

FROM DISCOURSE OF RITUAL TO DISCOURSE OF POWER IN SANSKRIT CULTURE

Sheldon Pollock

Sanskrit culture presents us with both the most highly articulated explication of ritual in antiquity and the most highly articulated ideological formation. The relationship between ritual and ideology is an important, largely unmapped region of Indian intellectual history. The following analysis will consider the ways in which in traditional India ideas originating in the realm of ritual surface in the social world and come to ground asymmetrical relations of power—power as the ability to act in pursuit of ends and to control access to material and nonmaterial resources.

In traditional India the discourse of ritual that has functioned as paradigmatic up to the present is that of Vedic ritual. The postulates of this discourse with respect to thought and action generally, in addition to its specific conceptual categories, have come to be viewed as paradigmatic also for the social realm at large. This transposition of ritual onto society was an important condition for the development of a wide variety of features characteristic of the orthodox, *vaidika* tradition, which I have termed "Sanskrit culture." Through the transposition from one realm to the other, ritual discourse becomes a discourse of social power insofar as it sustains the relations of domination constitutive of traditional Indian society, which are characterized by the systematic exclusion from property, power, and status of three-quarters of the population for more than two millennia. Mediating much of this development is *Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā*, a complex body of traditional theory on the nature and meaning of the Veda.

The Ritual and the Social

It is possible to object at once that the image of "transposition," the very idea of "ritualization of the social world," presupposes a distinction between the ritual and the social realms that does not hold. In the first place, one might argue that sociocultural practices typically exhibit a substantial "ritual" component to the degree that they constitute

formalized, conventionalized, ceremonial, and symbolic behavior. Furthermore, what makes traditional societies "traditional" is precisely the interpenetration of culture and ritual, whereas modernization may be characterized in part by the gradual carving out of a nonritual sphere. From yet another perspective, ritual can be viewed principally as a source of "symbolic capital," ultimately interconvertible with material capital, so that the ritual domain is disclosed as merely a subset within the general economy of practice.¹

I think this last perspective has the potential to reveal something profound about *vaidika* ritual practice strictly conceived, but it is a focus I do not wish to develop here. As for the indistinguishability of the ritual and the social, I admit that it is hard theoretically to establish separate domains for them and hard also to argue historically that in India there occurred a ritualization of the social (as Bourdieu, I think, might lead us to argue) or even a socialization of the ritual (so Hocart).² However, concrete reasons force us to deny that for Sanskrit culture these realms are identical, and I will consider these reasons momentarily. I do find some sort of truth in the common sense contrast implicit in the very idea "ritual"; it presupposes "nonritual," which we therefore intuitively posit. There must be more than a nominalistic, not to say English nominalistic, reality to this nonritual domain, however. Consider the difference that exists, for example, between ritual prestations and tax/rent tribute. Wherever we believe the difference to lie—perhaps in the threat of coercive force—it is in part on the basis of this difference that contemporary historians can work with the concept of segmentary state, a polity characterized by among other things a bifurcation between royal sovereignty and ritual suzerainty. Despite the fact that the application of this model to traditional India has various problems—actually, it is the very dichotomy of *dharma* and *artha*, as unproblematically and unhistorically accepted by Dumont and his followers, that I argue against here—the difference between prestations and tax/rent tribute remains real and entails a dichotomy between two spheres of action.³

Although I will be concerned in what follows with the historical process implicit in the notion of "ritualization" of the social, it is necessary also to reflect on certain structural

features of *vaidika* thought. What this structure confronts us with is a fact: the presence of ritual concepts in a realm that the tradition itself has constructed and identified as nonritual. Examining this fact may help us to assess in a new way some features of Sanskrit culture that are prominent in themselves but are particularly important for their contribution to the reproduction of social power. The features I would like to analyze in this essay—all of which are large themes that I will only be able to outline—are (1) the explicit rule-boundedness of Sanskrit cultural production; (2) the authority of "tradition" (*smṛti*), and (3) the notorious absence of historical consciousness as indicated, it is thought, by the absence of an indigenous narrative historiography.

These issues all have an "*idéal*" status, and I want to stay in that sphere for the present, while making no claims about actualization beyond insisting in passing that the *idéal*, what people think is or should be real, has reality too. These issues are all, conceptually speaking, interrelated as well, so there may be some overlapping in my discussion. In addition, all of them form part of a complex of ideas we can make sense of only if we first grasp some things about the nature of *dharma* and the Veda, about their relationship to one another, and about why we should have to bother our heads with Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā.

Dharma, Veda, and Mīmāṃsā

One basic fact of Sanskrit cultural/intellectual history, although we rarely see any reference made to it, is that *dharma*, the key word of Sanskrit culture, historically derives from—or, what amounts to the same thing, is first self-consciously thematized within—the context of sacrificial ritualism. It is the task of Mīmāṃsā to provide a coherent analysis of *dharma* (*athāto dharmajijñāsā, Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.1). Mīmāṃsā characterizes *dharma* as "some end [or human need/good] defined by Vedic injunction" (*codanālakṣaṇo 'rtho dharmah*, 1.1.2), and as Mīmāṃsā's elaboration massively demonstrates, this refers in the first instance to ritual activities that we are directed to perform by the commandments of the Veda ("*dharma*, which means the Vedic rites such as the daily fire sacrifice," *agnihotrādilakṣaṇo*

dharma, as Śabara, the earliest extant commentator on the *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtras*, puts it).⁴

There are two postulates in the Mīmāṃsā definition of *dharma* that inform its philosophical project: first, that the Veda is an absolute authority for *dharma* (according to the later Mīmāṃsā formula, *codanā pramāṇam eva*), and, second, that the Veda is the only such authority (*codanaiva pramāṇam*). The first postulate rests on a Mīmāṃsā epistemology that ascribes truth to what is not falsified (the embarrassment of unfalsifiability being ignored).⁵ The second rests on an unarticulated though perhaps self-evident axiom of the transcendent nature of *dharma*, which therefore can only be known through some source of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) that is itself transcendent (that is, one that excludes perception, inference, and the rest of the *pramāṇas* other than *śabdapramāṇa*).⁶ As the Veda is held to be the only uncreated, because authorless and beginningless, discourse on ritual,⁷ the Veda can be our only source of knowledge of *dharma*. Moreover, since *dharma* is by nature action and pertains axiomatically to the transcendent future (*bhaviṣyat* as opposed to *bhūtam*), the Veda's commandments on *dharma* can never be falsified and are thus inerrant.

I would like to examine three problems raised by the Mīmāṃsā understanding of *dharma*: the nature and reach of Vedic injunctions; the scope, consequently, of what counts as Veda; and the Veda's status as the only form of real knowledge. A discussion of these three problems leads us from ritual discourse to a discourse of social power.

Rules and Cultural Practice

The discrimination of ritual and nonritual realms, far from being categorically excluded for "traditional society" in India, is a basic polarity of Sanskrit discourse. From an early period, the dominant intellectual tradition posits two distinct spheres, *laukika* (everyday) and *vaidika* (Vedic, ritual). This distinction informs such foundational sciences of Sanskrit culture as grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), where a differentiation of ritual and nonritual language (*chandaḥ* and *bhāṣā*) is characteristic of the rule system, and Mīmāṃsā itself, where the contrast is elaborated in the concepts *drṣṭārtha* (or *prāpta*)

and *adr̥ṣṭārtha* (*apr̥apta*). This latter opposition needs to be explained in order to establish the contrast between the two spheres, but also in order to appreciate how it came to be cancelled.⁸

The rules (*vidhi*) that the Veda communicates are divided by Mīmāṃsā into two different types: those that are *dr̥ṣṭārtha* ("whose purpose is obvious," = *pr̥apta*, self-evident, naturally available) and those that are *adr̥ṣṭārtha* ("whose purpose is not obvious," = *apr̥apta*). As an example of *adr̥ṣṭārtha*, there is nothing "self-evident" about the Vedic injunction, "One must perform the daily fire-sacrifice (*yajña*)." However, since Veda is defined as that which enables us to know the human good called *dharma*, something not knowable by any other means, and is thus unfalsifiable, the injunction is a compelling one for which no justification is necessary; it is self-legitimizing. By contrast, a rule such as "One must pound [de-husk by pounding] the sacrificial grain" is *dr̥ṣṭārtha*, an injunction whose purpose appears straightforward to us. Such pounding prepares the grain for use as an oblation. The authority of rules of this latter sort would derive exclusively from their empirically proven efficacy.⁹ Both sorts of rules are found in the Veda, and in addition to their sacrificial significance Mīmāṃsā is interested in them because what basically distinguishes them—the presence/absence of instrumentality or utility (*dr̥ṣṭārthatva*)¹⁰—characterizes for early Mīmāṃsā the distinction between the ritual and nonritual domains and the authority legitimating the norms of practice in each.

A good illustration of the differentiation of these rule types and their spheres of application is found in the third and fourth *adhikaraṇas* of *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 6.2. In the third topic the principle is established that, once begun, a Vedic rite must be completed. The question is raised in the fourth topic whether this principle extends to other types of action: "Is it obligatory to complete everyday actions (*loke karmāṇi*) like Vedic actions, insofar as the knowledge of all such acts that fulfill human goals¹¹ derives from the same source?" (*Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 6.2.16). The answer is that the completion of everyday actions is not obligatory, and the reason given frames a central postulate of early Mīmāṃsā: *śāstra* (that is, the Veda) does not apply to nonritual actions, but only to those that, without the Veda, we would never undertake

(. . . *aprāpte śāstram arthavat*, 6.2.18). Śabara elucidates: There are textualized rules (*grantha*) for building a house or wagon, and these must derive from some *smṛti*. However, the assumption that this *smṛti* derives from *śāstra* (that is, Veda) is unwarranted. There is nothing transcendent (*adr̥ṣṭārtha*) about the action involved. We can know how to make beautiful things even without the Veda and transmit this through *smṛti* (*smāryate*). We do not have to assume the Veda as the source for this, but only for what we cannot otherwise know.¹²

Until we understand the nature of *smṛti*,¹³ it may be unclear why anyone would be led, as in the above example, to extrapolate from ritual injunctions to everyday actions in the first place. My point in adducing this passage here is primarily to show that mapping off a realm of nonritual action was a real and essential component of early Mīmāṃsā ritual theory. However, I also want at this point to suggest that its boundaries are inherently fuzzy and that later Mīmāṃsā interpretation worked to obscure them further rather than to clarify them. Whether out of a compulsion of rationality, following a relatively autonomous development of ideas, or somehow in response to sociocultural representations about rules and practices, later Mīmāṃsā moves away from a strict, almost naive interpretation of rules to one that is much more expansive.

First, in the absence of a closed canon of the Veda—and that Mīmāṃsā itself had to open this canon up will become clear in what follows—the proposition "Vedic rules are non-instrumental" was easily reversed: any noninstrumental cultural rule could be viewed as Vedic in origin. There is in addition a real ambiguity as to what constitutes the difference between the two categories of rules. Only an explicit theorization of the concept itself of instrumentality could ground the distinction, and this is what we nowhere get in Mīmāṃsā. That it could not be an absolute distinction anyway Mīmāṃsā itself came in time to realize. The eighth-century Mīmāṃsaka Kumārila argues that there must be in every *adr̥ṣṭārtha* rule an element of instrumentality and in every *dr̥ṣṭārtha* rule an element of noninstrumentality. Since the injunction to perform the daily fire-sacrifice is communicated to us by the Veda, and Vedic injunctions axiomatically define *dharma*,

which itself is some human need or good (*artha*), there must be some good to be secured from the rule requiring us to perform the rite, making the rule instrumental or utilitarian. Conversely, the fact that the sacrificial grain should be husked by pounding rather than by any number of other possible procedures implies that some unknowable purpose is served by conforming to this particular prescribed method—what is known in Mīmāṃsā as the *niyamavidhi*, or restrictive injunction—and this can only be Vedic in origin. As Rāṇaka observes, "One can always succeed in identifying instrumentality in Vedic action, but this doesn't make it nonVedic . . . even if the instrumentality is perfectly real."¹⁴

These developments in the Mīmāṃsā conception of rules are important because they make possible the participation of a vast range of provisional sociocultural norms—all norms being provisional until they are thematized in discourse—in an invariable transcendent legitimacy conferred by Vedic ritualism. In fact, classical Sanskrit culture witnesses a process of "vedacization" of noninstrumental rules taking place in every realm of practice. Textualized śāstric injunctions soon are found covering everything from procedures for defecation to how to write beautiful poetry.¹⁵ It is this development that helps impart that peculiar homeostasis to certain regions of Sanskrit culture best exemplified in the history of the Sanskrit language itself.¹⁶

The Mīmāṃsā understanding of rules ultimately enables a Veda-like authority to attach not only to the noninstrumental dimension of sociocultural production, but to tradition as such. The very substance of tradition is the fact that we do things one way rather than another, and this brings it under the rubric of the "restrictive injunction" (*niyamavidhi*). Tradition becomes intelligible, and its imperative force is renewed, once we assume that its peculiar arrangements serve some unknowable purpose. Finally, the failure or refusal to conceptualize instrumentality per se (similar to the case of "interest" discussed below) was the enabling condition for the extension of ritual legitimation to the social and economic order at large.

That a more capacious, almost infinitely expandable category of rules was made available by later Mīmāṃsā was not, however, a sufficient condition for the ritualization of the

social. Also required was an expansion of the concept of *dharma* and thus the field of applicability of Veda-like texts.

"Tradition" as "Revelation"

During precisely what period in the history of Sanskrit culture the extension of the concept of *dharma* took place is not entirely clear. There are good reasons, including the struggle over the appropriation of the term in early Buddhism, Jainism, and elsewhere (a struggle that was still echoing throughout the medieval period), for situating this extension within the context of late Vedic heterodoxy.¹⁷ In any case, it was a development of central importance for Indian intellectual history when *dharma* ultimately spilled over its original conceptual confines of "ritualism"—the confines of "sacrifice, recitation, giving," as Chāndogya Upaniṣad 2.23.1 identifies the three components of *dharma*—and found wide application in domains beyond Vedic ceremonialism.

I might illustrate briefly this spill-over process by taking an example from grammar, which I feel is particularly cogent given the cultural representativeness of language generally, and especially in India. At the beginning of his *Mahābhāṣya*, when the purposes of grammar are discussed, Patañjali cites the celebrated formulation of his predecessor, Kātyāyana: "Although language is naturally communicative (*lokato 'rthaprayukte śabdaprayoge*), grammar is necessary in order to regulate behavior in accordance with *dharma* (*śāstreṇa dharmaniyamaḥ*)." Patañjali elaborates, using some of the distinctions we have already encountered: just as there are prohibitions against eating certain animals (although these can satisfy hunger), or against sexual relations with certain women (although these can satisfy passion), so grammatically correct words must be used (even though the sense might be communicable through incorrect words), for only thus can (spiritual) success (*abhyudaya*) be secured. That the usage here envisaged is nonritual is corroborated by the character of the entire *Mahābhāṣya*, as well as by later discussions even in *Mīmāṃsā*.¹⁸

What is true of the development of the concept *dharma* is equally true both for narrowly ritual terms, such as *bali*

("offering, oblation," later "tax, tribute") and *yajamāna* ("patron of the sacrifice," later simply "patron"), and for other concepts central to the entire social and economic project of Dharma-Sāstra and other normative discourses. *Puruṣārtha* ("human need/goal"), for instance, was first conceptualized within the domain of Mīmāṃsā (*Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 4.1.1ff.) and only thereafter passed into the extra-ritual sphere. *Adhikāra*, the "entitlement" or, better, "right" to participate in certain forms of social action—which I believe to be one of the building blocks in the construction of the idea of inequality in early India—has likewise a Mīmāṃsā provenance as "the right to sacrifice"¹⁹ and is later generalized in such influential social discourses as the Bhagavad-Gītā. In fact, much of the social idiom of traditional Indian society in general appears to be originally of ritual coinage.²⁰

The expansion of the realm of *dharma* beyond the ritual realm, which can thus be clearly traced historically, was a fact that the custodians of *vaidika dharma* confronted directly. This was assuredly not because they felt the paradox Heesterman believes he has identified and many Indologists accept: that the Vedas have really nothing to do with *dharma*, that these texts have "ultimate authority over a world to which they are in no way related," that "there is no common measure between the Veda and the social world, no connection between *śruti* and *dharma*" (1978;1981:61).²¹ The intellectual history of early India demonstrates that the paradox—if indeed it is a paradox—is actually the other way around: the social world had originally nothing to do with *dharma*, since the first *dharma*, as the Ṛg-Veda puts it, was the sacrifice (1.164.50). By the time of the classical and medieval commentators, however, no one saw any discontinuity between sacrificial and social ritualization.²² What is of concern to Mīmāṃsā is principally the fact that texts other than the Veda, and practices other than what is directly enjoined by the Veda, count as *dharma* in daily life.²³ Its luxuriant discussion of this fact is centered on the relation between *smṛti* and *śruti* (*Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3).²⁴

The failure of Western (and Westernized) Indology to be precise about the meaning of these two key terms, *śruti* and *smṛti*, has prohibited us from grasping the larger implications of how Mīmāṃsā conceives of their relationship, which is in

fact the original and determinative conception. A review of the standard literature shows how imprecise at best and how mistaken at worst our understanding of these two basic concepts and their relationship to one another has been: "Smṛti, '(tradition fondée sur la) mémoire', l'opposant à śruti 'revelation'" (Renou and Filliozat 1947:381,270); " . . . 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); "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 and Moore 1957:xix); "semi-canonical scriptures called Smṛiti, '(human) Tradition'—as opposed to the Vedas, which are Shruti '(divine) Revelation'" (Raghavan and Dandekar 1958:217); "[die] Śruti—d.h. . . . '[das] Hören' der ewigen Wahrheit durch inspirierte Weise in der Vorzeit . . . Smṛti—[die] Erinnerung', d.h. [das] Herkommen. . . ." (Gonda 1960:107).²⁵

There is a knot of confusion and contradiction in these definitions. What makes "memory" and "tradition" coterminous? Is not Veda tradition? How does the "memory" of *smṛti* differ from the memory necessary to transmit *śruti*? Are not the *smṛtis* "heard" in this oral culture just like the Veda? If "hearing" means revelation, why is the Veda invariably said to have been "seen"? How can the Vedic tradition (*vaidikaparaṃparā*) be beginningless, as the oldest formulation represents it, if there was a single revelation? Finally, what is the origin of what *smṛti* remembers—where, that is, does Gonda's *Herkommen* come from?

It is not possible to go into all of these questions here, as they are complex and to a degree difficult for the Sanskrit tradition itself, especially for Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya, Vedānta, and Vyākaraṇa, which all contribute to the discussion. I only want to consider the last question regarding the origin of what "tradition" "remembers," for this points towards the basic misunderstanding at the root of the standard equivalents "'tradition' as opposed to 'revelation.'"

There is a dichotomy entailed in the concepts "revelation" and "tradition." Difficult as the two Western terms may be to conceptualize satisfactorily, when paired they constitute for us

a bipolarity: two separate realms of cultural knowledge/-practice, distinct in their origins and in the way they derive their legitimacy and authority. Understood in this fashion, *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. Yet this dichotomy is precisely what the categories *śruti* and *smṛti* reject. This rejection is established in the very terminology that constitutes these categories. Formulated first, narrowly and weakly, in early Mīmāṃsā and then more broadly and strongly by Kumāṛila, it becomes generalized throughout Sanskrit culture.

Mīmāṃsā introduces the problem by starting with the fundamental postulate: "The basis of *dharma* is sacred word, and therefore what is not sacred word has no relevance [*vis-à-vis dharma*]" (*Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.1). As Śābara explains, texts/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/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 *smṛtis* cannot be based on sheer "memory" (*smaraṇa*) because memory presupposes experience, and the only previous experience of something that counts as *dharma* is the Veda (as proven in *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.2). Furthermore, it is not just the continuity of cultural memory that authenticates it; our "memory" of the Veda itself is not validated merely by its unbroken tradition, but by the fact that the Veda is actually perceptible to us. It is this actual perception of Vedic texts—their existing during recitation—that constitutes the "prior cognitive experience" necessary to substantiate the memory of them. No such prior cognition is available to underpin "non-Vedic" texts/practices, and no tradition founded on such ignorance can become true simply by being beginningless.²⁶

The position finally accepted by Mīmāṃsā is offered in the next *sūtra*: "On the contrary: By reason of the fact that the agents involved are the same, 'inference' (*anumāna*) could be a 'source of valid knowledge'" (*Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.2). Insofar as the same people who perform the acts of *dharma* required by the Veda also perform acts that count as *dharma* that are 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 or to have once existed. As Śabara adds, it is not unreasonable to hold that the knowledge of these texts is remembered, while the texts themselves (that is, their actual wording) have been lost.²⁷ 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 cited above is a little awkward to translate, since *anumāna* comes to suggest, it seems, not only the logical operation of inference, but also the Vedic text that is thereby inferred. In this latter sense *anumāna* can and does substitute for what is elsewhere called *smṛti*, precisely as *pratyakṣa*, "sensory perception," can and does take on the signification "Vedic texts perceived" (or even, *tout court*, *pramaṇa*, "source of valid knowledge") and replaces *śruti* both in Mīmāṃsā and elsewhere. The semantic weight thus discernible in *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*, which helps us move towards an historically more accurate understanding of *smṛti*, is corroborated by a wide range of examples in the Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, and Dharma *sūtras*.²⁸

Both sets of terms—*pratyakṣa* / *śruti* and *anumāna* / *smṛti*—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 available 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 accessible are perceptible; they are something we can actually hear during instruction in recitation (*gurumukhoccāraṇānūccāraṇa*) and in daily repetition (*svādhyāya*). This is what for Śabara validated Vedic memory, 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*.'" Yet other texts and practices relating to *dharma* can have validity inasmuch as they necessarily lead us to *infer* the existence, at some other time or 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*," again according to traditional etymology.²⁹

In short, *śruti* means nothing other than "(Veda) actually now perceived aurally (in recitation)," that is, extant or available, while *smṛti* means "(Veda) that is remembered," that is, material that, having once existed as part of a Vedic corpus and been heard in recitation, is inferentially recoverable from present reformulations in language or practice. Both terms refer in their primary connotation to one and the same thing—the Veda, as actually recited or simply recalled (*paṭhyamānasmāryamānaveda*), as Kumārila puts it.³⁰ Since the epistemological background presupposed in the original meanings of *śruti* and *smṛti* is provided by Mīmāṃsā, there is reason to hypothesize that Mīmāṃsā itself coined these terms, or at the least was responsible for their currency.

How or why the Vedic texts of which *smṛti* is the memory are not accessible to us, how the content of the Veda can be transmitted without the form of the Veda, and how the memory of Veda (*smṛti*) really differs from the Veda recalled in recitation (*śruti*) are complex and controversial questions discussed at length in the śāstric tradition. However, this discussion is generally concerned with details. The fact of *smṛti*'s derivation from the Veda is not questioned in any *vaidika darśana*, nor is its primary signification or the implication of its reference.

From the moment the sources of Sanskrit elite authority subsumed under the term *smṛti* were recognized as a genre, they received validation through their derivation from the "transcendent speech" of Vedic ritual, a process of legitimation fossilized in the technical term applied to them. The *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtras* do, however, seek to restrict the inferential validity of *smṛti*, and thereby the process of vedacization, by denying a Vedic provenance to any such text

that directly contradicts an existent Veda or exhibits some "interest" (*hetu, karaṇa, P ūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.4. ff.). Nevertheless, we see the same development in Mīmāṃsā with respect to the expansion of the domain of *smṛti* that we saw in the case of rules. For one thing, as Kumārila shows with extraordinary acumen, it is theoretically impossible to establish such contradiction, and he concludes: "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." The conflicting *smṛti* in question becomes equal in authority with, hence an alternative to, the extant Veda, and, even more important, the earlier constraints on what can be counted as "Veda" are relaxed.³¹ Second, as we saw with reference to the problem of instrumentality, "interest" as such is never problematized. It is even less likely for it to be so in this context, since sacrifice itself is interested (*svargakāmo yajeta*, "he who desires heaven should sacrifice"), and even obligatory rites are motivated by interests, since performing them enables one to avoid the sin incurred in not doing them. The Vedic "canon" thus becomes limitlessly legitimating as long as the agents of the texts/practices involved are those who participate in Vedic culture. In the end it is only the status and nature of these agents that legitimate or delegitimize *smṛtis*. No Buddhist text, for instance, can be valid in the realm of *dharma* since the people who "remember" such works "decidedly reject social behavior that is in accordance with caste duty."³²

That Mīmāṃsā could hereby take all of cultural memory out of time was facilitated by its evaluation of the status of history. This memory would cease to be ultimately true if it were historical.

The Problem of History³³

Perhaps no Orientalist tag has been quite so adhesive as that of "timeless" India. This putative characteristic was directly related by early Indology to the absence of an indigenous narrative (and basically Graeco-Roman) historiography in India. "Early India wrote no history," subtly reasoned A. A. Macdonell, the Boden professor of Sanskrit at Oxford, "because it never made any" (1966:10-11). Although the

supposed absence of an historical consciousness in traditional India has become something of an axiom of the field,³⁴ it is in fact no longer possible to accept uncritically the terms of the problem. For the exact definition of what constitutes history, the forms in which it is represented, and its relation to such basic human experiences as narrativity and temporality are some of the issues in the history of history that are currently being rethought and that have permanently neutralized any naive quest for an Indian Herodotus—or for a Greek Herodotus, for that matter.³⁵

The received opinion that India lacks an historical imagination is unacceptable not only because we are no longer altogether sure what those terms are supposed to mean. Even adopting the old categories unchallenged for the sake of argument, I think the standard view is false. There is in India, in addition to a massive amount of material with recognizable historiographical interests (medieval dynastic accounts, *vaṃśāvalis*, for instance, or numerous inscriptions), a whole range of ethnohistorical forms, some of which, such as historically coded iconography, we are just beginning to learn to read.³⁶ The assertion that historical interpretation in traditional India is a "zero category" is therefore a gross exaggeration that simply recapitulates the thoroughly colonial vision of "timeless" India (Larson 1980:305).³⁷

Notwithstanding the above qualifications, it must be acknowledged that there is a stunning absence of apparent historicity in orthodox Sanskrit discourse itself: tens of thousands of pages of Sanskrit text without a single useful, meaningful historical reference. I would argue, however, that this "ahistoricity" is itself historical (in a similar way as, indeed, the idea of "timeless India" has a beginning in time) and that it in part develops out of Mīmāṃsā's confrontation with history and the limiting conditions placed on historical thinking by Mīmāṃsā's valuation of real knowledge.

This confrontation emerges out of Mīmāṃsā's vindication of Vedic authority. Earlier I mentioned that Mīmāṃsā holds that *dharma* can only be communicated by texts that are themselves transcendent. How does it prove the Veda to be so? A substantial obstacle here, obviously, is to establish the possibility of language itself existing outside of social time and space, and it is to solve this general problem that a large part

of the philosophical portions of Mīmāṃsā texts is devoted.³⁸ The specific question of the Veda's transcendent character (*apauruṣeyatva*, "existing beyond the human," and indeed "beyond Puruṣa," the Supreme Being) may itself be reduced to basically two arguments, the first of less, the second of more significance for the question of social power.

With respect to the first argument, Mīmāṃsā holds on empirical grounds that the tradition of recitation of the Veda must be beginningless.³⁹ However, that is not sufficient to prove its transcendence and infallibility, which are closely linked: verbal communication is fallible only if defects can be shown to be present in the speaker, but it is impossible to show this if there is no speaker. It is therefore argued that the Veda is transcendent (*apauruṣeya*) by reason of its having no author. Had the Veda been composed by men, albeit long ago, there is no reason why the memory of these composers should not have been preserved. Texts for which no authors can be identified must necessarily *have* no authors, and this applies to the Veda and to the Veda alone.⁴⁰

Signally important is the second argument, in which the transcendent character of the Veda, which is proved by the fact of its having no beginning in time and no author, is confirmed by its contents: the Veda exhibits no dimension whatever of historical referentiality. Allusion to historical persons or to historical sequentiality is only apparently historical. For instance, the Vedic sentence "Babara son of Pravāha once desired. . . ." (*Taittirīya Saṃhitā* 7.1.5.4)—which might be thought to establish a *terminus post quem* for the composition of the text (that is, after Pravāha begot Babara)—is interpreted as containing merely phonemic resemblances to the names of historical persons. "Etymological" analysis shows that the references are in fact to natural entities or categories, which in the Mīmāṃsā view exist eternally (for example, the reference in question is to the "howling wind"). As Kumārila succinctly characterizes the Mīmāṃsā interpretive principle, "The reference of an eternal text can only be the eternal."⁴¹

There are two different directions in which to interpret the significance of the Mīmāṃsā conviction that, existing as it does out of time—the fact that alone authenticates its claim to truth and authority—the Veda can have no dimension of

historical referentiality. One is in the past—the past tradition that was thereby called into question—and the other is in the future—the requirements for conceptualizing cultural texts/-practices that were thereby imposed.

With respect to the past direction of the significance of the Mīmāṃsā view of what the Veda can mean, this view challenged and supplanted an important alternative conception. The *nairukta*, or etymological, analysis of the Veda, which we find to be a central form of argument in the *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtras* and which is later set forth in detail in the *Śābarabhāṣya*, had been only one of several modes of interpretation of the Veda in early India. Another was that of the *aitihāsikas*, who sought to explain the Vedic texts on the basis of "what has taken place" (*itihāsa*).⁴² No textbook of *aitihāsika* interpretation has been preserved, in contrast to the *nairukta* tradition about which we are informed in detail by the *Nirukta*. We learn something about the conceptions of the *aitihāsikas* from the *Nirukta* itself,⁴³ but thereafter Vedic commentators seem to become increasingly indifferent to citing them. From the materials that we do have, however, it is clear that this interpretive mode consisted in explicating the mythological and historical background—the deeds of gods and of praiseworthy men—to which the Vedic hymns were thought to make allusion.⁴⁴

Whatever may be the scholarly value of *aitihāsika* interpretation itself—an old controversy of no relevance to the present discussion—it is significant in re-examining the question of Indian historical consciousness to know that such interpretation once existed. In a large but still meaningful sense, this was historical explanation. As Durga defines it, "*itihāsa* concerns causal events, it is 'what actually happened'" (*nidānabhūtam iti haivam āsīd iti ya ucyate sa itihāsaḥ*).⁴⁵ *Aitihāsika* interpretation was a mode of explanation that viewed the Vedic texts as what they are, historical-cultural products. Moreover, it should now be clear that in the post-Vedic period crucial postulates about the Veda, as the paradigm of truthful and authoritative discourse, were developed by the principal guardians of the Veda—the Mīmāṃsakas—that rendered such a mode of understanding impossible, with *nirukta* or etymological allegoresis eventually becoming the dominant hermeneutic.⁴⁶

The second, or prospective, direction of significance of the Mīmāṃsā conception of the Veda has much more importance for Indian intellectual history. My hypothesis in essence is that when the Veda was emptied of all historical referential intention other sorts of Sanskrit intellectual practices seeking to validate their truth-claims by their affinity to the Veda had perforce to conform to this special model of what counts as knowledge and so to suppress or deny the evidence of their own historical existence—a suppression that took place even in the case of *itihāsa*, "history," itself.

I have argued elsewhere that virtually all Brahmanical learning in classical and medieval India comes to view itself in one way or another as genetically linked to the Veda—a process, which I called above "vedacization," that appears to be culture-wide. The conception of the rule-bounded nature of action and the expansion of the reach of *dharma* and its textual basis encouraged this process. As "Knowledge" *tout court*, as the *śāstra* par excellence, and as the "omniscient" text (Manu-Smṛti 2.7) and the "infinite" text (Taittirīya Saṃhitā 3.10.11.4, et al.), Veda is the general rubric under which every sort of partial knowledge—that is, the various individual *śāstras*—is ultimately subsumed. There are several routes to establishing this consanguinity: (1) through some formal convention embodied in the text, in which a *śāstra* will explicitly claim status as a Veda, or establish for itself a genealogy (*paramparā*) reverting to God, or present itself as the outcome of divine revelation directly to the author or as part of a revelation of successive abridgements from an all-comprehensive Veda; (2) through incorporation into a taxonomy (such as the "fields of knowledge," *vidyāsthānas*) of what constitutes authentic knowledge of *dharma*, the expansion of whose empire we traced earlier; and concomitantly (3) through the argument that *all* traditional Sanskrit knowledge—*smṛti*—is derived from lost Vedic texts.⁴⁷ There is, in the final analysis, hardly any branch of learning the texts of which do not claim authority by asserting a quasi-Vedic status in one way or another. For such a claim to be sustained, it was essential to conform at the level of discourse with the putative referential sphere of the Veda. As in the case of language itself, which in the Mīmāṃsā view expresses in the first instance the general, the type (*ākṛti*), and

not the particular, the token (*vyakti*), the primary referential sphere of the Veda—and hence of all vedacized texts—is the eternally repeated and no longer the contingent, localized, individual, historical.

History, one might thus conclude, is not simply absent from or unknown to Sanskrit culture; it is denied in favor of a model of truth that accorded history no epistemological value or social significance—a conception that reaches its apogee in late Vedānta. Appāyya Dīkṣita, for example, in extending an ancient formula, claims that "the holy word cancels phenomenal reality" (*pratyakṣāt . . . śrutir baliyāsī*).⁴⁸ This denial of history recovers its significance for Indian intellectual history when we conjoin it with such other components as rule-boundedness and the nature of "tradition" that help to construct the ideological discourse of Sanskrit culture.

Conclusion

The massive presence of discursive domination in Sanskrit culture may be something of a banal Indological fact. Perhaps it is this very banality that renders Western Indology indifferent to it.⁴⁹ Outsiders are not inured, however. A recent work charting the development of social power in history is impressed by this discourse of Sanskrit culture and persuasively argues that it "represents the pinnacle of the power of ideology to date" (Mann 1986:302,348ff.). Merely to recognize the existence of this ideology, however, is not the same thing as analyzing it, and that is precisely what we lack: an analysis of its mechanisms, its categories, the ways in which it is constructed and works.

One place to start this analysis is with the observation that discursive elements from the domain of ritual—and this means the paradigmatic ritual, that of the Veda—appear in a domain outside of ritual. The rules that are posited as governing every dimension of practice, the textual authority they come to require and to claim, the way these texts are rendered immune to the challenge of their historicity by denying their origination in time—all of these features characteristic of the social lifeworld of Sanskrit culture have their prototypes in the world of Vedic ritualism as articulated

by Mīmāṃsā. We can read this derivation from the prototypes in the optative force of practical rules, in the widening field of application of the notion of *dharma*, in the semantic value of the term *smṛti* itself, and in the dehistoricization of all śāstric discourse.

It is hard to argue conclusively, or exclusively, that such ideas were imported from a realm outside the world of everyday practices. Ideological representations are not imposed: they are developed out of representations already embedded in practical consciousness prior to articulation in discourse. The rules that necessarily—if all the while flexibly—govern practices, making them recognizable, repeatable, interpretable; the force of "tradition" and the authority it naturally appears to arrogate to itself by the sheer inaccessibility of its origins; the apparent co-presence of generations in "cool" societies; along with a perhaps fundamentally human anxiety concerning history's contingency and the responsibility it confers upon human action—such everyday practices and representations exist primordially in the realm of the self-evidential (what Bourdieu calls *doxa*), remaining unspoken and unformulated until such time as critique destroys the social world's "character as a natural phenomenon" (Bourdieu 1977:159-170). In the face of such critique orthodoxy is generated, and elements of practical consciousness become thematized in *discourse*, and, insofar as they sustain asymmetrical relations of power, function as ideology.⁵⁰

In early India this critique was launched by Buddhism, and in the face of the new conventionalism of Buddhism orthodoxy responded with what may best be viewed as a desire to renaturalize the world.⁵¹ Through the mediation of Mīmāṃsā the Vedic model of thought and action was generalized, the rules of social life became textualized and represented as inescapable and immutable, cultural memory and the record of human achievement were transformed into the revelation of the eternal, and historical representation was denied to have any status as knowledge so that thinking about things historically, as constellations of contingencies—along with the corrosive and potentially emancipatory power of such thinking—became impossible. If, as seems to be the case, ritual, although the most contrived of social behavior, serves through its form and purpose precisely to discourage

recognition of its man-made quality (Moore and Myerhoff 1977:1), then the expansion of the ritual model would be an important element in this process of renaturalization.

This process of renaturalization is I believe one crucial way in which the relations of domination that characterize the elite culture of premodern India are sustained and reproduced. Obviously underlying this discussion is the recognition that via this whole process of conceptualization, *Mīmāṃsā* was to become the metalegal framework for an explicit program of power—Dharma-Śāstra—that inculcates and legitimates such concrete modes of domination as caste hierarchy, untouchability, and female heteronomy. However, these may be surface ripples from deeper currents. It may be in a more intimate domain of general social and cultural practice that the real force and durability of Sanskrit discourse is located, as a discourse of false necessity that vastly expands the realm of compulsion in general and transforms the arbitrary into the legitimate, the cultural into the natural, and the contingent into the immutable.

NOTES

¹ See Bourdieu 1977:177-183 on "symbolic capital." "Secular ritual" is discussed in Moore and Myerhoff 1977. The classic statements on the co-extensiveness of society and religion in "primitive" culture are Durkheim, *The Division of Labor* (1893) and *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915).

² Bourdieu's thinking is too complex to reduce to any such formula, and I may be wrong here, but see 1977:163,178. For Hocart the caste system is originally a "sacrificial organization" in which castes are "merely families to whom various offices in the ritual are assigned by heredity" (1950:17,20, et al.). I cite this book as an extreme example of the position (a statement such as "It is indeed possible that all jewelry began as ritual accessories" is characteristic). Hocart's relativization of caste domination and violence is pernicious (for example, "This [that is, slavery] we have come to look upon as utterly degrading, though it is not necessarily so at all. . . ." [1950:42]).

³ For the segmentary state see most recently Southall 1988:52-82, esp. 76, and for the Indian application in particular see Stein 1980:264ff. Dumont's view of the dichotomy is most accessibly offered in 1962:48-77, esp. 66.

⁴ *Śābarabhāṣya*, p. 24.5, and thus throughout the history of Mīmāṃsā. Cf. *Mīmāṃsānyāyaprakāśa*, p. 4 (*yathā yāgādi*).

⁵ Although not by rival systems. See, for example, Franco 1987: 27ff.

⁶ The *pramāṇas* (sources of valid knowledge) accepted by Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā are perception, inference, verbal communication (*śabda*), analogy, implication, and nonapprehension. All are dependent on perception, which itself can only operate, by definition, on nontranscendent objects.

⁷ See pp. 329-330.

⁸ See Pollock 1989a, from which some of this material is drawn.

⁹ *Śābarabhāṣya* on *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.2, pp. 78-79; Kumārila, *Tantravārtika*, p. 78.14-15.

¹⁰ Mīmāṃsā thus makes explicit an understanding of the special character of ritual rules that other traditions have sensed but never analyzed. Compare Maimonides: "When the sages said that the continent man is more virtuous [than the virtuous man] and his reward is greater, they had in mind the traditional laws [such as dietary restrictions, rather than the "rational" laws such as the prohibition against murder]. This is correct because if it were not for the Law, they [the foods prohibited by the dietary laws] would not be bad at all" (1975:80). See also more generally Eric Hobsbawm, "Objects or practices are liberated for full symbolic and ritual use when no longer fettered by practical use" (1983:4).

¹¹ *adhipuruṣajñānam*. Śābara is not clear in his gloss, while Kumārila and Prabhākara are silent. I follow Partha, *Tantrarātna*, vol. 3, p. 471: *puruṣārthatayā*.

¹² *Śābarabhāṣya* on *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 6.2.13, p. 233.20-26.

¹³ See pp. 15ff.

¹⁴ *Tantravārtika* on *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.2, pp. 78.11-15; 81.14-15. The quotation from *Rāṇaka* is from *Nyāyasūdhā*, p.126.20-21,25 (*vaidikesv api ca sarvatra drṣṭārthatvas-yotprekṣitum śakyatvān na tenāvaidikatvasiddhiḥ. . .*). See also Goody 1977:28: "Actors in 'rituals of affliction' do indeed

expect to have their afflictions relieved. And again, I find the planting of grain as 'symbolic,' often as 'formal,' certainly as 'repetitive' as any other kind of [ritual] action."

¹⁵ Despite what Śabara says, the *ālaṃkārika* argues that beauty cannot be produced without *śāstra*, the origin of which is ultimately transcendent. See Pollock 1985:499-515; 1989a.

¹⁶ See Pollock (1989a) for a discussion of the distinction between "regulative" and "constitutive" rules, rules of style and rules of substance, the former regulating what might be done otherwise. See also note 22 below. Dharma-Śāstra rules seem largely regulative. There is a constitutive dimension to them as well, however, which we should not ignore. Jayanta (*Nyāyamañjarī*, p. 6) is perfectly right to say that Indians do not need a *śāstra* to tell them to bathe when they are dirty or to eat when they are hungry (something covered by the Mīmāṃsā principle discussed above, *aprāpte śāstram arthavat*). However, exactly *when* they are dirty and *what* and *how* they may eat are precisely the kind of points Dharma-Śāstra spends much of its time discussing. *Śāstra*, in effect, *constitutes* dirtiness as a category, as in *sacelasnānam*, the injunction to bathe fully clothed when touched by an Untouchable (see *Tantravārtika* on *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.3, pp. 97-98).

¹⁷ *Ślokaavārtika*, *Codanāsūtra*, vss. 190ff.; *Nyāyamañjarī*, pp. 398ff. An interesting contentiousness indicative of this struggle swirls around the appropriation of the term *sanātana dharma*. See, for example, Mahābhārata 3.13.6 (critical edition), "Someone who cheats you should be slain, *eṣa dharmah sanātanaḥ*"; Rāmāyaṇa 2.21.49 (vulgate), "One must obey one's father, *eṣa dharmah sanātanaḥ*"; Dhammapada 1.5, "Hatred cannot be fought with hatred, only with nonhatred, *eṣa dhammo sanātano*."

¹⁸ *Māhabhāṣya*, vol. 1, p. 65. The form and content of the work make clear that *dharmābhyudaya* derives from grammatical purity in nonritual action no less than in sacred action (see also *Vākyapadīya* 1.139). For the Mīmāṃsā discussion, see Kumārila's tour de force in the *Vyākaraṇādhikaraṇa* 1.3.24-29, pp. 182-229. (Mīmāṃsā, incidentally, denies the communicability of ungrammatical words.)

¹⁹ See, for example, *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 6.1.25ff., the *apaśūdrādhikaraṇa*, "On Excluding the *Sūdra* [from participation in the Vedic sacrifice]."

²⁰ The same may be said of the "Sanskrit" language itself, which, as Thieme recently reminds us, is not only "put together" from morphologically analyzable elements, but is "made fit," "prepared," for ritual purity (1982:14). Heesterman offers some suggestive remarks on the *jajmān* in 1981:60ff. I nowhere find any reflection on the crucial fact of the Mīmāṃsā provenance of the term *puruṣārtha*, even in the most recent treatment of the term (Malamoud 1982). (I thank Dr. Prakash Joshi of Pune for making available to me as yet unpublished materials from the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Sanskrit* relating to the term *puruṣārtha*). Van Buitenen was the first to call attention to the place of *adhikāra* in the Bhagavad-Gītā (1981, pp. 19ff.). I am currently preparing papers on the history of *puruṣārtha* and *adhikāra*.

²¹ Heesterman's view that "[The Veda] is, and expressly wants to be, outside society" may hold true of the Veda in itself and originally, but not in any other sense. Otherwise the entire Dharma-Śāstric system of self-validation would be incomprehensible. If anything, Heesterman's remarks on the originally "ultramundane *śrauta* ritual" tend to confirm my claim both for the dichotomy of the social and the ritual in early India and for its gradual elimination.

²² Even for Mīmāṃsā *dharma* comprises not only what might be viewed as strictly sacrificial or ritual acts, such as childhood tonsure as a *rite de passage*, but also a wide range of forms of everyday behavior, including acts of deference or of hospitality, table manners, personal hygiene, and the like (*Sābarabhāṣya* on *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.2, p. 70.3ff.; *Tantravārtika* p. 145.8ff.). Typical for the medieval tradition is Śaṅkara (with Ānandagiri *ad Brahmasūtra* 2.1.1, p. 346): *Manu* and the other *smṛtis* treat *dharma* both as *kratvartha* and as *puruṣārtha*: that is, as including, on the one hand, the *agnihotra* and other rites, as well as initiation, ritual obligations, Vedic study and its termination, and marriage rites of the different *varṇas*, and, on the other, the whole range of *varṇa* and *āśrama dharma*.

²³ This is the *saṃgati*, or logical connection, between I.1-2 and I.3 as identified by Parthaśārathi, *Śāstradīpikā ad I.3.1*.

²⁴ This material is drawn from my forthcoming essay on *śruti* and *smṛti* (Pollock [1990a]), where a fuller exposition can be found.

²⁵ Emphases added.

²⁶ *Śābarabhāṣya* on *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.1, pp. 72-74.

²⁷ *Śābarabhāṣya*, 77.7-8, mispunctuated in the printed edition.

²⁸ *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.15, *Brahmasūtra* 1.3.28, and *Baudhāyanadharmasūtra* 1.6 are three salient instances.

²⁹ Panditaraja K. Balasubrahmanya Shastri, personal communication. Cf. *Vācaspatyam*, s.v. *śruti* and *smṛti*, which is what I translate in the text (p. 5155, *vedasya sarvaih śrūyamānatvāt śrutitvam* [*karmādaḥ kṛtin*]; p. 5373, *smṛyate vedadharmo 'nena* [*karaṇe kṛtin*]).

³⁰ *Tantravārtika* on *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.3.3, p. 94.2.

³¹ See *Tantravārtika*, esp. p. 112.7ff., on the absence of contradiction. The whole question of "canon formation" deserves separate study. The narrowness of early *Mīmāṃsā* and *Dharma-Śāstra* (cf. *Āpastambadharmasūtra* 2.4.10ff.) is markedly altered later. Even in Kumārila the *vidyāsthānas* ("fields of knowledge") become so capacious as to embrace virtually every significant intellectual practice including, for example, *Gandharva-Veda*, *Āyur-Veda*, and *Artha-Śāstra*. See *Tantravārtika*, p. 122).

³² *Nyāyamañjarī*, p. 378.

³³ Much of the following material is drawn from my essay, "Mīmāṃsā and the Problem of History" (Pollock 1989c).

³⁴ Lefebvre (1971:46) is typical when he remarks in his influential survey, *La Naissance de l'Historiographie moderne*,

Une seule civilisation en est restée, et encore, à ses premiers pas, sur la route longue de l'histoire, celle de l'Inde. . . . D'ailleurs, il faudrait, pour observer l'histoire des hommes, que l'esprit indien ait été moins obsédé par de larges visions cycliques de destin du monde (qui rejettent les humains vers une attitude de patience ou de résignation), ou par les impératifs esthétiques qui relèguent l'histoire dans le monde merveilleux des légendes. 'Rein d'étonnant,' disait déjà Max Weber, 'que l'Inde

n'ait pas développé une historiographie digne de mention.' . . . Mais laissons l'Inde, ici comme si souvent, cas difficile.

³⁵ From the large bibliography of recent work I would single out White 1978 and Ricoeur 1984-1988.

³⁶ A good example is provided in the development of the Śiva Gaṅgādhara motif, which inscribes the Pallava defeat of the Gaṅgas in the eighth to ninth centuries. This development is analyzed expertly by von Stietencron 1977.

³⁷ I would also point to passages such as *Nyāyakuśumāñjali* 2.3, pp. 317ff., which attempts to fit the disappearance of Vedic śākhās into an "historical" scheme.

³⁸ I intend to treat at length elsewhere the dispute between the Mīmāṃsakas and the Buddhists on the natural vs. conventional (*autpattika/samketa*) status of language, along with its larger ideological dimensions, which had implications for Indian intellectual history as significant as those of the *nomos/physics* controversy in fifth-century Greece.

³⁹ *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1.1.29, *uktam tu śabdapūrvatvam*, which I understand in agreement with *Rāṇaka* (p. 269) and most of the rest of the tradition, but there are problems. For most of the commentators, this *sūtra* refers to the beginninglessness of Vedic recitation. See, for example, *Kutūhalavṛtti*, pp. 16-17 (which expands on *Ślokaṇvārtika*, *Vākyādhikaraṇa* 366 and largely reproduces *Śāstradīpikā*, p. 162): "The ritual recitation of the Veda, which is here the issue under dispute, has always depended on a previous recitation, 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 and hence never any author of the Veda." However, contrary to what the commentators claim, nothing of the sort has already been "said"; only the beginninglessness of language has been established, not the beginninglessness of the Veda. If this were not the case, why would Kumārila have to establish this independently in the *Vākyādhikaraṇa*?

⁴⁰ However unconvincing we may find this argument, Kumārila clearly finds it otherwise, for he reverts to it elsewhere. Cf., for example, *Tantravārtika*, p. 166.25-26.

⁴¹ The *sūtra* arguing for etymological analysis is 1.1.31, *param tu śrutisām ānyamātram; pūrvapakṣa* ad 1.1.28. It consequently becomes a principle of Mīmāṃsā interpretation, that *mantras* (the generally noninjunctive Ṛg, Yajur, and Sāma-Veda, and *arthavādas* (descriptive passages of the Brāhmaṇas) can in no way be connected with noneternal entities (what Kumārila refers to as the *mantrārthavādānityasaṃyogaparihāranyāya* (*Tantravārtika*, p. 188.14ff.). Kumārila's quote is from *Ślokaivārtika*, *Vedanitādhikaraṇa* 14ab. See also *Sambandhākṣepaparihāra* 61cd-62 regarding the fact that an eternal Veda cannot refer to creation and thus cannot be invoked to prove the existence of God; cosmogonic references can only be *arthavādas*.

⁴² Such a bifurcation in interpretation between the historical and the allegorical is familiar from the early Christian tradition. See Press 1977: esp. 286.

⁴³ See, for example, *Nirukta* 10.3.26, p. 450.

⁴⁴ Sieg characterizes *aitihāsika* interpretation as "mythologisch-historische" or "historisch-antiquarische" (1902:7,19, 35). Horsch remarks that *itihāsa* "[darf] ohne Bedenken als Vorläuferin des Heldenepos betrachtet werden und wird deshalb schon in vedischer Zeit Sagenmotive und heroische Taten von Menschen in ihre Darstellung verflochten haben" (1966:13).

⁴⁵ Durga on *Nirukta* 2.3.10. Cited in Sieg 1902:28.

⁴⁶ I intend to deal elsewhere with the Mīmāṃsā treatment of such quasi-historical references, called [*parakṛtipurākalparūpa*]*arthavāda*. For the Mīmāṃsakas as guardians of the Veda par excellence, cf. the popular *subhāṣita* ending "Who on earth but the Mīmāṃsakas respectfully guard the Veda?" (*bhinna mīmāṃsakebhyo vidadhati bhuvī ke sādaram vedarakṣām* (*Subhāṣitaratnabhandāgara*, p. 43).

⁴⁷ For details see Pollock 1985; 1989b. Related, if more "philosophical," is the view of both Bhartṛhari and Kumārila that *all* systems of thought must derive ultimately from the Veda. See *Vākyapadīya* 1.148 and *Tantravārtika*, p. 81. (This includes even Buddhism, which Kumārila frequently describes as the "ungrateful child" of the Veda. See, for example, *Tantravārtika*, p. 113.21ff.).

⁴⁸ *Sāstrasiddhāntaleśasaṃgraha*, p. 216.

⁴⁹ This indifference seems to me almost total. To cite one instance, an ambitious symposium on the theme of "duty" in South Asia (O'Flaherty and Derrett 1978) nowhere recognizes the intellectual violence of so much Sanskrit discourse. As an example of the banal recognition of domination, see Rudolph and Rudolph 1967:5.

⁵⁰ My thinking on the nature of ideology has been influenced by Thompson 1984, which I feel is competent to answer many of the questions raised about ideology by Foucault, Lefort, Gouldner, and others (for example, that it entails some concept of "truth," that it is a market-economy phenomenon, and the like).

⁵¹ As one famous contemporary Mīmāṃsaka told me, Mīmāṃsā has only one real enemy: Buddhism. The major intellectual attacks mounted against Buddhism in the medieval period (for example, *Tantravārtika*, pp. 112.17-115.10, 121.22-124.9; *Nyāyamañjarī*, pp. 379ff.) deligitimate its worldview precisely by invoking the arguments I am discussing here.

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