit the inference that what is remembered is (in any of several senses) authentically Vedic (*Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra*, 1.3.3). It is one of the principal tasks of Kumārila in the *Tantravārttika* on the *smṛtipāda*, however, to eliminate the theoretical possibility of such contradiction (which had been a central interpretative principle in early Mīmāṃsā; see for example Śabara on *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra*, 6.1.13-15; 6.1.20). He does this by a detailed empirical analysis of each of Śabara's examples (vol. 2, pp. 105, ll. 13 ff.), concluding: "Therefore, we scarcely ever find contradiction between *smṛti* and *śruti* [...] [p. 111, ll. 15-16] [...] Given the possibility that the Vedic source of a *smṛti* may be located in some other Vedic school, we cannot accept the position that it can ever be totally dismissed".[23] This liberates the full potential of the legitimation power of all elite Sanskrit discourse, so long as 'interest' itself is never explicitly analyzed as a category.

2) *'Interest'*. Early Mīmāṃsā holds that no memory can count as Vedic if some 'interest' or 'motive' (*hetu, kāraṇa*) is therein evident (*Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra*, 1.3.4). This is so because the Veda is defined precisely as that which alone refers, and exclusively refers, to the realm beyond the realm of interests (*aprāpte vā śāstram arthavat*

what [Kumārila] intends in the *vārttika*, 'For the very Veda [...]' [...] Now it is true that *śruti* and *smṛti* are equal in being manifested through articulation (*pāṭha*). And while the one being *śruti* and the other *smṛti* are equally derived from traditional usage (*vṛddhavyavahāra*), *smṛti* is unequal in having to be inferred [as deriving] from *śruti*' (*Mīmāṃsānayaviveka*, pp. 83-84). Varadarāja, ad loc., explains: 'The categorization of the two genres *śruti* and *smṛti* is traditional. If one argued that a discourse had to be inferred to be *śruti*, the way *smṛti* has to be inferred to derive from *śruti*, this would still not make the two equal [as being both inferential], since *smṛti* likewise would have to be inferred to be *smṛti* [thus adding a second stage of inference]'.

[23] *Tantravārttika*, vol. 2, p. 112, ll. 7-8 (see *Nyāyasudhā*, p. 158, ll. 30-33). Compare also *Nyāyamañjarī* (p. 375) where the Vedists (*svādhyāyābhiyuktāḥ*) hold that no example of *śruti-smṛti* contradiction exists.

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[*Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra*, 6.2.18]). But interest in Mīmāṃsā is never abstractly defined or even theorized.[24] The failure to conceptualize interest is a condition for the following:

3) *The Convergence of Non-instrumentality and Traditional Practice as Such.* Non-instrumental action (the fact that some act is done for an 'unseen', other-worldly purpose [*adṛṣṭārthatva*]) is what for Mīmāṃsā essentially characterizes the nature of Vedic commandments. But as Kumārila came to recognize, there is no transcendent commandment that does not have some dimension of instrumentality to it. At the same time, any instrumental act can disclose a dimension of non-instrumentality: the very fact that a practice is enacted the way it traditionally is, instead of in any other of the potentially infinite number of ways, is itself evidence that some transcendent purpose is being served.[25] All of this enables the following:

4) *The Enlargement of the Canon.* The range of texts that can be counted as Vedic in origin was vast already in Kumārila's day, despite his intention to limit them.[26] And he supplies an argument that may have contributed to this enlargement: It is not an inference from the 'sameness of agents' (*kartṛsāmānyāt*) that leads us to postulate a Vedic source for certain *smṛti*s, but an assumption based on the fact that the learned of the three *varṇa*s accept them (*śiṣṭatraivarṇikadṛḍhaparigraha*).[27] By the time of Jayantabhaṭṭa, such 'acceptance' (now *mahājanaprasiddhyanugraha*) is explicitly and exclusively a function of a text's "conformity with the social norms known from the Vedas, such as caste". The only texts now excluded are the scriptures of the Buddhists and the 'Saṃsāramocakas', or ritual murderers, insofar as they "decidedly reject social behavior that is in accordance with caste duty".[28]

4. Summary and Conclusions

From the moment *smṛti* was recognized as a genre, it secured legitimacy by way of its derivation from 'transcendent speech', a process of legitimation fossilized in the very name by which the tradition came to refer to it. Dispute among specialists centered in

[24] This is true also in Nyāya. See the extended discussion of the logical necessity of assuming *apūrva* to explain ritual behavior, and the narrow conception of this behavior, in *Nyāyakusumāñjali*, 1.8; 2.3 (Kanchipuram ed., pp. 14 ff; 95 ff).

[25] This is what later comes to be known as the *niyamādṛṣṭa*. See, for example, *Tantravārttika*, vol. 2, p. 78, ll. 11-15; p. 128, ll. 3-4 (with *Nyāyasudhā*, p. 126, ll. 20-21, 25).

[26] Including strictures against sectarian *āgama*s. See, for example, *Tantravārttika,* vol. 2, p. 122, ll. 3-5 (on the 'fourteen *or eighteen*' *vidyāsthāna*s); vol. 2, p. 112, ll. 18-19 (on the *bāhyagrantha*s, including the Pāñcarātra and Pāśupata *āgama*s).

[27] The argument itself is subtle. See *Tantravārttika*, vol. 2, p. 76, ll. 21 ff (with *Nyāyasudhā*, p. 124).

[28] *Nyāyamañjarī*, pp. 376 ff (especially p. 377, ll. 1-3; pp. 379 ff). The term *mahājana* merits more detailed historical analysis than it has so far received. Contrast for example Derrett («[…] a synonym for Brāhmaṇa [...] 'important person'» [O'Flaherty, Derrett: 56

general only around conceptual issues provoked by this derivation: the nature of the Vedic texts preserved by 'memory', and their status vis-à-vis the Vedic texts 'actually heard' (for example, in the matter of contradiction between the two); the hermeneutic of recovery of the 'original'; the reasons for the inaccessibility of this original. It is likely that this conception of *smṛti* was developed by Mīmāṃsā as early as the *sūtra*s; it had become a *topos* by the classical period.[29] An initial reluctance to admit absolute equipollence of *śruti* and *smṛti* was fully neutralized in the medieval period, when Kumārila claimed for all *smṛti*s participation in the inerrancy of holy word. It is thus only a slight exaggeration to say that, in the elite discourse of traditional India, there exists no cultural memory —*smṛti*— separate from the memory of the eternally given.

This 'revelation of tradition' has two faces, which in concluding I would like briefly to delineate.

Mīmāṃsā's project of founding *smṛti* upon *śruti*, that is, of explaining social-cultural life as deriving from revealed truth, arguably comprises some vision of the ideal. I do not mean just a longing for transcendence or utopia, for some communal existence that the agents believe to be in conformity with cosmic order. I mean more particularly that it exhibits a perceived need *to give good reasons*, to provide *grounds* for the way the lifeworld is organized, and thereby to privilege, at least in theory, justification and persuasion over imposition and subjugation. The need to justify presupposes and can nurture a sense of the need for justice. This positive dimension, the presence of an emancipatory value at the core of ideological discourse, is worth recognizing despite the fact that the reasons Mīmāṃsā gives, and argues out with stunning acuity, are bad ones, that its logic of tradition is finally illogical, and that the justification it seeks is directed toward achieving an unjustifiable consensus, on purely sectional interests of the social world.

The fact that these are sectional interests, and that legitimation by nature emerges from the competition and conflict over legitimacy,[30] discloses for us the dark face of the 'revelation of tradition'. Mīmāṃsā's most significant social-historical role, of course, was as the metalegal framework for *dharmaśāstra*, the explicit program of domination of Sanskrit culture. And the validation of *dharmaśāstra*'s code of asymmetrical power —of illegitimate hierarchy, untouchability, female heteronomy, the degradation of work— depended centrally upon the Mīmāṃsā revelation of tradition. Manu's claim —"this is all based on the Veda" (*Mānavadharmaśāstra*, 2.7-8)—

n. 8]) and Chemparathy («[…] une grande multitude de personnes […]» [Chemparathy 1983: 69]). Both scholars are referring basically to the same context, and both can hardly be correct.

[29] See Kālidāsa, *Raghuvaṃśa*, 2.2 (*śruter ivārthaṃ smṛtir anvagacchat*).

[30] An obvious point, but easily overlooked. See further Bourdieu 1977: 168.

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would be hollow indeed without this prior revalorization of 'memory' itself, which his commentators prominently reproduce.[31]

When tradition and revelation are forced into convergence; when 'memory' no longer bears the record of human achievement and 'tradition' no longer transmits the heritage of the historical past, the understanding of culture and society as the provisional arrangements of people making and remaking their lifeworld becomes impossible. *Smṛti* may be transmitted in the memory of men, but it has become the memory of the *apauruṣeya*, the transcendent, whereby the structure of the human world itself —now the domain of *dharma* and thus incomprehensible without *smṛti* texts— is rendered *apauruṣeya*. A culture and society that have ceased to be the products of human agency cease to be conceivable as humanly mutable, and it is this conception —the reification and naturalization of the world— that forms one essential precondition for the maintenance of social power.

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[31] See, for example, Medhātithi on *Manusmṛti*, 2.6: '*śruti* applies when the actual scriptural words of instruction in *dharma* are available to hear, *smṛti* applies when they are [only] remembered' (*śrūyate dharmānuśāsanaśabdaḥ sā śrutiḥ, yatra ca smaryate sā smṛtiḥ* [vol. 1, p. 80]); Kullūka on *Manusmṛti*, 2.12: 'The Veda is the source of knowledge of *dharma*. In some instances, Veda is perceptible, in others it [must be] inferred from *smṛti*' (*vedo dharmapramāṇaṃ sa kvacit pratyakṣaḥ kvacit smṛtyanumitaḥ*). See also the *Gītāmāhātmya* in *Mahābhārata*, 6.43.2 (vulg. ed.): 'the *Gītā* encompasses all *śāstra*s, Hari all gods, the Gaṅgā all sacred places, *Manu* all Vedas'. According to a recent book on RSS doctrine, «[...] the *Bhagavad Gītā* was theologically considered *smriti* (non-canonical) by orthodox Hindus. However, the revivalists tended to blur the distinction between non-canonical texts and the canonical *śrutis* [...] and to treat both sets of texts as equally authoritative» (Andersen 1987: 23 n. 21). The RSS, we can see, is reclaiming or continuing an ancient mode of legitimation. For the *Bhagavadgītā* (and *Mahābhārata* as a whole) in particular, this had already been explicitly asserted at least as early as Jayatīrtha, who argues that their validity is a function of their being derived from the ultimate valid text, the Vedas (see *Bhagavad Gītā with Eleven Commentaries*, p. 13).

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