Chapter 1

Introduction

> In fact, one may—this simple proposition, which is often forgotten, should be placed at the beginning of every study which essays to deal with rationalism—rationalize life from fundamentally different basic points of view and in very different directions. Rationalism is an historical concept which covers a whole world of different things.
>
> —Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

This book interprets the contemporary significance of the Pratyabhijñā, "Recognition," apologetics for monistic Śaivism of the Kashmiri thinkers Utpaladeva (c. 900–950) and Abhinavagupta (c. 975–1025). I will investigate the characteristics of the Pratyabhijñā as philosophical discourse and the ways in which it advances Indian discussions of interpretation. The main Pratyabhijñā theories will be presented as cogent argumentation of the transcendental or metaphysical variety, in that they demonstrate necessary truths, the denials of which are contradictory.[1] These necessary truths include a kind of interpretive realism, as opposed to interpretive skepticism. They also comprise—as integral to the realistic stance—the existence and aspects of the nature of God, along with a way of experiencing God.

The first and chief task of this chapter will be the initial formulation of a problem and a methodology. I will review contemporary dilemmas about specifically cross-cultural interpretation, such as those central to religious studies. Then I will adduce transcendental considerations, in certain ways anticipatory of the main substantive arguments, to the effect that comparative, "foundationalist" philosophical dialogue is the most critical means available for addressing these dilemmas.

The next task will be to provide an overview of the rest of the book. I will briefly describe how my model of philosophical dialogue elucidates and is corroborated by the discourse of the Pratyabhijñā system. I will also endeavor to give the reader a preliminary understanding of the Indian debates on interpretation and recognition, and Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta's theory of divine self-recognition.

The Problem of Interpretation as Cross-Cultural

This study will present the Pratyabhijñā philosophy as giving us a viable answer to a problem that, while an enduring human concern, has assumed a radical importance in the contemporary "postmodern" intellectual era: Does interpretation refer to some reality and, if so, how does it? In my formulation of this problem, interpretation should be understood in the broadest sense as comprising all media articulating meaning, including language, imagination, symbols, metaphors, narratives, and so on, identifying a world of entities and nonentities, events, and values.

The question of whether there are grounds of "rationality" should be understood as a subspecies of the problem of interpretation. Rationality may be defined as the founding in reason(s) for ideas and actions. It is interpretations in the form of assumptions, rules, or axioms that determine what will count as a reason. These include widespread logical principles such as noncontradiction as well as specialized styles of inference, various sorts of justifications of action, and ex post facto analyses of the rationality of ideas and behaviors. Such interpretations, even when conceived in a situational or fallibilistic manner, posit some sort of "reality" as their grounds.

A preliminary treatment of the problem of interpretation is necessary even before we can consider the Śaiva approach to it, for this book itself is an exercise in "cross-cultural" interpretation. In a sense, the issue of cross-cultural interpretation is merely another specific example of the problem of interpretive reference. As such the questions center around whether and how members of one culture can interpret the "reality" in the worldview, behavior, rationality, and other features of another culture.

However, in a deeper sense the cross-cultural problem epitomizes one of the most important sets of considerations motivating present reflections on the general issue of reference. Interpreting another culture inevitably brings one into conflict with that culture's interpretations of itself. A crucial feature of the postmodern dilemma

is precisely a sense of the *great difficulty of arbitrating between a plurality of interpretations.* The very fact of difference raises doubt about whether anyone is right.

The landmarks in the growing challenge of interpretive plurality scarcely need mention. The multifaceted conflict between "tradition" and "modernity" is still deepening and spreading—science, history, and other secular theories of culture have repeatedly come into conflict with traditional religious beliefs, and modern social, economic, and political systems have challenged traditional values. Modern transportation, communication, trade, and politics have also led to more and more frequent interactions and confrontations between different societies. An ethical valuation of the diversity of viewpoints has come from democratic and liberal-social understandings of human rights and equality. The development of individualism associated with democracy and capitalism has likewise contributed to a sense of the value of plurality for its own sake.

Another set of intellectual considerations have developed in a manner both encouraged by, and independent of, the sensitivity to plurality. These are a variety of conceptions of what may be called "nonepistemic factors" of interpretation. When there is disagreement between interpretations, it is a likely presumption that something other than truth or reality must be motivating a lot of people to interpret the world in their peculiar ways. Traditional examples include the delusive evil will posited by monotheistic religions, and attachment and karma as posited by various kinds of Hinduism and Buddhism. Such religious ideas are obviously not important to most contemporary theories of interpretation.

The types of nonepistemic factors analyzed in contemporary cultural studies reflect rather the effort of various disciplines to imitate the *causal analysis characteristic of science and technology.*[2] Even when not so candidly identified, ostensibly empirical causes, functionalities, or motivations form the basic terms of explanation of the mainstream disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, for example, literary theory, anthropology, sociology, psychology, political science, history, and so forth. The classic "hermeneutics of suspicion" of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud, are really only more iconoclastic examples of a widespread orientation. The manifest explanatory successes of these various analyses greatly strengthen the worry about how any interpretation epistemically connects to reality.[3]

Presently there are very influential in the academy a number of skeptical theories of interpretation, which either explicitly deny the

reference of interpretation to reality or so emphasize the considerations mentioned that they effectively preclude it. One of the most common names for such theories is "cultural relativism." The various expressions of such skepticism share the basic approach of explaining the plurality of interpretations as epistemically arbitrary, each interpretation being determined within the holistic "contexts" defined by one or another set of nonepistemic factors.[4] No view of reality, principle of reason, or norm of behavior is more correct than any other. According to the usually egalitarian objectives of cultural relativism, the idea of universal truth is only an unfair strategy to privilege one set of views over others.[5]

The nonepistemic causes of interpretation emphasized by relativists are a subset of those described in the mainstreams of the humanities and social sciences, but the mode of explanation is more reductionistic. To simplify, we may say that these factors are of two basic types. First, many theories emphasize such factors as are intrinsic to the medium of interpretation or cultural expression itself. Whereas earlier theories adverted to categories of subjectivity, the most influential of such analyses now are in terms of language and related semiotic systems, and what are considered their exemplary artifacts.

Thus the classic relativism of Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf reduces the cross-cultural diversity of perception, concepts, and logic to the grammars of different languages.[6] The language games of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* are determined by rules conceived—as the name indicates—simultaneously as grammatical and as having the manifestly arbitrary character of the procedures of games.[7] The deconstructionism of Jacques Derrida radicalizes the nonepistemic trajectory of Saussurian structuralism. Interpretation is determined entirely by a play of differences between signs, without any semantic anchorage to objective presence.[8]

Among exemplary interpretive artifacts emphasized reductionistically, one important category is narrative. Thus Jean-François Lyotard argues that it is by means of narrative that claims of knowledge are legitimated. Attempting to carry the modern incredulity toward traditional narratives to its proper conclusion, he repudiates the modern "metanarratives" of the progress of human reason in favor of a relativism or "paralogy" of local narratives.[9] Thomas Kuhn's famous category of the paradigm, as model for scientific research and theorization, is another kind of exemplary interpretive artifact given a nonepistemic causal role.[10]

The other basic way in which interpretations have been contextualized, sometimes in a manner complementary to the first, and

sometimes to its exclusion, is in the more extrinsic terms of social-historical situations. Wittgenstein thus correlated his language games with various "forms of life," and Thomas Kuhn related paradigms to the practices of normal science and the innovations of scientific revolutions. While a variety of social causes are identified, the most influential in current relativist theories are the conceptions of power and legitimation of Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Émile Durkheim.

The basic trajectory toward skepticism of social-contextual analysis comes out clearly in the development of the discipline of the sociology of knowledge. From Max Scheler, to the "strong program" of Karl Mannheim, to the classic programmatic statement of the strong program by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's, *The Social Construction of Reality*, there is a progressively complete explanation of beliefs in terms of nonepistemic social causes. While the latter still eschews relativism, as the title of the book suggests, reality is viewed entirely as produced by society.[11] The effect is the same. Barry Barnes and David Bloor brought this approach to its logical (!) conclusion in unequivocally identifying truth and reasons with social causes.[12]

One of the most influential formulations presently of the dominant reduction of truth to power, that of Michel Foucault, may be understood in terms of this same trajectory. For Foucault, ideas are so fully determined by power that there is no possibility of using an ideology critique to separate truth from distortion. He describes the confrontation of interpretations with the model of *war*. Foucault has the manifestly nonskeptical political agenda of fighting hegemony in pursuit of a more equitable distribution of power.[13] However, because he has so thoroughly reduced truth to power, the relativist consequence appears unavoidable.

All of these contemporary skeptical theories raise difficult problems for those who believe in noncontingent truths, values, and principles of reason. Any attempt to describe a reality independent of interpretations will be only one option among a virtually unlimited plurality of others.[14] And each interpretation within this plurality will be explained by relativists as generated from the contexts of one or another set of nonepistemic factors.

Transcendental Parameters of Cross-Cultural Interpretation

I am in strong agreement with relativists about the great difficulties affecting interpretation/cross-cultural interpretation, and I am equally sympathetic with their advocacy of tolerance for conflicting interpretations against the imperialistic imposition of unity. However, I maintain

that the relativist thesis is not required to address these concerns and objectives. This is fortunate, for transcendental argumentation will be developed throughout this book which demonstrates that interpretive skepticism per se is wrong. At present we will only consider enough of such argumentation as will be needed to justify the alternative approach to interpretive divergence taken here.

The oldest, but no less cogent, criticism of skeptical positions is that they are self-referentially contradictory—as is exemplified by Epimenides' paradox of the Cretan asserting that "All Cretans are liars." This criticism points to the fact that the thesis that interpretations are relative is itself an unacknowledged nonrelative or universal claim. The unacknowledged universalism of the relativist theory extends to the *reasons* that are adduced for it: Plurality is presumably a state of affairs not relative to the relativist's own outlook. So presumably are the nonepistemic causes that are alleged completely to determine interpretation. As Edward Farley explains regarding the latter:

> The anomaly of an absolute skepticism about truth, knowledge, or reality apprehension is that it must appropriate what it rejects to make its case—namely the sphere of the interhuman. There is a common element in various attempts to deny or eliminate truth as a feature of the human transaction with things. This is the initial restrictive placing of truth (and knowledge, reality) in a prereality individual whose capacities for truth must then be demonstrated. The enterprise then is to indicate a number of causalities (cultural relativities, brain physiology, genetic predispositions) whose interventions hold reality and truth in abeyance. It is obvious to the point of banality that reality-positing must occur to make the case for such interventions.[15]

Because relativism denies itself, it is simply wrong. This failure demonstrates the antithesis that universal claims in interpretation are unavoidable.

The transcendental parameters of cross-cultural interpretation may be further elucidated by considering a couple of other antirelativist arguments. We may first turn to the philosopher of language Donald Davidson, who in his classic article "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" and in other writings has argued against the coherence of the very notion of incommensurable schemes of interpretation.[16]

Davidson begins his analysis by identifying ostensible conceptual schemes with languages. However, he grants that more than one natural language could express a conceptual scheme. So he expands

the linguistic model to identify conceptual schemes with "sets of intertranslatable languages."[17] He interprets the relativist thesis of the incommensurability of different schemes as untranslatability.[18] Davidson's refutation of relativism, then, involves demonstrating that there are necessary characteristics of all languages/sets of languages that preclude their being untranslatable to other languages/sets of languages.

Now a language is a medium expressing meanings. Davidson observes that an important feature of meaning is its dependence upon beliefs about what is true. "Meaning, as we might loosely use the word, is contaminated by theory, by what is held to be true."[19] As he elaborates elsewhere:

> A belief is identified by its location in a pattern of beliefs; it is this pattern that determines the subject-matter of the belief, what the belief is about. Before some object in, or aspect of, the world can become part of the subject matter of a belief (true or false) there must be endless true beliefs about the subject-matter.[20]

This brings the inquiry to the nature of truth. Davidson attacks the common attempt to explain truth as a correspondence between a language or scheme and some uninterpreted reality. We cannot use language to show how language is connected with what is nonlinguistic. According to Davidson, notions such as organizing or fitting the facts, evidence, or sensory experience, do not in any way further our understanding of truth.[21]

The truth of a linguistic statement can only be expressed in terms of truth conditions identified in another linguistic statement. Davidson makes a virtue of this necessity by further developing the semantic theory of truth of Alfred Tarski.[22] Tarski argues that truth for a language will comprise all what he describes as equivalences of the form T. This may be explained as follows: A sentence *p* is given the name or description *X*. The form T is written: *X* is true if, and only if, *p*.[23] To quote an example and explanation from Davidson: "The sentence 'My skin is warm' is true if and only if my skin is warm. Here there is no reference to a fact, a world, an experience, or a piece of evidence."[24] For Tarski this equivalence is stated in what constitutes a metalanguage in relation to the language in which *p* has been made.[25] Davidson explains that if the original statement is not in English, the second expression (here *p*) will be its translation into English.[26]

This understanding of truth means that the battle is over for a coherent idea of an alternative conceptual scheme:

> Convention T suggests, though it cannot state, an important feature common to all the specialized concepts of truth. It succeeds in doing this by making essential use of the notion of translation into a language we know. Since Convention T embodies our best intuition as to how the concept of truth is used, there does not seem to be much hope for a test that a conceptual scheme is radically different from ours if that test depends upon the assumption that we can divorce the notion of truth from that of translation.[27]

In this way Davidson is able to justify the strong contention: "Nothing, it may be said, could count as evidence that some form of activity could not be interpreted in our language that was not at the same time evidence that that form of activity was not speech behavior."[28]

Davidson has shown that some agreement between divergent systems of interpretation is necessary even to make sense of their differences. Davidson makes his own formulation of what W. V. O. Quine has called a "principle of charity" that is necessary for successful interpretation. We must assume a great deal of common truth in order to interpret the different views of others:

> The method is not designed to eliminate disagreement, nor can it; its purpose is to make meaningful disagreement possible, and this depends entirely on a foundation—*some* foundation—in agreement. The agreement may take the form of widespread sharing of sentences held true by speakers of "the same language," or agreement in the large mediated by a theory of truth contrived by an interpreter for speakers of another language. . . .
>
> Charity is forced on us:—whether we like it or not, if we want to understand others, we must count them right in most matters. . . .
>
> We make maximum sense of the words and thoughts of others when we interpret in a way that optimizes agreement."[29]

The German philosopher Karl-Otto Apel has also made various transcendental arguments in support of a kind of cross-cultural interpretive realism, which he calls "transcendental pragmatics." One of Apel's arguments involves the use of certain ideas of Wittgenstein against the relativist implications of that thinker's own *Philosophical Investigations*, to "think with Wittgenstein against Wittgenstein and beyond Wittgenstein."[30] Apel takes his stand on Wittgenstein's argument against the possibility of a private, solipsistic language. According to Wittgenstein, such a language is impossible because the rules of language games are publicly defined within their respective forms of life.

Apel contends that Wittgenstein's own near-behavioristic description of the diversity of language games, along with his criticisms of the abuse of language, also suffer from a "methodological solipsism." To avoid the predicament, Wittgenstein's theory must participate with the language games he describes in an encompassing, universal language game:

> From Wittgenstein's insight that (meaningful talk about) following a rule is, in principle, dependent on the context of a public language game it follows that the describer of a language game must participate, in a certain sense, in the language game to be described. . . .
>
> A language game must be postulated by which, in principle, communication with all language games and forms of life is possible without getting dependent on the different, and eventually incommensurable, paradigms of the different forms of life; rather the postulated language game must provide itself a paradigm or ideal norm for judging all other language games.[31]

Apel calls this universal language game the "transcendental language game." According to Apel, at the same time as a person acquires any language, he or she must acquire this transcendental game as "something like the deep structure."[32] Included in this game are "along with some rules of logic and the existence of a real world, something like the transcendental-pragmatic rules or norms of ideal communication."[33] This game cannot be denied:

> The individual cannot step into or out of the "institution" of this transcendental language game of critical argumentation in the same we suppose he can in the case of empirical "language games" and "institutions" as "forms of life" (Wittgenstein).[34]

Even the decision not to participate in the transcendental language game *requires this game for its very intelligibility:*

> Reason in no way needs to replace, through a decision, its rational justification, as is demanded by decisionism. For it can always confirm its own legitimation through reflection on the fact that it presupposes its own self-understanding of the very rules it opts for. Popper's assertion that irrationalism can be defended without self-contradiction because one can refuse to accept the argument is simply false, since the defense of irrationalism actually refutes the attempt to refuse to engage in argumentation. . . . The effective

> refusal to engage in rational argumentation (or a corresponding self-understanding) . . . is an act of self-negation and, moreover, self-destruction. . . . Even in such a case, however, the person making the decision must himself presuppose the denied principle so long as he understands his own decision as such. Otherwise, philosophical decisionism . . . could not treat the act of denying reason as an intelligible choice.[35]

Philosophy as Cross-Cultural Dialogue

All of these arguments demonstrate that we cannot avoid making noncontingent, universal claims in interpretation, but they have not demonstrated what claims should be made. Even if we agree with Apel that the transcendental language game requires "along with some rules of logic and the existence of a real world, something like the transcendental-pragmatic rules or norms of ideal communication" it is not clear what are the reality, logic, and communicative rules.

However, all interpretations, including all cross-cultural interpretations and all theories of interpretation, do rest on concrete premises about these matters. As we have seen, relativists (self-contradictorily) posit as the noncontingent reality their own understanding of relativity, along with the fact of plurality and various nonepistemic causes. While relativism is usually advocated in the defense of "open-mindedness," because it does not acknowledge its own claims, it succumbs to the very problems it criticizes in an insidious way. Relativism may thus do severe violence to the views of those whom it is supposed to defend. Most people in history have not understood their views to be no more true than any others, or to depend only upon a collection of nonepistemic sociocultural causes.[36] If someone else's views are framed as intrinsically "neither wrong nor right" they will never have to be taken as a serious challenge to one's own.

It seems that most of those arguing against relativism are attempting to defend the claims of modern science, technology, and social-political thought.[37] Donald Davidson is still continuing the tradition of analytic philosophical empiricism. He thus indicates an end to interpretive charity:

> We get a first approximation to a finished theory by assigning to sentences of a speaker conditions of truth that actually obtain (in our own opinion) just when the speaker holds these sentences true. The guiding policy is to do this as far as possible, subject to considerations of simplicity, hunches about the effects of social

conditioning, and of course our common-sense, or scientific, knowledge of explicable error.[38]

Apel's "pragmatics"—like other formulations of pragmatism, from the more skeptical version of Rorty, to the more rationalist one of Habermas—is partially intended to admit a healthy dose of fallibilism into the interpretive enterprise. Like the other pragmatisms it is also very much articulating a modern "this worldly" ethics correlated with science, technology, and economic and political rationalization.

I am not saying that there is not much universal truth in modern science, technology, and sociopolitical thought or that there is something wrong with being practical—but only want to point out the inevitable biases in these antirelativist theories. In particular I doubt that they are adequate to the fair assessment of the radically divergent truth claims of the world's religions, whether these be ethical, metaphysical, mystical, or eschatological.

Where are we left? There must be some reality but there are enormous disagreements about what it is, and our views often seem to be determined by motives other than the pursuit of truth. I believe that one of the reasons why many gravitate toward either closed universalist or relativist positions is that these views make things seem *easy*. Either *a, b, c* is reality or there is no reality. However, there is no logical compulsion for a problem to have an easy answer. I maintain rather that, if we are interested in addressing the dilemma, we are faced with the very messy task of attempting to mediate divergent interpretations about what is the universal reality.

This is a process of dialogue or conversation. I believe that the discipline that is most rigorously dialogical and is best suited to the problems of arbitrating between views is *philosophy*. For philosophy, as I understand it, is the effort to formulate one's views or arrive at new views about various issues in such a manner that the views are explicitly justified by deeper or universal criteria. In other words it is an effort to determine by rational argument what universal claims pertaining to experience, facts, morality, and even rationality, are truly universal.

By requiring such a search for criteria, my definition of philosophy is deliberately "foundationalist."[39] The transcendental arguments against skepticism show that assumptions about "foundations"—noncontingent truth, reality, logic, and so on, are unavoidable. Philosophy is only an effort to argue explicitly about them. At the programmatic level, no claims about foundations are excluded, whether these be sense

experience, principles of action, intuition, the words of the Buddha, or the Bible. Sometimes—but not always—arguments about foundations will be transcendental, such as my own that there must be foundations, and those that will be advocated later for the monistic Śaiva soteriology.

Many kinds of discourse are called philosophy for a variety of reasons. According to some understandings, all grand views about the world and life are philosophical. My definition stipulatively includes and excludes discourse from the category of philosophy on the basis of the degree of reflexivity about underlying premises for views and the effort to make explicit justification for particular ones over their alternatives. Discourses that are excluded are not judged to be "wrong" or "inferior." It is just that the concern here is with discourses—of which there are many examples—addressing certain problems of intelligibility.

Would my definition exclude antifoundationalist and skeptical philosophical arguments? Whether their proponents like it or not, I believe that these arguments would be *included* in my definition. For these rigorously argued, descriptive, and prescriptive theories about interpretation, as I have explained, are necessarily adverting to ostensibly universal foundations. Perhaps some skeptics could accept my definition provided that the foundations they adduce were understood in a paradoxically self-erasing manner. Thus a Mādhyamika as well as a deconstructionist may acknowledge that they use realist and rationalist concepts to lead us beyond such concepts. Whether or not the various kinds of skeptical arguments are viable is a subject of philosophical debate.

Since the nineteenth century, there has been the development of increasingly sophisticated dialogue between Western philosophies and non-Western philosophies—for example, of India, China, Islam, and so on—an area sometimes called "comparative philosophy." Another term for such inquiry that addresses the frequently religious orientations of the world's philosophies is "comparative philosophy of religion."[40] These dialogical efforts represent important steps in the development of a global arena of philosophical exchange, especially one in which Western philosophers will take the thought of other cultures seriously. However, I believe that the emphasis on comparison does not represent a novel turn as much as the elucidation and advancement of an integral feature of all philosophical inquiry to address our greater experience of cultural differences.

Philosophies throughout the world since ancient times have been comparative within their somewhat more limited domains. The entire

philosophical quest of discovery and justification is motivated to a large extent by the "comparative" encounter with the "otherness" or "doubt" of conflicting interpretations. Jean-Pierre Vernant has thus shown how the development of a sphere of public democratic debate in ancient Greece was decisive to the origination of pre-Socratic philosophical speculations.[41] Christian philosophy has been repeatedly stimulated by its historic confrontations with Hellenistic, Jewish, Muslim, modern scientific and historical thought, and now other cultures' religions and philosophies.[42] South Asian philosophy throughout its history has likewise been stimulated by the intellectual confrontations between different schools of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, and now Western thought. What Robin Horton has called the "inter-theoretic competition" basic to science[43] seems to be even more crucial to the development of philosophical reflexivity and foundationalist/criteriological inquiry.

Within current discussions of comparative philosophy, Paul Griffiths has made one of the most influential cases for the universal presumptiveness of philosophical argument. Griffiths describes philosophy in its character of transcending historical context as "denaturalized discourse"—a character that he states is ideal-typical. He explains the pursuit of this ideal on the basis of a conception of the nature of philosophy as presenting unambiguous and easily assessable propositions, as developed through Aristotle, Gottlob Frege, and contemporary anglophone philosophy, which he calls the "propositional mythos." He explains: "The perfectly denaturalized language, towards which the Aristotelian propositional mythos propels us, is no language at all but rather a universe of disembodied *noemata*, changelessly reflecting reality."[44] Though apparently less categorical than myself, he likewise states that denaturalized discourse "tends also to foundationalist in that it looks for certain and indubitable foundations (impressions, ideas, sensibilia, etc.) upon which all knowledge is based."[45]

I believe that the effort to achieve universal intelligibility of many of the religious philosophies of other cultures may be further illuminated by some of the reflections of contemporary Western theology.[46] The Catholic theologian David Tracy has distinguished philosophical theology, which he calls fundamental theology, from systematic theology and practical theology in a manner addressing problems of cross-cultural interpretation and rationality.[47] Further supporting the account here of philosophy as a dialogical effort to give rigorously explicit justificatory criteria for particular interpretations is his explanation that "fundamental theology is concerned with the *most abstract possibilities*

and necessities that *are* fundamental for understanding some of the necessary presuppositions of systematic and practical theologies."[48]

Fundamental theology is primarily addressed to, follows the standards, and addresses the substantive concerns of the academy. Thus, although it may argue on behalf of a particular religious tradition, it is methodologically detached from the religious and ethical commitments and presumptions regarding truth of the other two types of theology.[49] Tracy explains that

> In terms of modes of argument, *fundamental* theologies will be concerned principally to provide arguments that all reasonable persons, whether "religiously involved" or not, can recognize as reasonable. It assumes, therefore, the most usual meaning of public discourse: that discourse available *(in principle)* to all persons and explicated by appeals to one's experience, intelligence, rationality and responsibility, and formulated in arguments where claims are stated with appropriate warrants, backings and rebuttal procedures.[50]

At the same time he acknowledges that because of its historical and linguistic nature this effort is intrinsically problematic or uncertain.[51]

The Hermeneutic Circularity of Philosophical Inquiry

Great emphasis should be given to the qualifications that the project of a universally intelligible discourse is *problematic* and *ideal typical*. It is at this point that there should be developed in a nonrelativist fashion the insights of cultural and historical contextualism. Every work of philosophical reasoning is a product of a finite effort, reflecting the assumptions, purposes, and activities of humans in a particular situation.

While I have argued that "nonepistemic factors" cannot be entirely determinative of interpretation, this is not to deny that their operation is very real and pervasive. Pace Foucault, there is no way of avoiding the earlier modern projects of thinkers such as Marx and Freud, of consciousness enhancement or ideology critique, to separate these from the "epistemic factors." We must attempt to correct systematic distortion resulting from a variety of human motivations, psychological, social, economic, political, and so on.

With regard to a primary focus of many contemporary theories of culture—power—the difficult effort must be made to minimize the distorting role of this motive in philosophical inquiry. The practice of

philosophical discourse requires the pursuit of what Jürgen Habermas has called an "ideal speech situation" in which participants are given equal ability to express their own views and question each other. Paul Griffiths has argued similarly about the situation necessary for the conduct of proper interreligious apologetics. Such apologetics should not intend to justify ethnic superiority or a program of cultural, economic, or military imperialism. The desire to win an argument must be tempered by a valuation of learning the truth, wherever it lies.[52]

While in some ways more difficult, the same ideal should inform interpretations of the thought of those who are distant, deceased, or otherwise unable to respond—whether these interpretations are adverse or sympathetic, as in the case of my approach to the Pratyabhijñā system. Such interpretations gain from being produced in a context of free historical as well as philosophical inquiry. It should go without saying that I welcome responses to my interpretation of monistic Kashmiri Śaivism along with other systems of thought from South Asian, Western, and other scholars. I especially welcome criticisms from representatives of the interpretive skepticisms that I endeavor to refute.

However, the historicity of philosophy is much more than a matter of motivations that may distort the truth. There is always a limit to how far one can go in attempting to find rational grounds for beliefs. Philosophical inquiry follows the basic pattern of hermeneutic circularity. Whether engaging in apologetics for a particular view, or attempting to find answers to questions about which he or she is undecided—the philosopher must always begin and end in an orientation toward life—conceptual, ethical, religious, personal, and so forth—that is his or her own.

This basic hermeneutic circularity has an important consequence with regard to general considerations of philosophical method. Many common, but not invariable, patterns are found in philosophical methods throughout the world, such as adherence to the principles of material implication and noncontradiction. However, the details of philosophical method are ultimately inseparable from the substantive positions explicitly or implicitly maintained by the philosopher.[53] One naturally believes in methods that support one's views, and believes in views that are justified by one's methods.

It is a truism that consensus is never achieved about philosophical matters. Nobody possesses the single discourse within which all issues will be decided. Philosophical discussion involves a continuous reevaluation of the arguments for particular views, that is, the factual