

SKEPTICISM : ANCIENT 'EAST' AND MODERN 'WEST'

A careful examination of the Cārvāka school of ancient Indian materialism reveals a number of interesting parallels to a relatively modern school of western thought, the type of skepticism first formulated by David Hume, to mention only one example. The purpose of this paper is to examine and contrast the respective epistemologies which these two schools developed and, in particular, the similarities and differences in their skeptical outlooks.

For the sake of clarity, the paper is divided into three parts. In the first part, I will attempt to define skepticism and also distinguish between what I will call extreme skepticism and limited skepticism. In the second part, I will describe and analyze skepticism in Indian philosophy with special reference to the Cārvāka school. In the third part, I will note similarities and differences between the two. I will conclude by pointing out the value of skepticism in both traditions by demonstrating its unsettling effect on traditional viewpoints and its effect on those who hold the older positions.

I

What is skepticism? There seems to be no generally accepted definition of skepticism in philosophical circles. On the one hand, the frequent usage of terms like 'skeptic', 'skeptical', 'skepticism', gives the impression that we understand what we mean by these terms, but, on the other hand, the fact that the concept of skepticism is used in so many varied and sometime conflicting ways would seem to indicate that there is no single universally accepted understanding of the meaning of this term. For this reason, perhaps the safest and best way to begin is by offering a definition of skepticism: skepticism is a doubting or challenging-challenging of knowledge claims. In other words, a skeptic is one who questions or call into doubt knowledge claims. In the West, knowledge is generally understood as involving belief. One may be said to have the knowledge that r if he believes that r , r is true, and has proof that r is true.. In other words,

is it a proposition which is either true or false, and the knowledge claim implies that the knower believes a true proposition. Without this claim the question of knowledge will not arise and a skeptic performs no useful function because there is nothing to doubt or dispute about. Some skeptics, most notably David Hume, take this position a step further and make the stronger claim that it is not possible for the human understanding to discover the real nature of things as they exist in themselves, independent of experience.

Sextus Empiricus (*Circa* 200 A. D.), a Greek philosopher, divided philosophers into three groups: those who claim that they have discovered the truth, i. e. the dogmatists; those who claim that the truth cannot be discovered, i. e. the Academicians; and those who do not make either of these claims but go on inquiring, i. e. the skeptics or Pyrrhonists.¹ The Greek term *skeptic* meant an inquirer. Thus skepticism, as philosophical doubt rather than as doubt concerning traditional religious beliefs or traditions originated in ancient Greek thought.

Extreme skepticism, as a philosophical position, called into question all knowledge claims which go beyond one's immediate experience. This calls into question the very basis of skepticism itself; for the skeptic claim that if there is any truth at all, the truth is that there is no truth. If an extreme skeptic intends to negate all knowledge claims, how does he know that his own claim is valid? On the other hand, if he does not know that the evidence for his claim is valid, he has no basis for skepticism.

Partial or limited skepticism calls into question specific knowledge claims made either by metaphysicians or theologians which go beyond their immediate experience. Limited or partial skepticism can, therefore, be considered as an attempt to establish the necessary criteria which a valid knowledge claim must satisfy. Extreme skepticism maintains that no knowledge beyond immediate experience is possible, whereas in its weaker form skepticism expresses the doubt whether any particular knowledge claim can be known with certainty.

With this general introduction about skepticism and two kinds of skepticism, I will turn my attention to skepticism in Indian thought and the role skepticism has played in the Cārvāka school.

II

An examination of the history of Indian philosophical thought reveals that skepticism has not played a very important and prominent part in that history. Though one finds many references to skeptics scattered throughout the Indian literature, and despite the fact that the existence of a school of skepticism known as *lokāyata* or Cārvāka is acknowledged by such scholars as Tucci, Dasgupta and Garbe, it is well known that very few writings by Indian ancient skeptics have actually survived. The lack of positive writings by Cārvāka has even caused some to question whether any *lokāyata* text had ever existed. However, there is no doubt that actual *lokāyata* texts existed in ancient times, although they are now lost. Tucci states that from the fact that no *lokāyata* work came down to us it would be incorrect to assume that no *lokāyata* text ever existed.² Professor S. N. Dasgupta has given conclusive evidence that the *lokāyata sūtra* with its commentary existed in ancient times.³ The principal sources of information on skepticism is the writings of those who either sought to refute it or ridicule it. Thus the *lokāyata* philosophy (doctrine) has been preserved for us only as quoted in *purvapakṣas*, i. e., the objections raised against it by its opponents. One source of information on Cārvāka is the brief summary given by Mādhava in his *Sarva-darśana-saṅgraha*.⁴ In recent years, however, the *Tattvopaplavasīṃha* by Jayarāsi Bhaṭṭa, has been considered by its editors on the basis of internal evidence, to be the only authentic surviving text of this school,⁵ and most Indian scholars now share this opinion. However, this single text does not provide an adequate indication of the full reasoning and argumentation of the doctrines of the Cārvāka school. Nevertheless, a careful reading of these resources leaves no doubt that the Cārvāka school represents the standpoint of skepticism in Indian philosophy. My account of the skepticism of the Cārvāka school is based on these two sources.

Mādhava attributes to the Cārvākas the view that perception is the only source of valid knowledge. They reject the authority of the vedas, the supremacy of the Brahmin Caste and, the law of *karma*, and advocate egoistic hedonism in ethics. In the opening lines of his book Mādhava states :

The efforts of cārvāka are indeed hard to be eradicated, for the majority of living beings hold by the current refrain—

While life is yours, live joyously;
None can escape Death's searching eye :
when once this fame ours they burn,
How shall it e'er again return ?

The mass of men, in accordance with the śāstras of policy and enjoyment, considering wealth and desire the only ends of man, and denying the existence of any object belonging to a future world, are found to follow only the doctrine of Cārvāka. Hence another name for that school is lokāyata—a name well accordant with the thing signified.⁶

Mādhava emphasizes the epistemological basis of the Cārvāka skepticism. What is perceived by means of five senses is valid. Inference cannot be regarded as a source of valid knowledge because inference is possible only when the concomitance between *sādhya* (major) and the *hetu* (middle) is known to be existing in the *pakṣa* (minor). This concomitance must not be only unconditional but also there should be no doubt in the mind that it could be conditional. Inference cannot take place until this concomitance is known. In Mādhava's words :

Now this invariable connection must be a relation destitute of any condition accepted or disputed; and this connection does not possess its power of causing inference by virtue of its existence, as the eye, & c., are the cause of perception, but by virtue of its being *known*. What then is the means of this connection's being known? :

One cannot know it by perception because concomitance is not something with which the senses can come into contact. Moreover, the contact between the senses and the object gives us only knowledge of the *particular* object in contact with our senses, and this contact cannot produce the *universal* connection between the *sādhya* and the *hetu*. This argument clearly states that perception only gives us knowledge of particulars. And as the scope of perception is limited to particulars only, it cannot provide us with the necessary connection required for a valid inference.

Inference as a means of knowing *vyāpti* is also rejected because it is itself dependent upon a *vyāpti*. "Nor can *inference* be the means of the knowledge of the universal proposition, since in the case of this inference we should also require another inference to establish it, and so on, and hence would arise the fallacy of an *ad infinitum* retrogression."⁸

Śabda (testimony) and *upamāna* (comparison) cannot help us in knowing the universal relation between *sādhya* and *hetu* because they are themselves based on inference. Thus Mādhava concludes: "Hence by the impossibility of knowing the universality of a proposition it becomes impossible to establish inference, & c."⁹ That for Cārvākas the move from the proposition 'y cannot be known' to the proposition 'y does not exist' commits the fallacy of '*argumentum ad ignorantiam*' i. e. argument from ignorance. Ignorance of how to prove or disprove a proposition establishes neither the falsehood nor the truth of that proposition, which is to say that on the basis that something is *not known* to exist one cannot claim that it *does not* exist.

It is obvious, however, that if one accepted the view that inference is impossible, it would be very difficult to account for the fact that in everyday life we rely on reason and, based on the results obtained, judge that belief well founded and necessary (the criterion used in practice); in other words, without the type of reasoning which the Cārvāka wants to reject everyday life would be impossible. Each of us intuitively recognize that without inference it is impossible to explain everyday practice. In short, the Cārvāka's position seems to contradict everything we think we know to be true about reality. Moreover, this viewpoint actually places its adherents in a difficult position because any proof that is given to prove the correctness of his position will require inference. How can a Cārvāka prove his assertion that perception is the only means of valid knowledge? At this point, he finds only two alternatives are open to him. Either he accepts the validity of inference as a means of valid knowledge or refuses to recognize even perception as a source of valid knowledge. Both these positions have in fact been taken, the first by Purandara and the second by Jayaraśi Bhaṭṭa.

Purandara, probably a seventh century Cārvāka, admits the validity of inference in regard to the perceptible world but denies

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its applicability beyond the realm of perceptual experience. Dasgupta holds that Purandara

admits the usefulness of inference in determining the nature of all worldly things where perceptual experience is available; but inference cannot be employed for establishing any dogma regarding the transcendental world, or life after death, or the law of karma which cannot be available to ordinary perceptual experience.¹⁰

Perhaps the rationale behind maintaining the distinction between the usefulness of inference in our everyday experience and in ascertaining truths beyond perceptual experience lies in the fact that an inductive generalization is made by observing a large number of cases of agreement in presence and agreement in absence, and since agreement in presence cannot be preserved in the transcendental world even if such a world existed, no inductive generalization relating to that world can be made.

A Cārvāka, like Purandara accepts perception and inference on the empirical level and discards metaphysical inference on the grounds that what is in principle unobservable is unknowable. Other Cārvākas, who accept only perception, leave themselves open to two questions : (1) How is validity of perception as a source of knowledge be ascertained ? and (2) How do we ascertain the invalidity of other means of knowledge, accepted by most of the schools of Indian philosophy?

Perhaps, these questions led the Cārvākas like Jayarāśi Bhaṭṭa to focus on the questions of the validity of perception as a source of knowledge. He maintains that

the system of knowables depends upon the system of means of knowledge; while means of knowledge in order to be valid have to conform to reality. So one has to examine whether there are any valid means of knowledge before one can say anything about reality. Jayarāśi is of the opinion that there are no valid means of knowledge...¹¹

Jayarāśi shows the invalidity of the *pramānas* and the consequent invalidity of all metaphysical principles and categories.

Lokāyatās base their skepticism on the assumptions that material objects exist and that they are perceived. Everything in this world is reducible to the four elements, air, water, fire and

earth. Everything arises out of a combination of these four elements and dissolution consists in their separation. But Jayarāṣi contends that there is no valid ground for accepting the existence of material elements, because if perception is the only valid source of knowledge, how can one be certain that perception reveals the true nature of objects? Perception itself cannot be regarded as the means for ascertaining the validity of perception. Thus, it is not surprising that the view propounded by Jayarāṣi was called *tattvopaplava-vāda*. The title literally means 'the lion that throws overboard all categories'. The title is appropriate as the main thesis of the book demonstrates the impossibility of establishing the truth of any view of reality.

Jayarāṣi's skepticism is not based on the affirmation of any higher metaphysical truths. His skepticism does not permit him to claim a metaphysical basis by means of which he can reject different metaphysical theories. Instead, he employs dialectical argument to disprove his opponent's thesis. Like Sextus Empiricus, Jayarāṣi starts with his opponents concepts, suggests various alternative definitions, shows that some of these definitions are inapplicable, and that others lead to contradictions. His entire work is devoted to the discussion of these problems in epistemology. He challenges the validity of the theories of knowledge put forward by Mīmāṃsā, Buddhism, Nyāya and uses the same method throughout. For example, he does not claim to know that perception is an invalid source of knowledge. Rather, he starts with a specific claim, e. g., the definition of perception as given in the *Nyāyasūtras*: perception is that which "arises from contact between sense-organ and object, is determinate (*avyapadeśyam*), non-erroneous (*avyabhicāri*) and non-erratic (*vyavasāyātīmakam*)."¹²

Jayarāṣi focuses his criticism on the term "*avyabhicāri*" (non-erroneousness) known, which occurs in the Nyāya definition of perception. The non-erroneousness is, of course, not known by perception, because perception always involves perception of an object and the non-erroneousness of perception is not an object. Neither can it be known through inference because such an inference in itself would have to be based on perception, which will make it a case of *petitio*. Thus, as the non-erroneousness of perception cannot be established, either by perception

or by inference, it can-not be regarded as a means of valid knowledge.

Having demonstrated the impossibility of perception, he uses the same method to attempt to show the invalidity of all *pramānas*. Since we cannot establish any valid source of knowledge, we cannot claim that material objects exist. In short, Jayarāṣi's view represents the standpoint of extreme skepticism which holds that neither any epistemological nor any ontological category is possible. This theory rejects the vedic dogma which, on the basis of *śabda* (testimony) and *anumāna* (inference), claims to establish the existence of the soul, life after death, etc. This skepticism also undercuts the dogmatism of both forms of materialism discussed above. Jayarāṣi rejects the two distinguishing features attributed to the *lokāyatikas* in the Indian philosophical literature; (i) sense-perception as the only valid means of knowledge, and (ii) the reality of the four well-known elements. Thus, Jayarāṣi's text contains an outright rejection of materialism and represents a thoroughgoing skepticism.

This raises some very important questions about the basis of skepticism itself. Skeptics such as Jayarāṣi reject their opponents knowledge claims, and suspend all judgments about truth and reality because the evidence supporting the knowledge claim is inadequate. However, if the skeptic is to doubt everything, then, to be consistent he must also doubt the basis of his doubt which makes it impossible for skepticism to establish the validity of its own claims. An extreme skeptic, in other words, must be skeptical about his own position. If he does not doubt his skepticism, his own philosophical system is guilty of being inconsistent, i. e., it demands greater rigor of other system than it does of its own.

Having presented this overview of the skepticism of the Cārvāka school, I will now proceed, in the next section of this paper to briefly state the basic structure of David Hume's epistemology and the nature of his skepticism.

III

In this section, I would like to draw special attention to the epistemological problem of perception *versus* inference, and the bearing it has on the respective metaphysical theories of Hume

and Cārvāka.¹³ There exists a basic similarity between Hume and Cārvāka in that for both thinkers theory of perception forms the basis of their skepticism on many related matters such as substance, assumptions about the nature of causality, status of the causality, status of the external world and belief in the supernatural and other related issues. For the sake of clarity, this section of my paper is further divided into four parts. The first part provides a brief explanation of the importance of the relation between impressions and ideas in Hume's epistemology. The second part discusses the status of the world independent of consciousness in Hume and Cārvāka. The third part discusses the question of how the Cārvāka arrived at the view that the knowledge can be obtained from perception only, and the question of the relationships between perception and inference in Hume and Cārvāka. The fourth part analyzes the striking parallel between Cārvāka's and Hume's treatment of causality.

(i) In the *Treatise*, Hume begins his study of the human understanding with a careful investigation of the contents of our minds. In the opening lines, Hume gives us a classification of what he calls "perceptions of the human mind". He holds that "everything which appears to the mind is nothing but a bundle of perception", and that "to hate, to love, to think, to feel, to see; all this is nothing but to perceive".¹⁴ He then divides the perceptions of the mind into impressions and ideas. An impression for him is the immediate datum of experience: for example, sensations, passions, as they make their first appearance in our minds. An idea, for Hume, is a "faint copy of an impression." These ideas and impressions always correspond to each other. In other words, there can be no idea in our mind, if we do not have a corresponding impression; a blind man cannot have any notion of color and nor a deaf man sound. He makes a further distinction between simple and complex impressions and simple and complex ideas. However, the important distinction between impressions and ideas is that the former appear first in consciousness and that the latter are copies of the former. All knowledge is derived from impressions and the way to ascertain the *truth* of any simple or complex idea is to trace its origin to the impression or impressions from which it is derived.

This relationship between impressions and ideas is very important in Hume's philosophy. His purpose is to show that

we cannot have any idea corresponding to which there is no impression. For example, he asks, from what impression the idea of substance is derived? And, he concludes that we have no idea of substance apart from the idea of a mere collection of particular qualities. He states: "When we entertain, therefore, any suspicion that a philosophical term is employed without any meaning or idea (as is but too frequent), we need but to inquire, from what impression is that supposed idea derived? And if it be impossible to assign any, this will serve to confirm our suspicion."¹⁵ Thus, Hume rejects the notion of substance, whether material or spiritual.

(ii) The Cārvāka philosophers, like Hume, stressed the validity of perception as the main avenue of knowledge. As such, they thought that only the four elements, earth, fire, water, and air constituted the whole of reality for these and only these are the things we perceive. The infinite variety in this world is explained by different combinations and proportions of the four elements. Mind, as well, is but a certain ordering of earth, water, fire and air. This emphasis on perception has its parallel in the importance Hume puts on impressions. Just as the Cārvāka would deny the existence of anything which cannot be perceived, in the same way, Hume would deny the meaningfulness of an idea which cannot be broken down into its constituent impressions. However, it is obvious that there is a great difference in the point of view between the two positions. The Cārvāka is making a sweeping metaphysical claim, while Hume is making an epistemological claim. In this sense, the Cārvāka is more optimistic about man's capacity for knowledge. Although our knowledge is limited by what we can perceive we nevertheless can perceive the only reality, namely, matter, whereas Hume's epistemological point of view claims it is impossible for us to know things in themselves. One never comes into contact with the physical object, but only with the impressions of what we believe to be caused by physical objects. This is not to suggest that Hume outrightly denies the existence of external physical objects. Rather, he is denying that our natural belief that objects exist outside of consciousness is philosophically defensible. Hume, unlike Berkeley, did not begin with the intention of denying the existence of the objective world independent of human consciousness and perception but nevertheless reached the same conclusion. In his words :

Nature has not left this to his choice, and has doubtless esteem'd it an affair of too great importance to be trusted to our uncertain reasoning and speculation. We may well ask, *what causes induces us to believe in the existence of body?* That is a point, which we must take for granted in all our reasoning.¹⁶

In summary, for Hume there is no rational justification for saying that bodies or things have a continued and independent existence external to us.

(iii) Let us now consider the question of how the Cārvākas arrive at the view that knowledge can be obtained only by perception? They argue for perception by a process of elimination. Indian philosophers generally recognize four sources of knowledge—perception, inference, verbal testimony and comparison. The Cārvāka claims to have shown that the last three means have serious defects and, therefore, perception is the only valid source of knowledge. They reject inferential knowledge because for a valid inference to be possible, the truth of the universal connection must be established. From a statement like “if A exists then B exists”, we cannot infer B’s existence on the basis that we know that A exists unless A and B are universally connected. In concrete terms, we cannot say that it is going to rain by perceiving black clouds unless black clouds and rain are invariably related. But how, the Cārvāka asks, is the universal connection known? As perception is confined to the present we cannot perceive universal connection. The senses give us only the particulars. In order for us to infer the one from the presence of the other, we must apply it to the past (experiencing its similarity with the situation), presents as well as to the future and on this make a prediction *the mind* perceives the universal connection because the mind cannot perceive external objects like clouds and rain except through the sense-organs. Nor is it correct to claim that we can establish universal connection by inspecting a large number of cases in which we perceive a connection between things, since there is nothing which necessarily prevents a failure of connection in the future, that is, incongruence with the past experience. In summary, the existence of inference as a source of valid knowledge is equally unfounded, as the essential condition for the possibility of inference cannot be established.

Hume derives the content of his skepticism on the basis of his

analysis of the limitation of sense-perception. He shows that all our ideas, simple or complex, can be reduced to original impressions. The idea of the 'golden mountain', though not derived directly from experience, is formed by combining the idea of a 'mountain' with the idea of 'gold', both of which are objects of experience. The Cārvāka also wants to claim that objects of experience, in whatever combination, can be the only objects of knowledge. However, the Cārvāka do not give an adequate account of the multiplicity of experience, for surely, perception alone does not tell us that everything we experience is composed of either earth, water, fire and air or any combination thereof. Only on the basis of perception one would naturally make a very important distinction between the four basic elements in Cārvāka ontology and the human body. Nothing in the unaided perception can persuade us that there is an underlying identity between the human body and these elements. Hume's point of view, it should be obvious, avoids this difficulty. There are, of course, difficulties of a different sort in Hume's position, but I will not discuss them here as they do not fall within the scope of this paper.

(iv) The Cārvāka's criticism of inference is quite similar to Hume's criticism of causality as a necessary connection. True to his method, Hume accounts for our idea of causal necessity as purely a result of certain experiences. We say that A causes B because A and B are always experienced together as either temporally or spatially connected with one another. Hume, like the Cārvāka, rejects the notion that because two things have always been experienced together that they must *necessarily* be so connected. He says :

If we define a cause to be an *object precedent and contiguous to another, and where all the objects resembling the former are placed in a relation of priority and continuity to those objects, that resemble the latter*, we may easily conceive, that there is no absolute or metaphysical necessity, that every beginning of existence should be attended with such an object.¹⁷

Hume and the Cārvāka, are therefore in complete accord in their skeptical views on necessary connection in causality. The Cārvākas, like Hume, assert that necessary connection cannot be established even by the observation of several instances because by observing several instances we cannot know that there is no smoke in the

absence of fire. However, as for the problem of the origin of this idea of necessary connection, Hume and the Cārvāka give very different answers. Hume argues that this is a false idea by stressing the subjective elements of our ideas. The constant conjunction of two things is the objective element of our experience, while necessary connection is the subjectively contributed element. As with the belief in the external and independent existence of objects, the belief in a causal necessity is a natural belief but one which is found to be without any real empirical justification. The Cārvākas, on the other hand, naturally did not accept this kind of explanation of false idea, as one of their central concerns was the refutation of the idea of a universal moral law which states "as you sow, so shall you reap." According to Cārvāka, the best way to refute this idea was to undermine its basic presupposition, namely that there is a necessary connection between one's status (or condition) in this life and one's *karma* as accumulated from previous lives. To admit that the idea of causal necessity has at least a subjective base would obviously not have served the Cārvāka's claim. Such an admission would have conceded entirely too much to the opposition. They wanted to prove the falsity of Vedic religion not simply its unjustifiability. But then the problem remains : how to account for the origin of false ideas? Hume posits a kind of natural disposition in human nature to account for them. However, he does not call them false ideas but merely empirically unprovable ones. The Cārvākas, on the other hand, and this is perhaps the most salient difference between Hume and Cārvāka, is quick to assign a more insidious cause to false ideas. Any opinion which is not in conformity with what we directly experience is either due to a deliberate and selfishly motivated distortion of experience or else the result of some kind of gross mental deficiency. But in no way is it natural to believe in things which are not met within sense-perception, if 'natural' is taken to mean psychologically natural in Hume's sense.

The Cārvāka emphasis on the validity of sense-perception is primarily a way of combating the kind of inferential knowledge needed to support spiritualism. These ancient Indian skeptics do not seem to have been troubled by the problem which preoccupies Descartes in his *First Meditation*. Although the Cārvāka is aware of the limitations of knowledge derived from the senses, they do not give a thoroughgoing critique of knowledge as such.

They simply assume that what the senses immediately represent to us possesses external physical reality. The materialism of the Cārvāka school, then, has a touch of what is sometimes called naive realism. In this connection, the term '*lokāyata*', the Indian equivalent for materialism, is especially interesting. One of its meanings is "prevalent in the world or the opinions of the common people." It would seem then, that naive realism or the intuitive belief in the existence of objective reality is not solely a western phenomenon. However, Indian materialism is much more than common sense speaking the language of philosophy. In the first place there is no hint of dualism in it. Not only is the physical world real, but anything which is not physical is unreal. In the second place, although the Cārvākas do not go so far as to turn skepticism on the presupposition of materialism itself it is unique in disposing, solely by the use of logical arguments, the major alternatives to materialism. But, again, a notion which the Cārvākas did not entertain and one which Hume did, is the possibility of complete ontological skepticism, at least in its theoretical aspect. However, in terms of its practical application the Cārvāka skepticism is unequalled in its consistency. Hume had many reservations about the nature of religious beliefs, but nevertheless, he seems to have had some sympathy for religion. In contrast, the Cārvāka held that religion is a moral and philosophical pestilence because or ostensibly because it is faulty in its logic. So, considering its time and place the Cārvāka skepticism is amazingly bold in the extent to which it criticizes Vedism and without any doubt much bolder than the skepticism of Hume.

In conclusion, we can see that Hume's skepticism is making a much stronger claim about the impossibility of valid inference than Cārvāka. Although Cārvāka accepted perception as the primary source of knowledge, they did not want to claim the impossibility of knowing the nature of things. They rejected not only verbal testimony, comparison, as a source of valid knowledge but rejected inference as well. However, their skepticism contains an important inconsistency : on the one hand, they maintain perception to be the only source of valid knowledge, but, on the other, also assert that everything is composed of earth, water, fire and air, which cannot be known from perception. That is why some materialists like Purandara allowed inference, but only from what is perceivable to what is also in principle perceivable. In contrast, Hume denies

the possibility of knowing the thing in itself independent of experience, which is the result of his extreme idealistically oriented empiricism. He states :

Now since nothing is ever present to the mind but perceptions, and since all our ideas are derived from something antecedently present to the mind, it follows, that 'tis impossible for us so much as to conceive or form an idea of anything specifically different from ideas and impressions¹⁸

Thus, the mind does not have anything present to it except perceptions and therefore cannot experience any universal connection between objects. The assumption of such a connection, for Hume, does not have any rational foundation. He admits limited skepticism as both "durable" and "useful". By questioning the soundness of popular notions, the skeptic sets new problems, directly supplies different fresh philosophical problems and saves philosophers from dogmatism to a large extent. On the Indian scene, for example, the influence of materialism was considerable at one time and both the *āstika* and *nāstika* schools took great pains to refute the Cārvāka materialism and skepticism before proceeding to establish their own view. In Western philosophy Kant states, "I openly confess my recollection of David Hume was the very thing which many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave my investigation in the field of speculative philosophy a quite new direction."¹⁹ However, Hume rejected excessive skepticism of the Jayarāṣi type as untenable in practice. He writes :

For here is the chief and most confounding objection to *excessive* skepticism, that no durable good can ever result from it while it remains in its full force and vigor. We only ask such a skeptic, *What his meaning is? And what he proposes by all these curious researches?* He is immediately at a loss and knows not what to answer.²⁰

I would contend that although Hume correctly noted the danger of extreme skepticism of the Jayarāṣi type and made a distinction between his own skeptical outlook and extreme skepticism, his own skepticism presents as great a threat to philosophy. Though Hume believes from the standpoint of common sense that an independent world exists outside of our minds his epistemological skepticism rules out the possibility of our mind "really" knowing objects external to us, which forces him to concede that this system

leaves open the possibility of solipsism, the impossibility of disproving religion and, most importantly, the impossibility of obtaining objective knowledge.

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NOTES

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2. G. Tucci, "A Sketch of Indian Materialism", *proceedings of Indian Philosophical Congress*, Vol. I, 1925, p. 36.
3. S. N. Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 3 (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass, 1976), p. 516.
4. *Sarva Darśana Saṅgraha*, translated by E. B. Cowell and A. E. Gough (London : Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd.), Chapt. I.
5. Jayarāśi Bhaṭṭa, *tattvopaplavasiṃha*, edited by Pandit Sukhlalji Sanghvi and Rasikal C. Parikh, Gaekwad's Oriental Series, No. LXXXVII
6. Mādhava, p. 2.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
10. Dasgupta, p. 536.
11. Jayarāśi Bhaṭṭa, p. xii.
12. K. N. Jayatilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of knowledge* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1963), p. 87.
13. In this section of the paper the term "Cārvāka" will be used synonymously with materialism.
14. David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, edited with an analytical index by L. A. Shelby-Bigge (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1888), p. 67.
15. David Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, edited with an introduction by Charles W. Hendel (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merril, Company, Inc., 1975), p. 30.
16. *Treatise*, p. 187.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
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19. Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, with an introduction by Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis : The Bobb-Merrill Company, Inc., 1976), p. 8.
20. *Inquiry*, p. 168.