CHAPTER 38

ANUKUL CHANDRA MUKERJI

The Modern Subject

NALINI BHUSHAN AND JAY L. GARFIELD

Mukerji's Context: The Milieu of Pre-Independence Indian Philosophical Thought

It is impossible to understand Anukul Chandra Mukerji's (1888–1968) philosophical program and achievements without some appreciation of the complex and fecund philosophical milieu in which he operated. The universities of pre-independence India boasted a large number of prominent academic philosophers. But this rich academic life was set in a larger context defined in part by the manifestos of important public intellectuals who contributed to setting the philosophical agenda that framed and problematized much of Indian philosophical discourse.

The public figures who were most directly influential on academic philosophy were Aurobindo Ghosh, Swami Vivekananda, Mohandas Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, and Dayanand Saraswati. Ghosh and Vivekananda in particular were influential in the revival of Vedānta thought, and in particular the idealist Advaita Vedānta school. They promulgated a distinctly modern version of this doctrine, in which idealism and realism are not seen as antitheses, but rather enjoy a creative tension. This tension animated new religious movements, gave a spiritual dimension to the political struggle for national identity and independence, and at the same time placed Vedānta and the question of how to read idealism in a modern context at centre stage of academic philosophical thought.

Tagore was not specifically involved in the Vedānta revival, but was also influential in identifying the classical philosophical tradition as a central component of contemporary Indian culture. He was also the first president of the Indian Philosophical Congress. His presidential address, "Pathway to Mukti,"[1] set a good deal of the agenda for academic

Indian philosophy in the next quarter century, insisting on the synthesis of philosophical analysis with aesthetic sensibility in the context of Indian religio-philosophical traditions. While Mukerji's own philosophical work does not directly reference these figures, his preoccupation with themes from Vedānta and his use of Indian philosophical categories and formulations of problems as a way to approach the history of Western philosophy is energized by the intellectual currents these public figures set in motion.

It is also important to note that Mukerji—as were all of the principal academic philosophers in India at this time—was writing in *English.* English was, of course, a vexed tongue: it was both the international language of philosophy and so the vehicle for interaction in the world philosophical scene, but also the language of a colonizing power, and so politically suspect. Moreover, given the tradition of writing philosophy in India in Sanskrit (or in *certain* vernacular languages in some communities[2]), to write philosophy in English was both to ally oneself with non-Indian communities and to distance oneself from the Sanskritic (and allied) discourse that had dominated Indian philosophical thought for centuries. Indeed, one oft-repeated libel of these philosophers is that they did not read Sanskrit. This turns out to be universally false, and in particular, Mukerji was very comfortable in that language and literature.[3]

This linguistic predicament was also beneficial: it allowed this community of philosophers, including Mukerji, to draw freely on ideas and texts from the European as well as the Indian tradition, and offered the opportunity to bring Indian ideas into European debates, as well as to bring European ideas into old Indian conversations. One of the most striking aspects of Mukerji's own work is this explicit and free movement between traditions in the service of philosophical ideas.

As we have noted, A. C. Mukerji's professional career, and indeed his publications, were centered in Allahabad. Allahabad University was an eminent seat of learning in colonial India and was referred to as "the Oxford of the East." Many are under the misapprehension that Indian academic philosophy during this period was all happening in Bengal, and indeed the misnomer "Bengal Renaissance" is often used to refer to the Indian renaissance. In fact, Indian philosophical activity was widely distributed across the subcontinent, with important centers in Mysore, Madras, Bombay, Allahabad, Aligarh, Varanasi as well as Calcutta. These regional centers were relatively isolated from each other, and scholars came together regularly only at the annual conferences of the Indian Philosophical Congress and at seminars at the Indian Institute of Philosophy at Amalner. Allahabad was one of these centers, dominated for decades by the trio of Indian greats R. D. Ranade, A. C. Mukerji, and A. N. Kaul, known as the "Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle of Allahabad."[4]

Mukerji's pan-Indian colleagues included his senior colleague R. D. Ranade, in his own department, who was an expert on classical Greek as well as Upaniṣadic philosophy; K. C. Bhattacharyya of Calcutta who shared his interest in German idealism and Vedānta; and M. Hiriyanna, the great scholar of the history of Indian philosophy, based in Mysore. An intellectual mentor for Mukerji as well as his colleague in the domain of British neo-Hegelianism—and indeed one of the world's greatest scholars of this tradition—was Hiralal Haldar of Calcutta. Mukerji's reflections on cross-cultural

philosophy and the role and nature of comparison bear the influence of B. N. Seal, first of Mysore and then the first King George IV Professor at Calcutta as well as the impressive polymath B. K. Sarkar, also of Calcutta.[5]

Mukerji and the philosophers just mentioned were participants in what in retrospect can be seen as a movement to correct a then widespread perception of Indian philosophy—reflected and reinforced in the work of S. Radhakrishnan[6]—as predominantly mystical and soteriological. This vision sharply distinguished the Indian tradition from the supposedly more rational, non-religious Western philosophical tradition. Philosophers such as Bhattacharyya, S. S. S. Shastri, V. S. Iyer and Mukerji himself undermined this misperception.[7] Their work concentrated on the rational argument that pervades the Indian tradition, on epistemology, the philosophy of language, the philosophy of mind, and rigorous metaphysics. They demonstrated the relevance of Indian philosophical concerns and ideas to Western problematics and prosecuted their philosophical program in joint conversation with Western and Indian interlocutors.

A. C. Mukerji's Philosophical Program

Mukerji trained and then apprenticed under two superb historians of philosophy, each of whom worked in both Western and Indian philosophy—his teacher Bhagavan Das and his senior colleague R. D. Ranade. His career reflects a preoccupation with the history of philosophy, and his systematic work is always situated both in the Western and Indian philosophical traditions. In the West his work focuses on the philosophy of Kant and Hegel, each of whom he read in German (as we discovered when perusing his personal library). But his attention to Kant is very much informed by a rich reading of Hume in particular, as well as by the commentarial literature by figures such as the British Kant scholar Pringle-Pattison. His reading of Hegel is very much informed by his immersion in the British neo-Hegelian tradition, to which he would have been introduced by Haldar.[8] He had a particular interest in the work of Bradley, Caird, Green, and Bosanquet. Green's joining of Hegelian idealism to scientific realism was a powerful influence on Mukerji.

Mukerji approached Indian idealism through the Advaita Vedānta school. He focused there on the work of Śaṅkara and Yajñavalkya as well as Rāmānuja, Vācaspati, and Prabhākara. He also attended to Buddhist idealism, particularly that of Dignāga, Vasubandhu, and Uddyotakara, and to its Buddhist Mādhyamika interlocutors, such as Nāgārjuna and his commentator Candrakīrti and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika figures such as Kaṇāda and Praśastapāda. His scholarship in the Indian tradition—both the orthodox and the Buddhist schools—is impeccable, and his readings are both insightful and critical.

Despite his impressive scholarship in the history of Western and Indian philosophy, Mukerji is not primarily a historian of philosophy. He draws on the history of philosophy as a *resource* for his systematic thinking about then current philosophical problems,

many of which continue to attract philosophical attention. (Indeed, contemporary philosophers would do well to return to Mukerji's work as a resource, as much of it is strikingly prescient and relevant to today's literature, particularly in consciousness studies and in the metaphysics of the self.)

Mukerji was a specialist in the philosophy of mind and psychology. He was a committed naturalist, in that he saw the deliverances of empirical psychology as foundational to an understanding of the mind. He paid close attention especially to the psychologists William James, John B. Watson, and James Ward. Nonetheless, Mukerji was convinced that psychologism was in the end insufficient as an understanding of subjectivity and required supplementation by a transcendental philosophy of the pure subject, for which he turned principally to Hegel, Caird, and Śaṅkara as inspirations for his own synthetic view.

Nor was Mukerji a comparativist. Indeed, he was philosophically concerned with the project of comparativism, a preoccupation initiated in India by B. N. Seal. He explicitly rejected comparativism as a method, in contrast both with Radhakrishnan and with his younger contemporary P. T. Raju, each of whom followed Seal in taking this to be the best avenue for advancing Indian philosophy in a global context. Mukerji instead insisted simply on *doing* philosophy, and doing it using all available resources, no matter their origin. He believed that the best way to advance Indian philosophy was to use it in philosophical practice, and never distinguished between Indian and Western sources in a systematic fashion. In short, he was more a cross-cultural than a comparative philosopher.

Finally, we should note that Mukerji is a perennialist in spirit: he is confident that a common cluster of philosophical problems turns up in each tradition, and he is confident that first principles of philosophy can be established independent of any particular tradition. These commitments guide the way he freely draws on philosophers from quite different periods and cultures in addressing problems.

Mukerji wrote two substantial monographs: *Self, Thought and Reality* (1933) and *The Nature of Self* (1938). Each of these develops themes first articulated in a series of journal articles published in *Allahabad University Studies.* These two books can profitably be read as a single two-volume study exploring and defending a naturalistic, Vedānta-inflected transcendental idealism as an account of the nature of subjectivity and of the relation of mind to the world. In each book, Mukerji is concerned to emphasize the rational intelligibility of the world and the foundation role that consciousness and self-knowledge play in the edifice of knowledge more generally. The present essay focuses on the philosophy articulated in this two-volume study, as these volumes present the clearest statement of Mukerji's reconstruction of the history of philosophy, his philosophy of mind, and his account of the interface between epistemology and metaphysics.

The first volume is more explicitly historical in character—a critical history of early modern Western philosophy focusing largely on Hume's realism, Kant's response to Hume, and a neo-Hegelian extension of the Kantian program, concluding with a discussion of Śaṅkara's idealism as an alternative to Kant's. Throughout, Mukerji is in constant dialogue with Edward Caird, James Ward, and especially T. H. Green. The second

volume picks up where the first left off, with a discussion of Śaṅkara and Kant, but is much less historical in structure. In this volume, while remaining firmly in conversation with the history of philosophy—this time both Indian and Western—Mukerji focuses directly on developing an understanding of the nature of the self and of the nature of self-knowledge. This is hence a much more philosophically systematic work, addressing epistemological and metaphysical issues on their own terms. While Mukerji draws extensively on historical sources, in each volume his primary interlocutors are his contemporaries.

Both books are animated by a single puzzle that preoccupies Mukerji: given that it is (1) *manifest* that we do know ourselves; (2) *necessary* that we do so in order for any other knowledge to count as knowledge; but (3) clear that we don't know ourselves as *objects*, in what sense and how does self-knowledge arise and count as knowledge? Mukerji sees the conundrum posed by this apparently inconsistent triad as the central problem of modern epistemology, and as central both to the Western and the Indian problematic, and only soluble by bringing the two traditions to bear on the problem. *Self, Thought and Reality* begins with the epistemology of the world of objects and the relation between knower and known; *The Nature of Self* uses this platform to launch the investigation of knowledge of the subject itself. We begin with the epistemology of the outer.

Self, Thought and Reality

Self, Thought and Reality is organized around three concerns. The first is the relation between idealism and realism: Mukerji is concerned to show that they are not in fact rivals, but rather complementary aspects of any plausible philosophical position. Second, Mukerji is interested in the relationship between correspondence theories and coherence theories of truth and knowledge, once again, concerned to show that the dichotomy is false. Finally, he is concerned, as he puts it, in the relation between "being and becoming," by which he really means the relation between metaphysics and science. These three concerns structure Mukerji's account of our knowledge of the outer world and frame his inquiry into the possibility of knowledge of the inner.

Kant's transcendental idealism is the backdrop for Mukerji's inquiry. He introduces the modern problematic concerning knowledge through a reading of Kant's response to Hume. Part of the originality and philosophical power of this text derives from the fact that Mukerji reads Kant's critique of Hume not as a critique of *empiricism*, per se, but of a *particular type* of *realism*. He sees Kant as taking aim at two theses advanced by Hume: first, the idea that plurality is ontologically prior to unity; second, that the mind is one object among many that can be studied using the same scientific techniques that disclose the natural world.

Mukerji opens his inquiry into the relationship between idealism and realism by examining Kant's response to Hume. He sees the foundation of Hume's realism in his commitment to a reductionist program—one he takes to be aligned with the positivism

and forms of empiricism fashionable in his own time. He then reads Kant as rejecting that reductionism in favor of a view of entities as constituted as unities in virtue of the synthetic operation of consciousness. Put this way, we can see Mukerji as arguing for the robust reality of the objects of the human *lebenswelt*, as opposed to those who would see them as merely constructions and look for greater reality in the ephemeral, atomic, and disconnected entities that constitute them. Here is how he puts the point:

> Our aim, therefore, is to show, in how imperfect a form, that Kant's answer to Hume has thoroughly undermined the only basis upon which all forms of realism must ultimately stand, and consequently the realistic and empirical philosophies of our time, in spite of what value they may possess for students of philosophy, do not represent a real development of thought. If we attempt a brief formulation of the underlying principle of empiricism it will be found to consist in the assumption that the "unconnected manifold" have a superior reality in comparison to their unity.[9]

This ontological insight is grounded as much in a reading of the British neo-Hegelians Bradley and Green as of Kant. Mukerji hence sees another way of posing Hume's problem and Kant's response: Hume argues that real entities exist prior to the relations in which they stand and that they exist independent of those relations. Kant, on his view, sees that things exist only in relation to consciousness in some sense; but Bradley completes this ascent. He does so, on Mukerji's view, by arguing that the identity of any thing is constituted by its relations to everything else, and hence that relations are essential, or internal, to being not mere accidents attaching to things that would exist even were they not to stand in those relations. Mukerji hence lines up the distinction between Kantian idealism and Humean realism with the neo-Hegelian distinction between holism and atomism.

> Things . . . do not exist at first in separation from each other so that all connections between them would be mere fortuitous generalizations; on the contrary, their existence has no intelligible meaning except in relation to each other. What we call the real existence of the world is constituted by the various relations, spatial, temporal, causal, etc subsisting between things, and each thing is what it is only through its relations. . .. Green puts the whole position this way: "abstract the many relations from the one thing, and there is nothing. They, being many, determine or constitute its definite unit. It is not the case that it first exists in its unity, and then is brought into various relations. Without the relations it would not exist at all."[10]

Mukerji hence takes the relationship between realism and idealism to track that between atomism and holism. He takes the second issue between Hume and Kant as a debate concerning the ontological role of mind itself. To the question, "does the mind have a special ontological status?" Hume, argues Mukerji, answers "no." Kant answers "yes." That is, Hume adopts a psychologistic approach to epistemology, while Kant adopts a normative, transcendental approach. Mukerji defends Kant here, arguing that to be an empirically real object is to be an object for a subject, and that is to be an object whose unity is the consequence of the synthesis of the manifold of sense by the operations of the

understanding. To say this, he argues, is not to reject empiricism, per se, in epistemology; but it is to reject the demotion of the mind to one entity among others and to refuse to reduce the project of epistemology to the project of understanding the operations of the mind from an empirical point of view. Introspection, Mukerji argues, cannot displace epistemological reflection. Mukerji characterizes the psychological attitude as follows:

> "To the psychologist." [James] tells us, "the minds he studies are objects, in a world of other objects. Even when he introspectively analyzes his own mind, and tells what he finds there, he talks about it in an objective way." . . .[11]
>
> When, however, the restrictions of psychology . . . are removed and the psychological attitude is universalized, we get a metaphysics . . . as Professor Alexander puts it, "in respect of being or reality, all existences are on an equal footing." And that mind has no privileged place in the democracy of things. And the realistic metaphysics of mind . . . is only "borrowing a page from psychology."[12]
>
> The epistemological attitude, on the other hand, is distinct from the psychological . . . and consists in treating the knowing mind, not as one object among other objects, but as that which is presupposed by everything known or knowable and in treating knowledge not as an attribute of a particular thing, but as the medium through which all objects reveal themselves.[13]

Mukerji forcefully rejects subjective idealism, which he takes to be an inevitable consequence of psychologism, and which he associates with Berkeley (and certain Vedānta thinkers such as Śrīharṣa, as well as Buddhist idealists such as Dignāga and Vasubandhu), according to which external objects are unreal. Instead, he argues that when each is properly understood, the apparent duality between idealism and realism is chimerical. Instead, they are complementary and even mutually entailing: idealism, he argues, presents an answer to the question, "what is it to be real?" and realism is guaranteed by the fact that although objects exist for us only as they are represented, their existence and character is independent of any particular thought or thinker. And it is science, he argues, that is the measure of the empirically real. Mukerji thus defends both transcendental idealism and scientific realism, so long as each keeps to its respective domain. On his view, things exist independently of us—the core of realism—but our knowledge of them is dependent on the structure of thought, and so they exist *for us* only subject to the conditions of thought—the core of idealism.

> The first thing which we should make clear in the beginning is that idealism, as we understand it, does not take away in the least the reality of anything which is considered as real by common sense of science. Far from subtracting anything from the common things of the world, idealism adds to the reality of the things, insofar as it alone makes it clear that things have far other aspects of their life than those which are revealed to commonsense or to science.[14]

This synthesis of idealism and realism provides the basis for Mukerji's second synthesis—that of correspondence and coherence. Given the association of coherence theories with

idealism and correspondence theories with realism, it is natural to see them as being in tension with one another, but also therefore natural to anticipate Mukerji's reconciliation of this apparent dichotomy. A pure correspondence theory of thought and truth would hold that the mind and the world are entirely independent of one another and that our ideas can be examined to determine the degree to which they correspond in some way to be specified with an independently examined world. As Mukerji points out, Berkeley puts paid to this naïve idea.

But as a theory of truth, Mukerji argues, correspondence is not bad. The idea that correspondence is the *content* of truth, he says, makes good sense, but to take it as a *test* for truth does not.

> The real defect of the correspondence theory consists in not the *definition* but the *test* that it claims to offer of a true judgment. It is futile . . . to attempt to know whether our knowledge at a particular stage is true or not by reference to things external to knowledge. The correspondence can be known only by the amount of harmony that knowledge has so far attained to. The more knowledge tends to be a whole, the greater is our assurance of correspondence; the more there are discords and disharmony in knowledge, the greater is the distance between knowledge and reality.[15]

That is, he argues, it is internal to the very idea of the truth of a thought or a sentence that it represents the world correctly. The problem arises when we also take correspondence to provide a *criterion* of that correctness, requiring the impossible independent access to the representation and to the represented. Instead, he argues, a coherence theory, while it makes no *constitutive* sense of truth, provides the best possible criterion that we can use in the *evaluation* the truth of sentences or of thoughts. We take something to be true to the degree that it coheres with the weight of other evidence and other secure views, including our evidence regarding the methods by means of which we test it. We can never escape the web of coherence criterially; but this does not mean that we do not discover the world, and that our criteria are not criteria for accurate correspondence.

Another way to put this subtle point is that the dichotomy between construction and discovery, on Mukerji's view, is also chimerical. One way that Mukerji defends this view is to argue that the very concept of belief presupposes the concept of truth: truth is that at which belief aims. But the concept of truth presupposes in turn an objective order of things. So, even to believe that one merely believes—the idealistic view—presupposes that the reality in which one believes is independent of that belief—the essential core of realism.

> Once it is admitted that the distinction between a true and a false belief is not to be found in the nature of the belief as an event in the mental history of the individual, it is easy to see that what invests it with the logical character is its conformity or otherwise to something beyond itself. That is, the truth or falsity of the belief has to be ascertained by reference to an objective order of things, so that when an assertion is claimed to be true, what is implied is not simply that an individual has somehow or other come to hold a particular belief, but that it has an objective basis in the nature

> of things. No theory of truth that does not distinguish between these two aspects of an assertion can stand the scrutiny of critical thought.[16]

Here we see Mukerji drawing together the question of the relation between the real and the ideal with the critique of psychologism. Neither epistemology nor the philosophy of mind, he argues, can make do with a naïve naturalism about truth, knowledge, belief, or indeed cognition itself. Each of these involves an ineliminable normative dimension. Mukerji's third concern in this book, as we have noted, is the status of scientific knowledge and its relation to pure epistemology and metaphysics. It is very important to him that the philosophical and the scientific standpoints are each necessary to provide a complete picture of the world, and that neither—pretensions of some partisans to the contrary notwithstanding—can replace the other. Nonetheless, he argues, they must each be regarded as a distinct *standpoint* and not as providing distinct *worlds*. The world whose transcendental conditions we investigate when we do philosophy, the world we experience in everyday life, and the world delivered by the best science are the same world, differently understood. And it is the task of good philosophy to explain why and how this is so. The anticipation of Sellars's view of the relationship between the original, manifest, and scientific images is rather breathtaking. In keeping with his critique of Hume, we see Mukerji as anticipating and rejecting Quine's own way of naturalizing epistemology by turning it into a branch of psychology. With Sellars, he would insist on the essentially normative character of epistemological categories, despite the necessity for a psychological science of the beings who deploy them.

The resolution of the dichotomies between realism and idealism and between correspondence and coherence take us to Mukerji's resolution of a third apparent duality: that between metaphysics and science. One might be tempted to see Mukerji's opposition to psychologism in epistemology as a deprecation of the epistemic status of science and in favor of that of metaphysics. Instead, he argues that these two cognitive enterprises stand in need of one another. On his view, transcendental idealism ensures that the world is a systematic unity; its dependence as object on the mind ensures that it is intelligible.

Thus, even empirical science has an a priori basis: science itself and its methodology, he argues, depend upon our conception of what constitutes explanation, and on our transcendental demand that all phenomena can be subsumed by explanation. No metaphysics or epistemology: no science. No science: no confidence in the reality of any objects of knowledge. Even the quantum theory and the uncertainty principle, Mukerji argues, presuppose transcendental conditions on explanation, the notion of truth, of knowledge, and of entities in interaction with one another. So, while scientific revolutions might alter the details of our metaphysical picture, they still presuppose a metaphysics and an epistemology that render the science itself intelligible.

> The indeterminacy of an entity in certain respects presupposes its determinateness in other respects; in other words, we can conceive arbitrariness in the behaviour of an entity, only insofar as it behaves in perfectly definite ways under other conditions. Absolute lawlessness is inconceivable, either in the world matter, or in that of spirit.

> If then so much be granted, one must give up the idea of constructing physical structures on a non-causal basis. No knowledge is possible without the categories of cause and substance, because they enter into the essence of every conceivable entity, no matter whether we are thinking of energy, mass, wave-function or quantum constant.[17]

Anticipating Goodman, Mukerji characterizes science as "drawing world-pictures." The world constrains the content of those pictures; epistemology guarantees that they can be drawn in the first place and constrains their form. The pictures, he insists, are not, simply in virtue of being drawn by us, fictions; instead, they are interpretations.

> What is called a world-picture is but an extension of the same process of interpretation that begins with identification. Even the things of ordinary commonsense knowledge would not be what they are if the sense-given data had not been interpreted and taken into conceptual frames. To feel a feeling and to know it as a feeling . . . are two very different functions of the mind.
>
> The distinction then, between the world of sense-data and world-pictures, we submit, is based on an unreal abstraction.[18]

All of this scientific realism notwithstanding, for Mukerji the most important consequence of all of this, returning to his initial critique of Hume, is that the self cannot be conceived of as a thing among things, or as a substance with attributes, even cognitive attributes, as the Cartesian might have it. Instead, he argues, the self is that to which all things or substances are related, that in relation to which they can be real, and by which they can be known. Its special place in the world is what grounds the normativity of knowledge and of the scientific enterprise in the first place.

Mukerji closes this first book, and anticipates the second, by examining this special role of the self and our knowledge of that self. In his conclusion, he draws in the Indian Advaita Vedānta philosopher Śaṅkara to understand this. But while one might think that this turn to the East is a turn away from reason and toward mysticism, Mukerji insists that that is inadmissible. The very demand for rational understanding that takes one this far is the demand that self-knowledge be rationally comprehensible.

> The relation between dialectic thought and intuition . . . is not, for Śaṃkara at least, one of antagonism. The path to intuition lies through the labyrinth of reasoned discourses, and this explains his invectives against mystical practices, or of mere feeling.[19]

The Nature of Self

A five-year gap separates these two volumes, and it is clear that during that time Mukerji thought hard about philosophical method, and in particular about philosophical

method in colonial India. In the preface to *The Nature of Self,* Mukerji dismisses mere comparative philosophy:

> Comparative philosophy has so far been either predominantly historical and descriptive, or it has contented itself with discovering stray similarities between the Western and Indian thought. No serious attempt, as far as I know, has yet been made to undertake a comparative study for mutual supplementation of arguments and consequent clarification of issues. Yet, this alone can suggest the paths to new constructions and thus help the development of philosophical thought.[20]

Mukerji is committed to this project of "mutual supplementation," and he is interested not in comparison but in the "clarification of issues." This book makes good on this promise. The historical approach of *Self, Thought and Reality* is replaced here with a cross-cultural problem-based approach. While Mukerji turns repeatedly to the history of philosophy for ideas, those references are only for the sake of setting up and clarifying philosophical analyses, and in this volume, neither the Indian nor the Western tradition is privileged. The volume begins with a consideration of what Mukerji calls "the egocentric paradox" and ends with a critical reading of Śaṅkara and Hegel on the nature of self-knowledge.

While *Self, Thought and Reality* is preoccupied with the dangers of *psychologism, The Nature of Self* is preoccupied with a series of ways of understanding the threat posed by *skepticism*. Mukerji takes it to be a necessary truth that we have knowledge and takes it that since all knowledge is grounded in appearances to the self, is mediated by the mind, and is structured by our cognitive faculties, all knowledge presupposes self-knowledge. Any threat to the certainty of self-knowledge, then, is a threat to all of knowledge. Mukerji's project in this book is to demonstrate that and how self-knowledge is possible, and how every response to skepticism about self-knowledge can be met.

Mukerji frames the book in terms of what he calls "the egocentric paradox." He formulates the paradox in terms of another apparently inconsistent triad: On the one hand, the self must be known, and indeed must be known better and more intimately than any object. On the other hand, for anything to be known, it must be an object, and so not a subject. But, the self is that which is always subject and never object. It hence appears that while self-knowledge is the necessary condition of all knowledge, it itself is impossible.

The first approach to resolving this trilemma, already considered and rejected in the first book, is to reject the third claim, through psychologism, a position Mukerji associates in this volume both with the Buddhists and with Hume. On this view, the self is placed on the object side of the divide. While this makes empirical psychology possible, it can never reveal or generate any understanding of the subject, which then must contemplate the objective self, and so remains a failure.

The second approach is that of Caird—the theory of so-called mediated self-consciousness—and rejects the second thesis of the trilemma. On this view, we know the subject in virtue of a thorough analysis of the object, and a transcendental inquiry

into the nature of a subject that can construct such an object. Mukerji objects that this falls prey to another form of skepticism. For given the co-relativity of subject and object, it is impossible to completely know the object without also knowing the subject. This project hence cannot get off the ground. A Hegelian approach, in which we seek higher categories that can apply not only to objects but also to subjects, Mukerji argues, only gets us more of the same: the self is either recast as an object of knowledge of yet another subjective self, or it must be known in relation either to that as yet unknown self or to an object which remains unknowable so long as the self is not known.

Mukerji considers a number of philosophical maneuvers conducted both in Europe and in India and concludes that any model that distinguishes the self as knower from the self as known opens an unacceptable skeptical gap. He is led then to an articulation of Śaṅkara's idea of *svaprakāśa*, or self-illumination, as a model of self-understanding. It is important to see that he does not simply adopt Śaṅkara's own view, but rather takes on an insight shared by Śaṅkara and certain Buddhist philosophers, combines it with ideas drawn from Hegel, Bradley, and Green, and develops a highly original synthesis as an account of self-knowledge. While *svaprakāśa* is introduced in the classical tradition as an explanatory primitive, Mukerji modernizes it (anticipating contemporary neo-Husserlian positions according to which consciousness is necessarily self-revealing), arguing that *svaprakāśa* is at bottom a *theory* of consciousness. The account of *svaprakāśa* at which Mukerji aims is an account of pure, unmediated consciousness of self.

It is therefore necessary for him to resolve a metaphysical tension at the outset: Is consciousness prior to or posterior to matter in the order of explanation? This is, of course, another way of putting the question regarding idealism and realism Mukerji addressed in *Self, Thought and Reality*, and his approach here is similar. He argues that while matter may be prior to thought in the order of *being*, thought is prior to matter in the order of *knowing*. An emphasis on the fundamental role of consciousness in knowledge, he argues, is therefore not antithetical to modern scientific materialism, and the analysis of existence in terms of transcendental subjectivity does not preclude a material theory of the origin of the mind.

> A word of explanation may be useful . . . in regard to the precise meaning in which consciousness is said to be the *prius* of reality. This doctrine is often interpreted on the idealistic line and supposed to deny the independent existence of the material world apart from consciousness. . .. It is, therefore, important to dissociate the assertion of the priority of consciousness from the idealistic contention, and realize clearly that the doctrine of the priority of consciousness is equally compatible with the realistic belief in an independent world. Even if it be granted that knowledge does not create but only reveals a pre-existent reality, yet it would remain unchallengeable that the external reality could not be revealed to us apart from consciousness which is the principle of revelation . . . The epistemological priority of the conscious self is thus reconcilable with realism as well as with idealism.[21]

Mukerji interprets *svaprakāśa* as a kind of immediate self-knowledge in which there is no distinction between subject and object. He is concerned to argue that there is nothing

mystical, irrational, or even essentially *Indian* about this notion, pointing out that versions of it are adopted by Green, Caird, Haldane, and others in the Western tradition. He is also concerned to show that while there are good arguments for this view, it is not simply *obvious*, and that there may be reasons to doubt it. Moreover, he argues, if it is known to be true, that cannot be by means of introspection, but only through philosophical argument. For introspection can tell us nothing about the self as subject.

> Neither inference nor introspection is capable of proving the reality of the conscious self, for the simple reason that the self is not a thing in the democracy of things. What introspection can guarantee is the reality of pleasure and pain, desire and aversion, because they are objects; but the self as foundational consciousness, as the universal logical implicate of all known things, cannot be grasped as an object. That *for* which my entire world has a meaning, that in the light of which my universe shines, cannot be objectified and perceived in the same way in which the cow or the tree is perceived. Self-consciousness is not, therefore, the consciousness of the self as an object given in introspection; and Hume as well as his Indian predecessors, the Buddhists, failed to find it in the flux of mental states, because they wanted to know it as a definite type of object among other objects.[22]

From Bradley, Mukerji takes the notion of immediate experience as the key to understanding *svaprakāśa* in a cogent way. Bradley argues in *Appearance and Reality* that any mediated knowledge of the world, or of the self, requires immediate experience of subjectivity as its condition. For all other knowledge must be constructed from this immediate foundation by inference from cause to effect. Thus, while we cannot have discursive knowledge of the immediate, we know that we have it, theoretically by reflection.[23] Our objects, on this view—that about which we can think and talk—are given to us as a causal consequence of this immediate experience, but it itself is not an object and is neither conceptualizable nor describable. We hence know this self, but we cannot express it.

While Mukerji argues that this absolute self is pure subjectivity, he hence argues as well that it is not a Kantian transcendental existence, but rather is entirely immanent. Nor is it a concrete universal as Hegel would have it, but is rather a personal self, only non-objectified, existing only as subject. Nor is this view simply a recitation of Śaṅkara's version of Advaita Vedānta. For unlike Śaṅkara, Mukerji does not take the absolute reality of the self as subject to disparage the reality of its objects. In fact, on Mukerji's understanding of the fundamental predicament of skepticism, Śaṅkara's own position opens up one more skeptical abyss by denying the reality of the object that must be correlative with the subject. Mukerji's own position is simply that subjectivity is immediately self-revealing not in introspection, but rather in the pre-reflective awareness of the fact that one is the subject of one's objective experience. It is the impossibility of denying this fact and the distinctive awareness of it that preclude skepticism about the self, and hence skepticism in general; but it can never be reduced to any other kind of knowledge. He concludes as follows:

> The Self is not a category at all, and, consequently, it cannot be said to be even a system or a relational whole or, again, a unity-in-difference. On the contrary, it is the

> ultimate, non-relational, Consciousness, which is necessarily distinctionless, unobjectifiable, and immediate.[24]

We see in this volume Mukerji as a supremely creative, synthetic, and scholarly philosopher with a firm grasp on the history of philosophy—Asian and Western—and a critical stance toward every position he encounters. He also has a positive vision, carefully articulated in dialogue both with the history of his discipline and with his contemporaries, both in philosophy and in science. Mukerji, we emphasize, is not alone in the colonial Indian philosophical scene. He belongs to a community of Indian philosophers who, despite the fact that they were educated and taught only in India, displayed a remarkably cosmopolitan sensibility; who, despite being educated in British-administered universities, never lost contact with the Indian philosophical tradition; and who, despite a colonial context, neither succumbed to the temptation to disparage European learning nor to that of simply imitating a parochial European sensibility.

Conclusion

Despite the impressive scholarship and masterful argument evident in Mukerji's books, the fact that they were published in India guaranteed their international obscurity, and with the exception of a single review of each, a short book note, they were hardly noticed in the West. In addition to these books and the articles that foreshadowed them, Mukerji published other important articles in epistemology, the history of philosophy, and the philosophy of mind, again, all locally. In one of these, "Puzzles of Self Consciousness," Mukerji distinguishes a number of senses of consciousness, such as phenomenal consciousness, creature consciousness, and introspective consciousness, anticipating contemporary debates with startling prescience.

Mukerji served for many years as head of the Philosophy Department at Allahabad and also served a stint as Dean of Arts. Among his prominent graduate students were Prof. Govind Chandra Pandey, who was to become one of India's and the world's greatest scholars of the history of Buddhism in India and Director of the Indian Institute for Advanced Studies, and Prof. S. L. Pandey, who enjoyed a career in the philosophy department at Allahabad. Mukerji was twice elected president of the Indian Philosophical Congress. We conclude with the opening words of his final presidential address in 1950:

> I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to give expression to my genuine admiration and appreciation for the work my colleagues in the Indian colleges and universities have succeeded in doing in the sphere of philosophy notwithstanding a hundred handicaps and formidable difficulties. I am fully aware of the general attitude of scorn and contempt, of distrust and discouragement, that has brought discredit upon the contemporary Indian thinkers from within and outside India; but I shall not enquire into the nature and cause of the circumstances responsible for this growing volume of suspicion. Of one thing, however, I am pretty sure and it is

> this that the adverse critics have neither the inclination nor the courtesy of spending on the Indian attempts a hundredth part of the time and attention they devote to the study of the currents of foreign thought. Philosophical convictions grow through the spirit of cooperation and helpful mutual criticism; it is positively unfair to refuse cooperation and yet wail over languishment. I for one do believe that the philosophers of contemporary India have already given sufficiently convincing evidence of the virility and strength of Indian thought which, given favourable atmosphere, would gradually develop into world views of far-reaching consequences whose value in the context of world philosophy would not be negligible.[25]

We cannot help but agree.

Notes

1. R. Tagore, "Pathway to Mukti" (1925), reprinted in N. Bhushan and J. Garfield, *Indian Philosophy in English from Renaissance to Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 151–164.
2. See D. Shulman, *More than Real: A History of the Imagination in South India.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).
3. See N. Bhushan and J. Garfield, "Whose Voice? Whose Tongue? Indian Philosophy in English from Renaissance to Independence," *Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research* 25, no. 2 (2008/2009): 89–108; N. Bhushan and J. Garfield, "Pandits and Professors: The Renaissance of Secular India," *Journal of the Indian Council for Philosophical Research* 26, no. 1 (2009/2010): 141–159; N. Bhushan and J. Garfield, "Can Indian Philosophy be Written in English? A Conversation with Daya Krishna," in *Philosophy as Samvada and Swaraj: Dialogical Meditations on Daya Krishna and Ramchandra Gandhi*, ed. S. Mayaram (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).
4. Bhushan and Garfield, *Indian Philosophy in English*.
5. See Bhushan and Garfield, *Indian Philosophy in English* for more on each of these figures and on the Indian philosophical scene more generally.
6. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life* (London: George Allen and Unwyn, Ltd., 1929).
7. K. C. Bhattacharyya, *The Subject as Freedom* (Amalner: The Indian Institute of Philosophy, 1930); S. S. S. Shastri, "Advaita, Causality and Human Freedom" (1940), reprinted in Bhushan and Garfield, *Indian Philosophy in English*, 363–392; V. S. Iyer, "Śaṃkara's Philosophy" (1955), reprinted in Bhushan and Garfield, *Indian Philosophy in English*, 407–424.
8. H. Haldar, *Neo-Hegelianism* (London: Heath Cranton, Ltd., 1927).
9. A. C. Mukerji, *Self, Thought and Reality* (Allahabad: The Juvenile Press, 1933), 20.
10. Mukerji, *Self, Thought and Reality*, 33; the Green reference is to Green, *Prolegomenon* §28.
11. *Principles of Psychology I*, (New York: Dover, 2012), 183.
12. *Space, Time and Deity I*, (New York: Dover, 2012), 6–9.
13. Mukerji, *Self, Thought and Reality*, 294–295.
14. Mukerji, *Self, Thought and Reality*, 47.
15. Mukerji, *Self, Thought and Reality*, 127–128.
16. Mukerji, *Self, Thought and Reality*, 172.
17. Mukerji, *Self, Thought and Reality*, 273.

18. Mukerji, *Self, Thought and Reality*, 276.
19. Mukerji, *Self, Thought and Reality*, 401.
20. A. C. Mukerji, *The Nature of Self* (Allahabad: The Indian Press, Ltd., 1938), v–vi.
21. Mukerji, *Nature of Self*, 113–114.
22. Mukerji, *Nature of Self*, 247–248.
23. Mukerji, *Nature of Self*, 321.
24. Mukerji, *Nature of Self*, 338–339.
25. A. C. Mukerji, "Human Personality: A Metaphysical Analysis" (1950), in *Facets of Recent Indian Philosophy,* vol. 1: *The Metaphysics of the Spirit, Indian Philosophical Congress Presidential Addresses*, ed. S. Dubey, 181–203 (New Delhi: Indian Council for Philosophical Research, 1994), 181–182.

Bibliography

Mukerji, A. C. *Self, Thought and Reality.* Allahabad: The Juvenile Press, 1933.

Mukerji, A. C. "The Puzzles of Self-Consciousness," *Allahabad University Studies* (1933): 105–162.

Mukerji, A. C. "Human Personality: A Metaphysical Analysis" (1950), in *Facets of Recent Indian Philosophy*, vol. 1: *The Metaphysics of the Spirit, Indian Philosophical Congress Presidential Addresses*, edited by S. Dubey, 181–203. New Delhi: Indian Council for Philosophical Research, 1994.

Mukerji, A. C. *The Nature of Self.* Allahabad: The Indian Press, Ltd., 1938.