

## **There is Something Wrong with Raw Perception, After All— Vyāsatīrtha's Refutation of *Nirvikalpakapratyakṣa***

Abstract:

This paper analyzes the incisive counter-arguments against Gaṅgeśa's defense of non-conceptual perception (*nirvikalpakapratyakṣa*) offered by the Dvaita Vedānta scholar Vyāsatīrtha (16th cent.) in his *Destructive Dance of Dialectic (Tarkatāṇḍava)*. The details of Vyāsatīrtha's arguments have gone largely unnoticed by subsequent Navya Nyāya thinkers, as well as by contemporary scholars engaged in a debate over the role of non-conceptual perception in Nyāya epistemology. Vyāsatīrtha thoroughly undercuts the inductive evidence supporting Gaṅgeśa's main inferential proof of non-conceptual perception, and shows that Gaṅgeśa has no basis for thinking that non-conceptual perception has any necessary causal role in generating concept-laden perceptual awareness. He further raises a number of internal inconsistencies and undesirable consequences for Gaṅgeśa's claim that non-conceptual states are introspectively invisible. His own causal theory of perception is more parsimonious than the Nyāya account, and is equally compatible with direct realism. I conclude by noting several striking parallels between Vyāsatīrtha's views and the conceptualism of John McDowell, while also suggesting that Vyāsatīrtha's own conceptualism is not unduly constrained by some of McDowell's limiting assumptions about concepts and perceptual contents.

The title of this essay alludes to an extended debate between contemporary Nyāya scholars Arindam Chakrabarti, Stephen Phillips, and Monima Chadha over the notion of non-conceptual perception (*nirvikalpakapratyakṣa*) and its place in the epistemology of Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya (14<sup>th</sup> cent.), who is regarded as the founder of the Navya Nyāya tradition.<sup>1</sup> To give some context for the debate, Gaṅgeśa and several Naiyāyikas before him acknowledge with the Buddhist philosophers Dignāga and Dharmakīrti (5th-6th cent.) a distinction between non-conceptual and concept-laden states of awareness (*jñāna*). Dignāga (*PS* 1.3, 2.7-9) characterizes perception as being essentially devoid of conceptualization (*kalpanāpoḍha*), which is just to say that the perception of a particular object does not involve any attribution of names or properties to it (*nāmajātyādiyojanā*). While Gaṅgeśa disagrees that all perception must be non-conceptual,

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<sup>1</sup> See Chakrabarti 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004; Phillips 2001, 2011: 37-38; and Chadha 2004, 2006, 2009, 2014, 2016. Bronkhorst 2011 and Maitra 2017 also weigh in on the debate.

given that he accepts the existence of perceptual states which are concept-laden (*savikalpakapratyakṣa*; *TCM*, 881.01-03), he nonetheless accepts Dignāga's characterization of non-conceptual perception as not identifying or categorizing objects according to the properties they possess (*TCM*, 857.01-02). In Gaṅgeśa's view, non-conceptual perception directly acquaints us with an object and its identifying attributes, but it doesn't present the object and its attributes as being related (*vaiśiṣṭyānavagāhin*). For instance, the non-conceptual awareness of an apple would present the apple and its property of applehood, but it would not yet present the applehood as being related or belonging to the apple. Accordingly, Gaṅgeśa also characterizes non-conceptual perception as being devoid of predicative content (*niṣprakāra*); a non-conceptual awareness does not present any properties as being predicated of the object that actually possesses them.

On the other hand, concept-laden or predicative (*saprakāra*) perception involves seeing objects as having certain properties, and seeing properties as qualifying or identifying their objects. Matilal (1985: 374) appropriately proposes that *savikalpaka* perceptions are instances of "seeing-as": In seeing something as an apple, a concept-laden perception presents the property of applehood as being a predicate (*prakāra*) of the apple; the apple as being what is predicated/qualified (*viśeṣya*) by applehood; and the metaphysical relation of inherence as being what connects or relates (*samsarga*) the applehood to the apple. While the same object and its properties may be presented in a *nirvikalpaka* perception, a *savikalpaka* perception takes the extra step of seeing the object, its properties, and the relation which binds them together as having distinct roles within a structured predicative complex. This sort of perceptual awareness can be "concept-laden" if it draws on memory-based recognitional capacities to classify its

objects, but it is also “concept-laden” just insofar as it has a predicative content (*sapraṅkāra*) whose compositional, object-property structure mirrors the subject-predicate structure of propositional contents found in conceptual states of cognition and language. Since the three kinds of intentional objects endemic to conceptual/predicative contents—i.e., qualifier, qualificand, and relational tie—are not presented as such in a non-conceptual perception, later Naiyāyikas posited that *nirvikalpaka* states have a fourth kind of intentional content (*viśayatā*) distinct from that of *savikalpaka* states, since they could not accept the existence of totally contentless, non-intentional perceptual states of awareness.<sup>2</sup>

There is one more important and controversial point to note up front about Gaṅgeśa’s theory of *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa*. As far as I can tell, Gaṅgeśa is the first thinker in the history of Indian philosophy to suggest that we have no phenomenological evidence for the presence of pre-predicative, non-conceptual perceptions. In Nyāya terms, non-conceptual states are inaccessible to the inner sensory faculty of *manas*, which is responsible for both introspection and selective attention to sensory inputs. Beyond the fact that we never have introspective reports of the sort, “I see the apple and applehood but separately,” there are at least two reasons why Navya Naiyāyikas following Gaṅgeśa could not allow *nirvikalpaka* awareness to be introspectively accessible. First, non-conceptual states occur at too early a stage in the perceptual process. Basically, the non-conceptual perception of an apple and the property of applehood must first give rise to an integrated, conceptually structured awareness of an apple before there can be an introspective awareness of seeing an apple. But because non-conceptual perceptions occur too early in the perceptual process, they will have already gone out of existence by the time an

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<sup>2</sup> NSMD 58, 252.12-13. See Bhattacharyya 1990a: 52-59 for Gadādhara’s discussion of why the *viśayatā* of *nirvikalpaka* and *savikalpaka* states must be distinct.

introspective awareness can arise (*JLVR*, 25.03-04; see also Mohanty 2011: 401). Second, non-conceptual contents lack the type of structure required for introspective identification and self-ascription. When I have the introspective awareness, “I see the apple,” I identify myself as having a first-order awareness of the apple. I am further able to identify that first-order state according to its predicative content, viz., the object which was perceptually classified according to its applehood. This predicative intentional content is what allows a perceiver to tell its first-order perceptual states apart, since the perceptions themselves are transparent or diaphanous; in keeping with Nyāya’s *nirākāravāda* (Matilal 1986: 186-187), states of awareness can only be distinguished according to their objective contents and not by any other subjective phenomenal qualities. But, since a non-conceptual state has no predicative content whatsoever, its content can’t be used to pick out the awareness for the purposes of introspective identification. In this way, non-conceptual perceptions remain introspectively invisible to the subject (see *NSM* 58, 251.09-252.06).

For Chakrabarti, the cost of admitting non-conceptual and subjectively unknowable perceptions within the framework of Nyāya epistemology is too high for any Naiyāyika to pay. For one, the postulation of a pre-predicative, linguistically inexpressible form of perception brings Nyāya uncomfortably close to claiming with Dignāga and Dharmakīrti that perception acquaints us with bare, propertyless particulars. Of course, the upshot of this Buddhist view is that any classification of particulars as being of a certain type, or attribution of shareable kind-properties to particulars, is an act of conceptual/linguistic fictionalization which distorts the reality of what is actually perceived. This is obviously a consequence that no Naiyāyika can abide. Nyāya realism holds that the world is actually comprised of property-possessing

particulars, and thus can be directly accessed without distortion by perceptual, cognitive, and linguistic states which identify those particulars according to the properties they possess. Indeed, Jayanta Bhaṭṭa (*NM*, 222.16) famously claimed that concept-laden perception—i.e., perceptual states whose contents are predicatively structured and linguistically expressible—is the "life-breath" of Nyāya philosophers: Their metaphysical understanding of the world as structured by real property-possessing objects is vivified by the epistemological fact that predicative perceptions of these objects can directly and correctly represent the world's structure as it is. The claim of Nyāya scholars that the admission of non-conceptual, pre-predicative awareness is "vital to Nyāya realism, for only such an awareness opens an access to things as they really are" (Mohanty 1992: 174) therefore strike Chakrabarti as being totally misguided—a non-conceptual awareness which fails to present properties as belonging to objects would not be giving us access to things as they really are (Chakrabarti 2000: 4). Chakrabarti thus offers several independent arguments to demonstrate that Gaṅgeśa's belief in *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* is not only an unnecessary and unwarranted feature of his epistemology, but that it also undermines Nyāya direct realism more broadly. The fact that non-conceptual states are also introspectively unknowable provides all the more reason to doubt that these states ever exist as part of our mental lives (Chakrabarti 2003).

As an internal critique of Gaṅgeśa, however, Chakrabarti's arguments are shown by Phillips to largely miss their mark. Chakrabarti is right to note that non-conceptual, introspectively invisible perceptions with a wholly unique type of intentional content seem out of place within Gaṅgeśa's overall taxonomy of mental states. Plus, there is no mention of a distinctly non-conceptual form of perception in either the root text of the Nyāya tradition, the

*Nyāyasūtra*, or the earliest commentaries of Vātsyāyana and Uddyotakara. Yet, neither these taxonomic or textual worries, nor any concerns about appearing to agree with Buddhists, are sufficient for overturning Gaṅgeśa's principled reasons for positing non-conceptual perceptions, which will be discussed in more detail below. For now, we can say that non-conceptual perception is supposed to fill a necessary causal and epistemic role, particularly with respect to a fundamental Navya Nyāya belief about descriptive object-identification, namely that "I cannot identify an object unless I already possess some information about it" (Matilal 1986: 350). Ordinarily, I can identify objects with the help of information stored in my memory. For instance, through remembering my past experience of and knowledge about snakes, I remember what a snake is, namely that which possesses the property of snakehood. This recalled property is now available to be perceptually attributed to a presently perceived object—seeing the object as qualified by snakehood, I can now perceptually identify it as being a snake. Sometimes, my memory misfires and leads me to falsely attribute snakehood to things to which it doesn't belong, like a rope.

On the other hand, if past experience were the sole source of information I could use for object-identification, then before I've ever had any past awareness of snakes and what they are, I wouldn't be able to correctly or incorrectly identify an object as being a snake. And yet, even if I've never seen anything else like a snake before, know nothing else about snakes, and don't know what sort of thing is called "snake," it's still possible for me to perceptually identify something for the first-time as a being a snake. Indeed, if I didn't see what it is to be snake in my first encounter with a snake, then I wouldn't ever be able to see what it is people are referring to when they use the word "snake"; I wouldn't ever learn that this thing is the type of thing people

call “snake.” Gaṅgeśa therefore takes first-time perceptual identification to be the clearest case in which the identifying information must come directly from perception itself, and not from past experience. Since I must possess the relevant information prior to having the concept-laden, predicative perception that this is a snake, there must be a form of non-conceptual, pre-predicative perception which directly acquaints me with the property of snakehood existing in the snake.

According to Phillips, Chakrabarti is wrong to think that the function of non-conceptual perception in subserving perceptual identification is either unnecessary, or incompatible with Gaṅgeśa’s general accounts of cognitive object-identification and causation. Whether they are perceptual or non-perceptual in nature, any state of awareness which presents an object under a certain description, i.e., as satisfying a certain predicate or qualifying property, will have a prior awareness of that qualifying property as its cause. Gaṅgeśa and Chakrabarti (2016: 461-463) would both agree that concept-laden states of perceptual recognition or reidentification (*pratyabhijñā*), in which a currently perceived object is descriptively presented as being the same thing as a previously perceived object, are no less perceptual because they draw their predicative content from, and are partly caused by, prior states of memory. Similarly, Gaṅgeśa and Phillips would insist that the first-time identification of *a* as F is no less perceptual because it draws its predicative content of F-hood from, and hence is partly caused by, a prior non-conceptual perception of F-hood. Chakrabarti questions why the Nyāya claim that I can’t descriptively identify *a* as F unless I am acquainted with F-hood has to be a causal requirement, rather than a merely logical one (2000: 5; 2001: 115). He draws on an analogy with spelling a word: One can’t spell the word “London” without having some acquaintance with the individual letters “L,” “O,”

and so on; but, one does not need to first separately spell the letters “L,” “O,” and so on before one can then spell “London.” Similarly, one can’t see something as a cow without being acquainted with its cowhood, but this does not mean that one should have to first separately see the cowhood. The problem with this analogy is that, properly understood, it makes Gaṅgeśa’s point for him. If the act of spelling is akin to the act of description or predicative qualification, then just as one first needs to utter or write the letter “L” itself without spelling it, one first needs to perceive the property of cowhood itself without describing or predicatively qualifying it. Prior to perceiving the cow as qualified by cowhood, then, there must be a prior stage of pre-predicative, unqualified acquaintance with cowhood. Furthermore, this direct perceptual grasp with a property “in the raw” is a necessary component of Nyāya direct realism. Our direct and non-descriptive acquaintance with properties in the world ensures that even our perceptual illusions keep us tethered to reality; that is, even when we perceptually misdescribe an object as having properties they do not have, we are still aware of real properties through having been non-conceptually acquainted with them prior to our mental misattribution of them in an erroneous concept-laden awareness (Phillips 2001: 111; Chadha 2014: 299-300).

So, if the debate over *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* in Gaṅgeśa’s epistemology and philosophy of mind appears to be more or less settled in recent literature, then why is it worth revisiting now? Indeed, a similar question can be raised more generally about the debate over the existence of non-conceptual perception in modern epistemology and philosophy of mind. Some recent overviews of the debate have concluded that the distinction between conceptual and non-conceptual mental states is largely terminological—as a result, the goalposts of the debate will shift simply depending on one’s assumptions about what a “concept” is (Bermúdez and Cahen



2015; Wright 2015). In response, I would suggest that the modern debate has appeared to ground out in a terminological stalemate because of its having been prematurely constrained by certain assumptions about the nature of concepts and perceptual contents. We might therefore find theoretical resources for moving the modern debate forward if we reexamine the arguments and assumptions of the classical Indian debate. In that same vein, we can move the classical Indian debate “forward,” or at least contemporary scholarship on it, by revisiting the incisive counter-arguments against Gaṅgeśa’s account of *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* offered by the Dvaita Vedānta philosopher Vyāsatīrtha (1460-1539). Like many of the innovative criticisms of, and contributions to, Navya Nyāya epistemology put forward in his *Destructive Dance of Dialectic* (*Tarkatāṇḍava*), Vyāsatīrtha’s refutation of non-conceptual perception has gone largely unnoticed both by later Navya Naiyāyikas as well as by anglophone Nyāya scholars.<sup>3</sup> Chakrabarti mentions some of Vyāsatīrtha’s arguments only in passing (2000: 3; 2003: 104-105), opting instead to develop his own. In his survey of the chapter on perception in Gaṅgeśa’s *Tattvacintāmaṇi*, N.S. Ramanuja Tatacharya (1992: 330-332) briefly raises and rebuts three of Vyāsatīrtha’s initial objections on behalf of Gaṅgeśa, but he avoids addressing the most important counter-arguments discussed below.<sup>4</sup> Once these counter-arguments are fully elaborated, we may come to realize that the recent conclusions about the success of Gaṅgeśa’s proof have been premature, and that Chakrabarti’s skepticism about *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* was warranted all along. We may also

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<sup>3</sup> Sharma 2008: 306-311 gives a brief summary of *Tarkatāṇḍava*. Duquette 2018 examines portions of the *Tarkatāṇḍava* in which Vyāsatīrtha refutes of Gaṅgeśa’s inferential proof of God’s existence and criticizes certain aspects of Mīmāṃsā hermeneutics. For a discussion of Vyāsatīrtha’s relation to previous Nyāya thought, see Williams 2014. McCrea 2015 and Stoker 2016 situate Vyāsatīrtha within the sectarian context of Vedāntic polemics and politics in 16th-century South India.

<sup>4</sup> Two of the three objections taken up by Tatacharya don’t actually originate with Vyāsatīrtha. The first objection was already made by Gaṅgeśa’s commentators, and is discussed in footnote 16 below; the second objection was rejected by Gaṅgeśa at *TCM*, 859.01-860.06. While the third objection (*TT*, 489.02-06) has deeper implications regarding the introspective invisibility of non-conceptual perception, it’s ultimately just a flippant *tu quoque* that Vyāsatīrtha wouldn’t defend in its own right.

begin to appreciate how the philosophical significance of Vyāsatīrtha's refutation extends beyond the narrow confines of Indian scholastic debates.

Section 1 of this essay follows Vyāsatīrtha's rehearsal of some initial arguments for and against the existence of non-conceptual perception. Section 2 examines Vyāsatīrtha's method of undercutting Gaṅgeśa's inductive generalization that all qualificative awareness-states are caused by a prior awareness of a qualifier, this general causal rule being the evidential basis for Gaṅgeśa's inference. Vyāsatīrtha shows that the awareness of a qualifier does not have the exclusive causal role that Gaṅgeśa takes it to have, meaning that there is no necessary causal role for non-conceptual perception to fulfill. In section 3, I explore several contemporary and classical attempts at justifying the posit of non-conceptual perception by appealing to its role in grounding Nyāya's direct realism. I instead suggest that Vyāsatīrtha's direct realism is no worse off without non-conceptual perception, given that he cites a more parsimonious set of causal mechanisms for directly tethering the mind to the world and selectively representing the world's structure. Section 4 looks at how the perception of absences stands as a counter-example to Gaṅgeśa's causal rule, and how Gaṅgeśa's ad hoc attempt to address this counter-example gives us reason to doubt that the awareness of a qualifier has any exclusive causal role in generating states of qualificative awareness. Section 5 raises a more fundamental counter-example to Gaṅgeśa's rule: qualificative states of memory (*smṛti*) are not themselves produced by an awareness of a qualifier. There is no obvious way of revising the rule to account for the counter-example of memory which will allow Gaṅgeśa to both maintain a causal uniformity across all mental states and still defend the unique existence of non-conceptual states. Section 6 considers how Vyāsatīrtha and Gaṅgeśa's commentator Rucidatta defuse the infinite regress of awareness-

states that threatens to result if memory were to replace non-conceptual perception as a cause of concept-laden perceptions. Section 7 raises a number of absurd consequences for Gaṅgeśa's claim that non-conceptual states are introspectively invisible. Section 8 highlights the various ways in which Gaṅgeśa's brand of non-conceptual perception is a fundamentally inert psychological and epistemological posit. Finally, section 9 draws several striking parallels between Vyāsatīrtha's views and the brand of conceptualism defended most notably by John McDowell, while also suggesting that Vyāsatīrtha's conceptualism isn't unduly constrained by some of the limiting assumptions of McDowell's account. To that extent, a fuller appreciation of Vyāsatīrtha's arguments may help us to see a way forward for both the classical and modern debates over non-conceptual perception.

### 1. Initial arguments for and against non-conceptual perception

Vyāsatīrtha begins by rehashing some of the arguments of Gaṅgeśa's *pūrvapakṣin*,<sup>5</sup> i.e., a prima facie opponent of *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa*, and then stating Gaṅgeśa's responses. The *pūrvapakṣin* claims that there is no warranted source of evidence for the existence of non-conceptual perception. Firstly, its existence can't be proven by direct perception, because Navya Naiyāyikas take non-conceptual awareness-states to be imperceptible or supersensible (*atīndriya*).<sup>6</sup> Earlier Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya thinkers didn't think that non-conceptual perceptions are introspectively invisible. For Kumārila (7<sup>th</sup> cent.) and Vācaspati (10<sup>th</sup> cent.), non-conceptual perceptions present an object in an unclear or confused manner (*saṃmugdha/saṃkīrṇa*; Taber 2005: 202 fn. 4). According to Keśava Miśra (13<sup>th</sup> cent.), a non-conceptual perception might

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<sup>5</sup> Phillips and Tatacharya (2009: 611) tentatively identify Gaṅgeśa's *pūrvapakṣin* as a Prābhākara Mīmāṃsaka.

<sup>6</sup> See *TCM*, 857.03-04; *BP* 58ab, 254.01

simply take the form, “This is something” (“*kiñcid idam*” *iti*).<sup>7</sup> Later, through acquiring relevant recognitional and linguistic capacities, a perceiver becomes able to perceptually classify the object by distinguishing its identifying properties. In principle, a perceiver could report the transition between the earlier and later perceptual experiences, stating, “This object wasn't clearly discerned by me before, but now I distinguish it clearly.” However, Gaṅgeśa believes that if a perceptual awareness is genuinely non-conceptual, then the object is not seen as qualified by any attributes whatsoever. Consequently, the initially indistinct perceptual awareness reported by the perceiver need not be interpreted as having been totally non-qualificative; like the subsequently more determinate perception, the initial awareness could also have identified its object under some qualifier. The determinate perception would differ from the former indeterminate one just insofar as the perceiver came to more clearly discern the identity of the object through recognizing more of its properties.<sup>8</sup> Sparse as it may be, the initial indistinct perception still has predicative content all the same, and therefore cannot be a genuinely *nirvikalpaka*, i.e., *niṣprakāra*, awareness on Gaṅgeśa's account.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, it turns out that there can't ever be any introspective reports of a non-conceptual state in the first place, because only *savikalpaka* awareness can bring about, and thus be inferred from, such reports.<sup>10</sup> Though it's possible to infer from a subject's statement, “There is a cow,” that the subject just had a perceptual awareness of the cow as qualified by cowhood, it's not possible to similarly infer the presence of a *nirvikalpaka* awareness—no one can ever talk about the *nirvikalpaka* awareness they just experienced.

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<sup>7</sup> *TB*, 36.29-30

<sup>8</sup> *TCM*, 857.05-06; *TT*, 484.06-08

<sup>9</sup> Tatacharya (1992: 320.05-09) confirms that a *nirvikalpaka* awareness could not properly be said to have the form, “This is something,” as “somethingness” (*kiñcittva*) would become the awareness's predicative content/*prakāratā*, thereby rendering the awareness to be *savikalpaka* in nature.

<sup>10</sup> *TCM*, 857.04-05

Since the existence of non-conceptual perception can't be established by direct perception or introspective report, it must be established inferentially. Vyāsatīrtha thus mentions three possible inferences, which are rejected by Gaṅgeśa's *prima facie* opponent. Two of the inferences are rather contrived and easily dismissed.<sup>11</sup> The third inference is more plausible, and was cited by Śāśadhara, a pre-Gaṅgeśa Naiyāyika, as being a conclusive proof of non-conceptual

<sup>11</sup> The two weakest inferences are raised at *TT*, 485.08-11. The first inference is mentioned by Śāśadhara (*NSD*, 45.21-22), and claims that the property of being an awareness (*jñānatva*) shares the same locus as the property of not having predicative content (*niṣprakārasamānādhikaraṇa*), because awarenesshood resides in all awareness-states (*sakalajñānavṛttitva*), just like the property of being existent (*sattā*). The example of *sattā* is a corroborating example (*sapakṣa*) insofar as it, being a property of all existing things, is a property of all awareness-states, and is also located in other things which technically lack predicative content as well, like a pot. In this way, every awareness is shown to lack predicative content, and hence be non-conceptual in nature. Yet, both Śāśadhara and Vyāsatīrtha agree that the proving property here—"being a property of all awareness-states"—is lacking in genuine probative power (*aprayojaka*). There is no supporting argument—no *anukūla-tarka*—which would conclusively prove that the proving property (*hetu*) cannot be found anywhere the target property (*sādhya*) is absent, in which case an opponent could suspect that the property of residing in all awareness-states could belong to awarenesshood even though awarenesshood does not share the same locus as the property of not having predicative content. In other words, the opponent could suspect that the *hetu* is present in the *pakṣa* without the *sādhya* also being present there. This inference would also absurdly result in an over-extensive application (*atiprasaṅga*): As Rāghavendratīrtha (*ND*, 485.12) explains, the same *hetu* could be used to prove that awarenesshood shares the same locus as pothood (*ghaṭatvasamānādhikaraṇa*). It's also possible to corroborate such a claim using the example of *sattā*, since *sattā* resides in all awareness-states and all pots. In a similar vein, Śāśadhara (*NSD*, 45.22) notes that the inference suffers from an undercutting defeater (*upādhi*), namely the property of residing in something which is not an awareness (*jñānatīrīktavṛttitva*). This property would pervade the target property, given that whatever shares the same locus as the property of not having predicative content—such as *sattā*—can also be found to reside in something which is not an awareness, like a pot. The proving property obviously cannot be found to reside in something which is not an awareness. Hence, the proving property is undercut—knowing that something resides in an awareness is not sufficient for knowing that it also shares the same locus with that which lacks predicative content, i.e., is non-conceptual.

The second inference tries to prove that the visual sense faculty is the chief instrumental cause of an awareness which is distinct from a concept-laden visual awareness (*cākṣuṣasavikalpakātīrīktajñānakaraṇa*)—i.e., a non-conceptual visual awareness—because the visual sense faculty is a chief instrumental cause of awareness-states (*jñānakaraṇatva*), just like the olfactory sense faculty. Śāśadhara mentions an undercutting defeater for this inference, as well: Anything that is the chief instrumental cause of an awareness which is distinct from a concept-laden visual awareness also has the property of being different from imperceptible light, whereas not every instrumental cause of awareness-states has such a property. According to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, the visual sense faculty is constituted by the material element of fire or light (*tejas*); this light illuminates the objects of vision although it itself is imperceptible (see *NS* 3.1.34, 3.1.42). The other non-visual sense faculties are constituted by material elements which are different from such imperceptible light, and they are the chief instrumental causes of non-visual concept-laden awareness-states. However, the visual sense faculty is not different from imperceptible light, so there is an instance of something which is a chief instrumental cause of awareness-states and which does not produce non-visual concept-laden awareness-states. More to the point, Gaṅgeśa's *prima facie* opponent (*TCM*, 863.03-04) and Vyāsatīrtha (see *ND*, 485.13) both agree that this sort of inference results in the absurd consequence that, rather than proving the existence of non-conceptual

perception.<sup>12</sup> After a night on the farm, one might look up immediately upon waking and have a concept-laden awareness of the form, “There is a cow” (“*gauḥ*”). Because this perception is a qualificative awareness, it must have been produced by a prior awareness of the property of cowhood, a property which serves to predicatively qualify the cow in the subsequent concept-laden perception of the cow *as* being a cow. Since this qualificative perception of the cow is supposed to be one’s first concept-laden awareness upon waking, it could not have been preceded by a previous concept-laden perception of cowhood, since then that perception would have been the first concept-laden awareness upon waking, thus pushing the problem back a step further. Nor could a qualificative awareness of some property other than cowhood produce the concept-laden awareness of the cow (*NSD*, 45.04-06). Finally, the predicative content of the concept-laden awareness—i.e., the property of cowhood—could not have been supplied by a memory trace (*saṃskāra*) left by a previous qualificative awareness of a cow. Memory traces can give rise to occurrent memories, and can also contribute their content to perceptual states. But, in order to do so, a memory trace must be activated by some trigger (*udbodhaka*), or else the trace would remain dormant and wouldn’t transfer its content to a subsequent awareness. For the memory trace to cause the initial concept-laden awareness of the cow after waking, it would need to be activated by a non-conceptual awareness (*NSD*, 46.06-08). The activating awareness couldn’t be a concept-laden awareness, since then that would again become the first concept-laden awareness upon waking, which is supposed to be the subject of the inference and would hence need to be produced by yet another prior awareness of a qualifier (*Ibid.*, 45.06-07). Thus, a non-conceptual awareness must be admitted as the cause of the concept-laden perception.

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perceptions, it could prove the existence of some unrecognized third type of awareness that is neither non-conceptual nor concept-laden.

<sup>12</sup> *NSD*, 45.03-04: “*jāgarādyasavikalpakam janyaviśeṣaṇajñānajanayam janyaviśiṣṭajñānatvāt. daṇḍī puruṣa iti jñānavaditi.*”

Against Śāśadhara, Vyāsatīrtha raises an objection to this inference on behalf of the Naiyāyika’s prima facie opponent.<sup>13</sup> The inferential example cited by Śāśadhara is defective insofar as it fails to exemplify the property to be proved. As a corroborating example (*sapakṣa*) of another qualificative awareness which is produced by a prior awareness of a qualifier, Śāśadhara mentions the perceptual awareness, “There is a man holding a stick” (“*daṇḍī puruṣaḥ*”). This awareness is doubly qualificative (*viśiṣṭavaiśiṣṭyāvagāhijñāna*), as the main qualificand (the man) is qualified by an entity (the stick) which is itself qualified by another property (stickhood). Śāśadhara and other Naiyāyikas would insist that “There is a man holding a stick” must be preceded by a prior awareness of the qualifier, i.e., “There is a stick,” since one cannot identify the man as having a stick unless one were already aware of the stick itself.

However, Vyāsatīrtha makes a point which will be central to his own arguments against non-

<sup>13</sup> A separate objection to Śāśadhara’s inference is raised by Gaṅgeśa’s prima facie opponent in *Tattvacintāmaṇi*. Non-conceptual awareness is not the only possible trigger for activating the relevant memory trace of a past experience with cows. The trigger does not have to be a state of awareness at all; it could be the case that whatever caused one to wake is also the cause of the memory trace’s activation, which then produces the initial concept-laden awareness of the cow. There is no uniformity as to what triggers the activation of memory traces; it could be a certain cognitive state, it could be some unobservable karmic force (*adrṣṭa*), or it could be any of the other disparate factors listed in *NS* 3.2.41, which is likely the “*prañidhānādi-sūtra*” directly referenced by Gaṅgeśa (*TCM*, 862.01) (contra Bhattacharyya 1993: 43 and Phillips and Tatacharya 2009: 622, who read the phrase as a reference to the *Yogasūtra*. Also, see *TCMP*, 862.18-19: “*nirantarābhyāsa ityādisūtram*”, and *NS* 3.2.41, 877.06: “...*nibandhābhyāsa*...”). Any of these factors may be present, and still the memory trace may fail to be activated; none of them is an invariable cause of activation (*TCM*, 861.16). The ultimate point is that non-conceptual awareness need not be posited in order to explain how an activated memory trace may produce the initial concept-laden awareness of the cow upon waking.

One more objection to Śāśadhara’s invocation of memory traces is offered by Gaṅgeśa’s commentator Jayadeva, namely that if the concept-laden awareness of the cow upon waking is to be produced by an activated memory trace, then that awareness would take the form of a recognition, i.e., “This is that cow that I remember seeing before” (*TCMA*, 817.14-16; cf. Bhattacharyya 1993: 41-2). According to Navya Nyāya, when a memory trace contributes some predicative content—in this case, the property of cowhood—to a current perceptual state, we get a hybrid concept-laden recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) that is part perceptual and part recollective. Memory states carry an implicit grasp of their causal origins in past experience, such that their content is marked by an additional property of having been experienced in the past—Gaṅgeśa terms this property “thatness” (*tattā*) (see *TCM*, 886.01; Phillips & Tatacharya 2009: 671-3). So, the awakened memory trace of previously experienced cowhood would lead to a perceptual recognition of the cow as being identical with “that” cow which was seen before. But, this perceptual recognition is not what has been postulated as the inferential site (*pakṣa*); that is, the sort of concept-laden awareness that occurs immediately after waking is not supposed to be recognitional (*pratyabhijñā*). Thus, Śāśadhara’s strategy of citing activated memory traces to prove non-conceptual awareness cannot be salvaged, which is why Gaṅgeśa will offer another inferential proof of his own.

conceptual perception, namely that a prior awareness of the qualifier is unnecessary because both the qualifier and the qualificand—here, the stick and the man—are perceived simultaneously, both being in contact with the visual sense faculty at the same time. Consequently, the awareness “There is a man holding a stick” could arise without a perceiver having to first cognize the qualifying stick separately. Instead, both the man and the stick are simultaneously grasped as being connected together, or rather, they are not grasped as being unrelated (*asaṃsargāgraha*); if they were grasped simultaneously but as unrelated, then one would not perceive the man as holding a stick. The larger point is that this same reasoning can apply to our awareness of the stick itself. Naiyāyikas would claim that the perceptual identification of a stick as a stick requires that one have a prior non-conceptual awareness of stickhood. In such an awareness, both the property of stickhood and the stick itself are cognized together, but not as connected (though not as divorced, either (Phillips 2001:105)). Vyāsatīrtha is here suggesting that if stickhood and stick are both simultaneously present to the senses and are not grasped as being unrelated, then that is enough to produce the concept-laden perceptual awareness of the stick as predicated by its stickhood, without requiring a prior non-conceptual awareness of unconnected stick and stickhood.

Having rejected the above argument on behalf of Gaṅgeśa’s opponent, Vyāsatīrtha then articulates Gaṅgeśa’s main inference for the existence of non-conceptual perception, which can be rendered as follows: One’s very first concept-laden perception of a cow, expressible in the form “That is a cow,” is generated by a prior awareness of the qualifier such as cowhood, because the concept-laden perception is a qualificative awareness.<sup>14</sup> This line of argument rests

<sup>14</sup> *TCM*, 863.05-06: “*prāthamikaṃ gaur iti pratyakṣaṃ jñānaṃ janyaviśeṣaṇajñānajanyaṃ janyaviśiṣṭajñānavāt anumitivat.*” The adjective “generated” (*janya*) is added as an adjective to the probandum (“*janyaviśeṣaṇajñānajanyaṃ*”) and the probans (“*janyaviśiṣṭajñānavāt*”) in order to make an exception for the states of perceptual awareness belonging to God (*īśvara*), which are eternal and so could never be causally



upon the invariable concomitance rule that every qualificative awareness (*viśiṣṭajñāna*) is produced in part by a prior awareness of that qualifier (*viśeṣaṇajñāna*) which is predicated to an object in the subsequent qualificative awareness.<sup>15</sup> The rule relates back to the Nyāya understanding of qualificative awareness-states as identifying objects through descriptions or information about them—identifying information must be known beforehand in order for it to be used for picking out some particular entity. Gaṅgeśa gives other examples of cognitive identification that would be based on the prior awareness of a relevant qualifier. For instance, one may infer from a distance that a mountain is on fire because of the visible presence of smoke there. In the inferential knowledge that the mountain has fire (“*parvato vahnimān*”), the fire is cognized as qualifying the mountain. For this qualificative awareness to arise at the conclusion of the inferential process, one has to have an antecedent understanding of the probandum (*sādhyaprasiddhi*)—i.e., fire—as existing everywhere that the probans—i.e., smoke—is present; understanding fire in this way is what leads one to have a qualificative awareness that identifies the mountain as having a fire on it.<sup>16</sup> Another example comes from the Nyāya theory of

generated by some prior awareness-states. The rule that qualificative states of awareness are produced by a prior awareness of a qualifier holds just for mortal, non-omniscient beings; I will be referring just to these sorts of mortal awareness-states for the rest of the essay, and will ignore translating “*janya*” as an adjective in compounds such as “*janyaviśeṣaṇajñāna*,” “*janyaviśiṣṭajñāna*,” and so on.

<sup>15</sup> Gaṅgeśa’s own definition of perception as “*jñāna-akaraṇakam*” (TCM, 595.01) allows that a *viśiṣṭa-jñāna* can be perceptual even though it is directly preceded by another awareness. That is, any awareness which does not have another awareness as its chief instrumental cause (*karaṇa*) counts as an instance of perception. A chief cause is understood as bringing about its effect through the operation of some intermediate cause (*vyāpāra*); in the case of perception, the connection of an object with the sensory organs gives rise to a *nirvikalpaka* awareness, which in turn produces a *savikalpaka* awareness. See Phillips & Tatacharya 2009: 334-335 for more discussion.

<sup>16</sup> It’s not clear whether having a prior acquaintance with a probandum entails that one also should know that the probandum pervades a certain probans; according to Matilal (1986: 347), the idea of *sādhyaprasiddhi* is just that if one is going to draw proper inferences about some probandum like fire, one ought to have knowledge of what fire is through some acceptable *pramāṇa*. Hence, the fallacy of *sādhyaprasiddhi* is one where the probandum is not “well-known,” as for example when someone tries to infer from the presence of smoke that there is fire which made of gold (*kāñcanamayavahni*); here, the delimiting property of the probandum, i.e., the property of being made of gold, does not actually exist in the probandum itself, i.e., fire. Once one is aware of this fallacy, one will be blocked from thinking that the smoke on a particular mountain is pervaded by such golden fire, thereby preventing one from drawing the conclusion that golden fire exists on the mountain. But

perceptual illusion, according to which erroneous perceptions involve a memory-based misattribution of a qualifier to an object (Phillips & Tatacharya 2009: 615). Ultimately, all these specific cases are taken by Gaṅgeśa as evidence for the general causal rule that, absent any counter-considerations, all qualificative awareness-states are produced by a prior awareness of a qualifier.<sup>17</sup>

Having established this general causal rule concerning states of qualificative awareness, Gaṅgeśa is thus led to postulate the existence of *nirvikalpaka* perceptions, because not all prior acquaintance with a qualifying feature can come from past cognitive states. Being direct realists about the external world, Gaṅgeśa and other Naiyāyikas take all our knowledge to be grounded upon perception and its immediate causal contact with that world.<sup>18</sup> With that in mind, Gaṅgeśa

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that being the case, *sādhyā-prasiddhi* may consist in the knowledge of what fire is *such that it would pervade smoke*; the fallacy of *sādhyā-aprasiddhi* would thus be an instance of the general fallacy of not establishing that a probans is pervaded by or concomitant with a probandum (*vyāpyatvāsiddhi*—see Vattanky 2003: 342-344).

Mentioning that *sādhyā-prasiddhi* entails the knowledge that a probandum pervades a probans allows us to bypass Vyāsatīrtha’s first objection to Gaṅgeśa (*TT*, 487.07-488.03), one which was already raised by Gaṅgeśa’s commentators Rucidatta and Jayadeva (see Bhattacharyya 1993: 18-21). Rucidatta points out that, strictly speaking, one’s antecedent understanding of a probandum (*sādhyāprasiddhi*) is not the actual cause (*kāraṇa/hetu*) of inferential knowledge (*anumiti*)—the mere awareness of fire as such (*vahnijñāna*) does not directly cause one to infer that fire is on the mountain (“*parvato vahnimān*”). Rather, the actual cause of inferential knowledge is one’s knowledge of a relevant concomitance rule (*vyāptijñāna*), e.g., that smoke is pervaded by fire. As he puts it, when an awareness of a *vyāpti* is present, the inferential conclusion is not delayed in arising by a delay in the awareness of the probandum as such (*TCMP*, 858.22-24). Jayadeva further explains that if *sādhyā-prasiddhi* were an awareness which preceded the awareness of concomitance, then it would be twice removed from the inferential knowledge, since it is a cause of the *vyāpti-jñāna* which is itself the direct cause of the *anumiti*. Just as a potter’s father is considered to be causally irrelevant (*anyathāsiddha*) for the production of a pot, the prior awareness of the probandum, being a cause of a cause (*hetuhetu*) would be also be causally irrelevant, and hence would not serve as evidence for the causal rule that qualificative awareness-states must be produced by a prior awareness of a qualifier. (Vyāsatīrtha raises this same objection at *TT*, 488.01-03.) Jayadeva’s solution is to identify *sādhyā-prasiddhi* with the *vyāpti-jñāna*, making it the cause of inferential knowledge and presumably restoring its status as the awareness of a qualifier—e.g., the awareness of fire as a pervader of smoke—that brings about a qualificative state of inferential knowledge (*TCMA*, 811.15-812.13). Vyāsatīrtha would seem to reject Jayadeva’s solution; see discussion of *TT*, 494.07-10 in section 4 below. In short, the problem is that a *vyāpti-jñāna* doesn’t cause inferential knowledge in the way that an awareness of a qualifier generally causes qualificative awareness, since the content of the *vyāpti-jñāna* doesn’t become the predicative content of the inferential knowledge-state. So, the case of inference would not support Gaṅgeśa’s general causal rule.

<sup>17</sup> *TCM*, 860.04-06; *TT*, 487.02-05

<sup>18</sup> Perception is thus spoken of by Naiyāyikas as being the “pre-eminent” source of knowledge (*jyeṣṭhapramāṇa*), and as being that upon which inference depends for its epistemic livelihood (*pratyakṣopajīvakatva*; see Phillips

restricts the scope (*pakṣa*) of his inference to one's first concept-laden/qualificative awareness of a cow: If one has never experienced a cow before, then one couldn't depend on the memory of previously experienced cows for identifying the presently perceived object as a cow, that is, for seeing the cow as qualified by cowhood. Nor should we resort to claiming that one's first concept-laden awareness of a cow in this life arises from a memory of cowhood that is itself generated by a memory trace of previously experienced cows in one's past lives, a trace which could've been activated by some unobservable karmic forces. Such activated memory traces are routinely cited by Indian philosophers to explain the purposive activity of newborn infants, who evidently know to stop crying and seek nourishment from a mother's breast which they're seeing for the first time.<sup>19</sup> Through remembering that this object is the sort of thing that can fulfill my desire for nourishment, the infant then intentionally reaches out to feed. But whereas this memory is evoked by certain karmic forces (specifically, *jīvana-adr̥ṣṭa*) which are responsible for autonomic actions involved in biological preservation, one's first-time perception of a cow can't be so evoked since it obviously serves no essential biological function (*TCM*, 863.10-11).<sup>20</sup> Another disanalogy: Memory from past lives has to be invoked in the case of the newborn infant just because it can't directly perceive the breast as having the property of fulfilling its desire for nourishment (*iṣṭasādhanatā*). But, invoking the same need for memory in the case of seeing a cow for the time would imply that cowhood isn't directly perceptible, which would mean that one couldn't have a qualificative perception of the cow to begin with.<sup>21</sup>

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1997: 129, 356 n. 34).

<sup>19</sup> e.g., *NS* 3.1.21, 745

<sup>20</sup> See Sinha 2014: 156-61 for a discussion of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika accounts of autonomic willing (*jīvanayoniyatna*) which are produced by *jīvana-adr̥ṣṭa*.

<sup>21</sup> *TT*, 485.11-486.02; *ND*, 486.16-17

There is another absurd consequence of positing that the first-time perception of a cow is preceded by a memory of cowhood arising from an activated memory trace from past lives. It's not just that this posit is less parsimonious than supposing that there's just an immediate non-conceptual awareness of cowhood. Additionally, if it were the case that the activated memory trace was sufficient to cause a memory of cowhood even while one's visual sense faculty was in direct contact with the cowhood present in this cow, then it should follow that we would constantly remember objects which were experienced in past lives, rather than simply perceiving those same objects which are directly present to our senses in this life—as a result, direct perceptual awareness would again be impossible.<sup>22</sup> Instead, it should be accepted that the sensory connection with an object (*indriyārthasannikarṣa*) is the cause only of perception, and that it is a sufficient enough cause to produce a perceptual awareness even if all the causal conditions for

<sup>22</sup> *TT*, 486.03. Gaṅgeśa and Vyāsatīrtha mention one more negative consequence of accepting that sense-object contact (*indriyārthasannikarṣa*) can cause a memory instead of a perception, and thus of admitting that the set of causal conditions (*sāmagrī*) of memory is stronger than that of perception. One's knowledge of the Vedas is derived from reliable testimony, and reliable testimony must ultimately originate from someone who has directly experienced the object of testimony. Thus, the ancient sages to whom the Vedas were originally revealed must have a direct experience (*anubhava*) of the Vedic sounds and their meanings. However, if the causal conditions for memory (*smṛtisāmagrī*) are stronger than that of direct experience (*anubhavasāmagrī*), then even the sages would only have a memory of the Vedas, rather than directly experiencing them (*TCM*, 863.18: "... nityānāṃ vaidikārthānāṃ ca smaraṇaṃ syāt na tv anubhavaḥ."). But, the sages are supposed to be "seers" of the Vedas, to whom the Vedic sounds and meanings are directly revealed. Hence, this inability to accommodate the direct experience of Vedic sages serves as a reductio of the claim that, in having a stronger set of causal conditions, memory can arise instead of a direct perceptual awareness, and specifically that memory could arise from sense-object contact instead of a non-conceptual perception in order to generate one's first concept-laden awareness of a cow.

There are two curious points to note with this argument. First, Naiyāyikas actually reject the view that Vedic sounds/syllables are eternal, or that they are eternally linked with their meanings. Instead, the Vedic mantras were composed by God (*īśvara*), and got their meanings/referents through the linguistic conventions he created. We might then suspect that Gaṅgeśa is drawing out an undesirable consequence for the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsaka, who would take the Vedas to be eternal, and who is the ostensible target of Gaṅgeśa's arguments in his *Nirvikalpavāda* (Phillips and Tatacharya 2009: 611). Second, it is peculiar that Gaṅgeśa only mentions this consequence concerning the Vedas, as it overlooks the more obvious consequence that we would continually recollect objects experienced in past lives whenever our sense faculties made contact with them in this life. This undesirable consequence is supplied by Vyāsatīrtha (*TT*, 486.07-08: "*anyathā janmāntarānubhūtānāṃ etajjanmani indriyasannikṛṣṭānāṃ...*"); it is unclear whether his doing so suggests a lacuna in received *TCM* manuscripts, or is instead a charitable addition to Gaṅgeśa's argument.

memory (i.e., a memory trace and an activating trigger) are also present. Therefore, the prior acquaintance with cowhood which is required for seeing the object as a cow must come from perception itself, specifically in the form of a pre-predicative, unqualified, *nirvikalpaka* perceptual awareness that arises immediately after the eyes make contact with the object, and immediately prior to the arising of the qualificative awareness.

Finally, there is a powerful argument for why this perceptual awareness of a qualifier must be non-conceptual, i.e., pre-predicative and non-qualificative: If all qualificative awareness-states were produced by the prior awareness of a qualifier, then an infinite regress would result if the prior awareness of a qualifier were itself qualificative. In other words, if the qualifier cowhood must itself be cognized as qualified by some other property, then this qualificative awareness of cowhood would require as its cause another prior awareness of that qualifying property; and if this latter awareness is again qualificative, then the regress of awareness-states continues, leading to the undesirable consequence that an infinite series of awareness-states would have to occur before a single qualificative perception could arise.<sup>23</sup> To avoid this regress, Gaṅgeśa thus claims that before one can for the first time perceive a cow as a cow, one must

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<sup>23</sup> *TT*, 486.09-12. Gaṅgeśa raises different forms of the regress objection in both the *pūrvapakṣa* and *siddhānta* portions of his *Nirvikalpavāda*. In the *pūrvapakṣa* section, a prima facie defender and a denier of non-conceptual perception both accuse each other's positions of leading to an infinite regress. The defender invokes the version of the regress stated above, which would result if a qualificative awareness were caused by a prior *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna* that was itself qualificative (*TCM*, 861.11-12). The denier of non-conceptual perception responds by arguing that the defender can't avoid inferring that all awareness is produced by a prior *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna*, in which case a regress follows because even non-conceptual awareness would have to be produced by a prior *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna* (see Phillips and Tatacharya 2009: 621-622). The first mention of the regress objection in Gaṅgeśa's own voice comes at *TCM*, 864.01-03: “*na ca gotvajñānaṃ gotvajñānajanyaṃ janyajñānajanyaṃ janyaviśeṣajñānajanyaṃ cety anyatra darśanāt prathamam na gotvānubhava iti vācyam. ekasya eva janyajanakatvānavacchedakatvāt anavasthāpātāc ca.*” “Nor can the following objection be stated: ‘Because it is observed elsewhere that the awareness of cowhood is generated by another awareness of a cowhood, which is generated by a prior awareness that is itself generated by a prior awareness of a qualifier, the first awareness [in the sequence that leads to the first-time qualificative perception of a cow] is not a non-mnemonic experience of cowhood (*gotvānubhava*).’ That is because the same thing cannot be the delimiting property of something's being a cause and something's being an effect, and because there is an infinite regress.” The responses of Vyāsātīrtha and Gaṅgeśa's commentator Rucidatta to the regress objection are discussed in section 6.

have a direct perceptual acquaintance with cowhood itself, shorn of any other qualifying features, any delimiting modes of presentation, and any cognized association with the particular cowhood-possessing cow.<sup>24</sup>

## 2. Does non-conceptual perception have any exclusive causal role?

Vyāsatīrtha's main strategy for refuting Gaṅgeśa's account of non-conceptual awareness is to put sustained pressure on the general causal rule that all qualificative awareness-states are caused by a prior awareness of a qualifier. Again, absent any phenomenological evidence, this rule is Gaṅgeśa's sole basis for defending the existence of non-conceptual states; so, if the rule is shown to be untenable, then Gaṅgeśa's posit of non-conceptual awareness is demonstrated to be baseless. Vyāsatīrtha first tries to show that the awareness of a qualifier is causally irrelevant or superfluous (*anyathāsiddha*) for the production of a qualificative perceptual awareness.

According to later Naiyāyikas, even if something invariably precedes the arising of a certain effect, that thing can be shown to be causally irrelevant to the production of that effect if there is some other invariably preceding entity whose presence is more parsimoniously related (*laghuniyata*; see *TSP*, 128.08, Bagchi 1953: 175-178). Vyāsatīrtha therefore points out cases in which the prior awareness of a qualificand is also necessary for the subsequent production of a qualificative awareness.<sup>25</sup> Nyāya understands states of error (*viparyaya*) and doubt (*saṁśaya*) to involve the attribution of a qualificand with features that it does not actually possess—e.g., perceptual error erroneously attributes a rope with the property of snakehood, while doubt classifies a distant object as being either a post or a person. These non-veridical states of

<sup>24</sup> Indeed, even in the qualificative perception of a cow as a cow, the direct non-conceptual acquaintance with cowhood remains; the property of cowhood is not itself qualified or delimited by any other property. See Phillips and Tatacharya 2009: 631-632.

<sup>25</sup> *TT*, 489.07-490.05

qualificative awareness would not occur unless there was a prior awareness of the qualificand which, due to its apparent similarity with other objects, triggers the recollection of properties that don't in fact belong to it. In addition, the prior awareness of a qualificand is necessary for generating inferential knowledge—one cannot cognize a mountain as being fire-possessing without first cognizing the mountain itself. From these particular cases, then, we could derive the general causal rule that states of qualificative awareness are produced by a prior awareness of a qualificand (*viśeṣyajñāna*). This rule would not only contradict Gaṅgeśa's rule that it is an awareness of a qualifier (*viśeṣaṇajñāna*) which produces qualificative awareness, but it would also displace his main reason for positing the existence of non-conceptual perception.

Of course, Gaṅgeśa and other Naiyāyikas would agree that a qualificand also appears in a non-conceptual awareness of a qualifier, since both the qualifier and qualificand are part of the causal conditions necessary for generating a perceptual awareness. Before perceptually identifying an object as a stick, for instance, one would first have a non-conceptual perception of both stickhood (*daṇḍatva*) and the stick, although both objects would appear by themselves, rather than as being related together in their respective roles as qualifier and qualificand.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, by acknowledging that non-conceptual perception is necessarily an awareness of a qualificand as well, Gaṅgeśa would no longer be holding that non-conceptual perception causes a

<sup>26</sup> Matilal (1986: 351) misleadingly asserts that only the qualifying property is presented in a non-conceptual awareness, and that the qualificand is presented only in a subsequent concept-laden perception. Instead, the Navya Nyāya view is that the qualifier and qualificand must both be presented in a non-conceptual awareness, if not also the relation that links them (for discussion, see Bhattacharyya 1990b: 172-6; see also the arguments in Mahādeva's *Nyāyakaustubha*—*NKau*, 195.08-15). Though, Matilal is of course not without a point here. Even though the qualificand should be presented in a non-conceptual perception, later Naiyāyikas would insist that the non-conceptual awareness of the qualificand does not play the same sort of causal role that the awareness of the qualifier plays in generating a subsequent qualificative awareness. The reasons for attributing the *viśeṣaṇajñāna* with an exclusive causal role are explained below. Perhaps it is to more sharply distinguish this exclusive causal role that later Naiyāyikas deny the causal necessity of a *viśeṣya-jñāna*, and instead attribute a causal role merely to the connection between one's senses and a qualificand (*viśeṣyendriyasannikarṣa*). This sensory connection is sufficient for the qualificand to appear in a qualificative perception; see *NKau*, 199.08-12.

subsequent qualificative awareness solely in virtue of its being an awareness of a qualifier. As a result, the awareness of a qualifier would become superfluous, no longer fulfilling the necessary causal role which Gaṅgeśa has cited as motivating his entire defense of non-conceptual perception.

In response to Vyāsatīrtha's objection, Naiyāyikas will maintain that, even if a qualificand figures in the content of a non-conceptual perception, it is only in virtue of being an awareness of a relevant qualifier that the perception generates a subsequent qualificative awareness. Now, to justify this reply, and explain why causal priority rests exclusively with the awareness of a qualifier and not of a qualificand, it is not enough to cite with Matilal the Nyāya theory of descriptive object-identification, i.e., the view that "I cannot identify an object unless I already possess some information about it" (1986: 350). Even if I couldn't identify an object without first being aware of its identifying qualities, I also wouldn't be able to identify the object if I weren't first acquainted with the thing which is to be identified. In other words, if I were only aware of the qualifying property *F* without yet being aware of object *a*, I still wouldn't be able to subsequently identify that *a* is *F*. Nor can we yet answer Vyāsatīrtha's objection by reiterating with Phillips (and Gaṅgeśa) that a qualificative perception must be produced by a non-conceptual awareness of a qualifier because all other states of qualificative awareness are similarly caused by an awareness of a qualifier (2001: 109). Aside from being subject to numerous counter-examples as Vyāsatīrtha will show, this causal rule on its own does not explain why the awareness of a qualifier has a special role in producing a qualificative awareness.

Gaṅgeśa's commentator Jayadeva offers a more pertinent explanation of why the causal function of non-conceptual awareness rests with its being an awareness of a qualifier



(*viśeṣaṇajñāna*), even though the same awareness is inevitably also an awareness of a qualificand.<sup>27</sup> The reason has to do with how relations are known. According to Jayadeva, a relation is to be described primarily in terms of its qualifying relatum, not the relatum which is qualified or both relata. (That is, a *sambandha* is *pratiyogi-nirūpya*, not *anuyogi-nirūpya* or *ubhaya-nirūpya*.) Simply put, if one learns of the presence of an inherence relation, one should then ask, “The inherence of what?” If the answer is, say, “The inherence of cowhood (in a cow),” then cowhood would serve as the relation’s “determining correlate” (*nirūpaka*), i.e., the thing which determines or describes that relation by answering such an “of-what” question. As it turns out, a relation is to be determined or described by that property which qualifies another object through being so related to it—in other words, the qualifier will be the relation’s *pratiyogin* while the qualificand will be the relation’s *anuyogin*. Consequently, the awareness of a relation’s determining correlate will take priority in explaining the production of a subsequent qualificative awareness which has that relation (*vaiśiṣṭya*) as its object.<sup>28</sup> The example cited by Jayadeva is an inherence relation which binds a color-trope to a substance; as the qualifying relatum (*pratiyogin*) of the inherence relation, the color can be presented as qualifying or identifying the substance in which it inheres. The qualificative awareness which takes that inherence relation as its object will identify the substance as possessing, and hence as being qualified by, that color (e.g., “*rūpavān*”; “The substance has a color”). The ordered structure of the qualificative awareness can therefore be explained by the causal process that gives rise to it: Being produced

<sup>27</sup> *TCMA*, 813.17-814.15

<sup>28</sup> It is somewhat curious why Gaṅgeśa does not straightforwardly explain the necessary causal role of a *viśeṣaṇajñāna* in producing a *viśiṣṭajñāna* as being due to a qualificative relation’s (*vaiśiṣṭya*) structure being determined by its qualifying relatum (*pratiyoginirūpyatva*), instead opting to inductively establish the general causal relation between *viśeṣaṇajñāna* and *viśiṣṭajñāna* on the basis of specific instances of this relation (e.g., inference, verbal understanding, perceptual illusion, etc.). Jayadeva suggests that Gaṅgeśa settles for generalizing his rule from particular instances because they are easier to focus on (*samādhisaukaryāt*) (*TCMA*, 815.18-816.12).

by a prior awareness of the inherence relation's qualifying relatum (*pratiyogin*)—i.e., the color—the subsequent qualificative awareness will cognize that relation such that the color is the one which qualifies the substance in which it inheres, and not the other way around. Conversely, if it were the case that a prior awareness of the qualified relatum (*anuyogin*) was responsible for generating a qualificative awareness, then we would see the color as possessing a substance (“*dravyavad rūpam*”; “The color has a substance”), which is absurd. Contrived as these technicalities may seem, they give us the clearest reasons for thinking that the non-conceptual perception of a qualifier has an exceptional causal role in the generation of qualificative perceptions.

### **3. Does direct realism need non-conceptual perception?**

Jayadeva's explanation also points us toward a more accurate understanding of why non-conceptual perception is supposed to undergird Navya Nyāya's direct realism, i.e., the view that the mind can perceptually experience external objects as they are, without needing to also perceive any other intervening mental entities. Before seeing how non-conceptual perception ought to ground Nyāya's direct realism, we can first examine two possible ways of accounting for this grounding relation. First, non-conceptual perception could support Nyāya realism by directly presenting the world as it is. Yet, as Chakrabarti rightly objects, non-conceptual perception cannot literally present things as they are, given that “things really are qualified” (2001: 4)—that is, substances actually possess qualities, universals, and relations, whereas non-conceptual perception does not present these features as belonging to substances. Indeed, Gaṅgeśa thinks that non-conceptual states of awareness do not present the world in either a

veridical or non-veridical manner<sup>29</sup>, because the veridicality or non-veridicality of an awareness is tied to its qualificative content—an awareness will be veridical if it qualifies an object *a* with property F when *a* is in fact F, and non-veridical if it qualifies *a* with F when *a* is not in fact F.<sup>30</sup> Because non-conceptual awareness does not possess any qualificative content, it therefore falls outside of the scope of veridicality. Being unable to qualify *a* as being F when *a* is in fact F (and F is otherwise perceptible), there is a strict sense in which non-conceptual perception could never present *a* as it actually is.

Another way that non-conceptual perception could ground Nyāya realism is by establishing a direct causal relation between the mind and the world, one which ensures that other mental states will present the world in a veridical manner even if the non-conceptual state itself does not. According to Chadha, the directness of the causal relation is due to non-conceptual perception’s operating prior to any “top-down” intervention of the mind on the perceptual process; as she writes, “Indeterminate perception provides the direct causal link between the sense organ and the property in the world without any intervening subjective elements” such as language and conceptual information stored in memory (2014: 297). On the Nyāya theory of perceptual illusion, the possibility of error arises at the level of determinate, concept-laden awareness, when these sorts of “subjective elements” can be improperly introduced through the misfiring of a memory trace (*saṃskāra*). Being triggered by the sight of a rope’s snakelike appearance, for example, one’s memory of a previously experienced snake may fuse with current sensory inputs to generate the illusory awareness of the rope as being a snake. Whether or not we accept that the property of snakehood is really present to the mind when we

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<sup>29</sup> TCM, 441.01-02

<sup>30</sup> TCM, 434.01-437.02

erroneously perceive a rope as a snake<sup>31</sup>, the relevant point is this: The memory-based concept of snakehood is available to be misattributed by the mind only because it was acquired via a previous veridical experience of a snake as qualified by snakehood; and this veridical experience, in order to avoid an infinite regress of qualificative perceptions, is itself grounded upon the direct non-conceptual encounter with snakehood as such (Phillips 2001: 110; see also Dasti 2012).

But, explaining the unique role of non-conceptual perception in purely causal terms is also a dead-end. Not only do these causal interpretations fail to capture why an awareness of a qualifier should take priority in establishing a direct link with reality, but they also don't gain purchase against Vyāsātīrtha's more simple and straightforward explanation. Strictly speaking, what provides an immediate causal link between "the sense organ and the property in the world" is just the connection (*sannikarṣa*) that a functioning sense faculty establishes with an object and its properties—a non-conceptual perceptual awareness, on the other hand, arises only after such a connection has been established. So, if the truth of direct realism is to be grounded upon the mind's having an immediate causal link with the objects of perception (whatever those may be), then it would seem redundant for a Naiyāyika to cite non-conceptual awareness as playing such a grounding role. Since it is a sensory connection which directly links the mind with the contents

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<sup>31</sup> Leaving aside their total rejection of the existence of universals, Dvaita Vedāntins offer a "fresh" (*abhinava*) version of Nyāya's "misattribution" theory of perceptual error (*anyathākhyāti*), one which denies the Nyāya belief that real snakehood is included as the content of the rope-snake illusion. In seeing a rope as a snake, Dvaitins deny that we are directly aware of real snakehood, present elsewhere in actual snakes but absent in the rope before me, through an extra-ordinary sensory relation (*alaukikasannikarṣa*). Rather, the snakehood which is erroneously superimposed (*āropita*) onto the rope is simply non-existent; the illusion just consists in the presentation of something non-existent as existing in the object which is actually being seen. The veridical perception of a real snake may indeed be responsible for my memory trace of snakehood, but whether or not the snakehood superimposed by memory onto the rope actually exists elsewhere is irrelevant to the content of the illusion. In short, it doesn't make sense to the Dvaitin that a non-existent entity could enter into a sensory relation with the mind. See Williams 2017 and Sharma 1962: 131-136 for more discussion.

of awareness, non-conceptual perception is also unnecessary for the purposes of ensuring that we are aware of real objects.<sup>32</sup>

There is one more explanation offered by Phillips (2001: 110; Phillips and Tatacharya 2009: 610) of how non-conceptual perception supports Nyāya realism, one which builds on the causal explanation while also getting closer to Jayadeva's own account. When my sense faculties are put in contact with an object, they are also put into contact with all of that object's perceptible properties. Yet, many of those properties may go unnoticed in my experience of the object. For example, in seeing a horse as a horse, I may fail to notice all of the other properties that the horse possesses—I may fail to see all of the horse's spots, or its property of having uncloven hooves, or its non-visible property of having a soft fur coat. Since my perceptual awareness only identifies the horse as having horsehood, there must be some prior causal step in the production of the awareness which is responsible for selecting the property of horsehood and filtering out all of its other innumerable properties. On its own, sensory contact with an object (*indriyārthasannikarṣa*) is insufficient for serving such a selective function, given that it

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<sup>32</sup> Vyāsaśrītha points out how the role of an operative sensory connection (*sannikarṣa*) in presenting the mind with real objects also vitiates the support that perceptual illusion is supposed to lend to Gaṅgeśa's general causal rule that all qualificative awareness is produced by an awareness of a qualifier. On the Nyāya account, the qualificative, albeit illusory, awareness of a rope as a snake is caused by the mistriggered memory of snakehood; the memory serves as an awareness of the qualifying property (*viśeṣaṇajñāna*) that leads to the erroneous attribution of snakehood to a rope in the subsequent illusory awareness. As Vyāsaśrītha notes, however, Naiyāyikas believe that the memory-awareness itself serves as an extra-ordinary sensory connection (*alaukikasannikarṣa*) with the qualifying property, such that through the memory of snakehood, one is directly aware of that real property in the world even as it is being falsely ascribed to the seen rope. If that is the case, then the memory-awareness is causing the subsequent perceptual illusion not by virtue of being an awareness of a qualifier (*viśeṣaṇajñānatva*), but by virtue of its serving as a sensory connection with that qualifier (*viśeṣaṇasannikarṣatva*). Further, it is more parsimonious for the causal role of memory to be delimited by its being a sensory connection with a qualifier, and not by its being an awareness (*jñāna*) of a qualifier, given that Naiyāyikas also admit that non-cognitive states like desire (*icchā*) and volition (*kṛti*) can also produce a qualificative perceptual awareness through serving as the extraordinary sensory connection with its contents (see *JLVR*, 60ff and Mohanty 2011: 401-404). In sum, if *viśeṣaṇa-sannikarṣatva* ought to be the property which delimits memory's causal role in producing perceptual illusions, then perceptual illusion would no longer provide evidence for Gaṅgeśa's rule that a prior state of awareness produces a qualificative awareness (*viśiṣṭajñāna*) just by virtue of being an awareness of the relevant qualifier (i.e., by virtue of its *viśeṣaṇajñānatva*); see *TT*, 493.04-07.

indiscriminately puts the senses in touch with the full array an object's properties all at once. Thus, Gaṅgeśa posits the existence of non-conceptual perception: A qualificative awareness perceives an object specifically as having a certain property just because it was that qualifying property which was selected as the object of a prior non-qualificative awareness.

Chakrabarti asks why the perceptual process needs to be causally layered in this way, that is, why an object needs to be disassembled in a non-conceptual awareness of a qualifier just in order to be seen aright as having the qualifying feature it actually has (2001: 6-7). Phillips answers by arguing:

If the ontological layering of things and their qualifiers were not reflected in the causal ordering that has the qualificandum known through knowledge of one or more of its properties, properties that are already known, then perception of a qualificandum should entail that the "thick" particular be presented, the thing with all of its properties, and as Gaṅgeśa pointed out... a blind person in touching a yellow cloth would know its yellow color" (Phillip and Tatacharya 2009: 610).

Jayadeva has already clarified one sense in which the ontological structure of objects needs to be reflected in the causal structure of the perceptual process: An awareness of a qualifier/*pratiyogin* must be the cause of a qualificative awareness to ensure that we correctly see a table as brown and not the brown as a table. Phillips's reply further justifies the causal priority of non-conceptual perception by specifically attributing it with a selective function: Non-conceptual perception selects a qualifier to be presented in a subsequent qualificative awareness not only so that the object's ontological structure can be perceived veridically, but also to avoid the absurd consequence that the object's entire structure must be perceived all at once (see also

Bhattacharya 1990b: 173). Together, Jayadeva and Phillips point toward a synthesis of the two ways in which non-conceptual perception could ground Nyāya's direct realism. In a strict sense, non-conceptual perception does not veridically present the world as it is; and, if its only purpose is to provide a direct causal link to the world, then it is redundant. However, it is because non-conceptual perception has the specific role of selecting a qualifying property that it produces a qualificative perceptual awareness which can selectively but correctly mirror the structure of the world.

Vyāsaśīrtha won't be convinced. While he doesn't directly respond to Phillips's argument concerning the selective role of non-conceptual perception (given that Gaṅgeśa himself doesn't develop it), there is an initial response available to him which will be sufficient for fending off Phillips and redirect the debate back to the main flaws with Gaṅgeśa's proof. Specifically, Vyāsaśīrtha can point out that the function of perceptual selection is performed by the inner sense faculty of *manas*, rather than non-conceptual perception. To explain: Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika understands *manas* to be a faculty of selective attention, determining what enters into a perceiver's conscious awareness by mediating between the multitude of simultaneous inputs provided by the external sense organs. Technically, the process by which a perceiver comes to cognize an object was expressed in terms of three kinds of "contact" (*saṃyoga/saṃnikarṣa*): an external sense faculty (*indriya*) comes into contact with an object (*artha*); *manas* makes contact with the external sense faculty; and *manas* becomes conjoined with the self (*ātman*).<sup>33</sup> In serving as an attentional filter responsible for regulating which sensory inputs are consciously accessible to a knowing self, the operation of *manas* was thus implicated as a necessary condition for the

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<sup>33</sup> NB 1.1.4, 94.02; see also VS 3.1.16, 111..

generation of all conscious awareness-states, despite itself being an unconscious sensory faculty.<sup>34</sup> Dvaitins hold a similar view: Although they disagree with Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika about *manas* being unconscious—given that it, and not the *ātman*, is supposed to be the locus of sensory and cognitive states (*vṛttijñāna*; Raghavendrachar 1941: 131)—they still view *manas* as playing the same necessary role of selecting, integrating, and relaying sensory inputs to the conscious self (Sarma 2016: 25-26). That being the case, Vyāsatīrtha can resist following Phillips in positing the existence of non-conceptual perception for the sake of explaining how the contents of awareness are selected—the contact of *manas* with a sense faculty would be sufficient.

Phillips (2001: 111) anticipates this sort of move, rhetorically entertaining that an “inconscious sense-organ connection” could deliver the relevant qualifying property to a subsequent qualificative awareness. But, he dismisses such a possibility, because the posit of non-conceptual perception has the “decided advantage of allowing us to maintain a causal uniformity” with other qualificative state of awareness, which are all thought by Gaṅgeśa to be caused by a prior awareness of a qualifier. Nonetheless, Vyāsatīrtha deftly undermines this apparent uniformity in a number of ways. As we have already seen, Gaṅgeśa’s insistence on uniformity backfires by forcing us to admit that the awareness of a qualificand (*viśeṣyajñāna*) is also a necessary condition for the production of qualificative awareness, in which case the awareness of a qualifier would be rendered causally superfluous (*anyathāsiddha*) and bereft of the unique explanatory role that motivates Gaṅgeśa’s entire defense of non-conceptual perception. Furthermore, Vyāsatīrtha can satisfy the Nyāya demand for causal uniformity with his more parsimonious *manas*-based account. The contact between *manas* and the self

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<sup>34</sup> See *PDS*, 182-3; *NK*, 237-238.



(*ātmamanoyoga/ātmamanaḥsannikarṣa*) is understood by both Naiyāyikas and Dvaitins as being a necessary condition for the arising of all conscious and intentional mental states, including states of awareness (*jñāna*), desires (*icchā*), and volitions (*kṛti*). Taken together with the subset of additional causes specifically responsible for awareness-states, the contact of *manas* with the self can thus satisfy the Naiyāyika's demand that there be a uniform cause (*anugatahetu*) of every qualificative awareness.<sup>35</sup> Finally, we will see in the next section how Gaṅgeśa's general causal rule collapses under its own weight, as Vyāsatīrtha points out numerous counter-examples which undermine the evidential support for the causal rule and, by extension, Gaṅgeśa's central proof of non-conceptual perception.

#### 4. An exception to the causal rule—the case of perceiving absences

Jayadeva has so far offered the most plausible explanation for why an awareness of a qualifier must be responsible for producing a qualificative awareness. To recapitulate: In order to know how two entities are ontologically related, one must first know which entity is the qualifying relatum (*pratiyogin*) that serves as the relation's determining correlate (*nirūpaka*). For example, the order of the inherence relation between a red color-trope and an apple-substance is determined by the red color, since it is the red color that inheres in the apple, and not vice versa. Being perceptually presented with the red color, the apple, and the inherence relation between them, we would come to correctly see the red color as qualifying the apple only if there was a prior awareness of the red color. Sensory contact alone would be too indiscriminate to discern the ordered structure between those three objects. Hence, the prior awareness of a qualifying relatum

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<sup>35</sup> *TT*, 491.13-492.04

takes causal and explanatory priority in determining the structure of the qualificative awareness's content.

Jayadeva's explanation does not withstand Vyāsatīrtha's scrutiny. To start, there are several examples of qualificative awareness which Naiyāyikas ought to recognize by their own lights as not being produced by the prior awareness of a qualifier. Rather than wading through the technicalities of each, we may focus on the most significant case in which Gaṅgeśa's causal rule breaks down: the perception of absences.<sup>36</sup> The canonical Nyāya example of absence-

<sup>36</sup> There are two other counter-examples mentioned by Vyāsatīrtha (*TT*, 491.02-05). The first is the perceptual awareness of two things as related by conjunction (*samyoga*) or inherence (*samavāya*), as expressible in the form, "These two are conjoined," or, "These two are inherent" ("*samyuktāv imau*"; "*samavetāv imau*"). In these cases, the conjunction and inherence relations are presented as qualifying the two objects which are related. If a prior awareness of the qualifier is a necessary cause of any qualificative awareness, then there must be a prior awareness of the qualifying *samyoga* or *samavāya* relations. However, this prior awareness of the relation itself could not be non-conceptual, because Navya Naiyāyikas generally believed that only the qualifier and qualificand appear in non-conceptual perception (see *TSBP*, 25.07-14; though, cf. *TSBP*, 137.01). According to them, an awareness of a relation (*sambandha*) requires that one first is aware of its relata (*sambandhin*). So, the awareness which first presents these relata—i.e., the qualifying relatum and qualified relatum—must be a non-conceptual, pre-predicative perception in which the relational tie itself is not yet presented (*vaiśiṣṭyānavagāhin*). But, if it is impossible for a relation to be presented in non-conceptual awareness, then the qualificative awareness of two objects as being qualified by a relation couldn't be produced by a prior non-conceptual awareness of that qualifying relation. Instead, this qualificative awareness arises without its qualifier being previously known in a separate awareness. That would contradict Gaṅgeśa's rule that all qualificative awareness is produced by the prior of awareness of the relevant qualifier.

The second counter-example is an introspective awareness (*anuvyavasāya*) of oneself as possessing a predicative awareness (*vyavasāya*) of some object. Say that you have a qualificative perception expressible in the form, "That is silver." The perceived object is identified as silver because it is seen as being qualified by the property of silverhood (*rajatatva*). The subsequent introspective awareness of this first-order perception identifies one's self as possessing a qualificative awareness in which silverhood is presented as a qualifying predicate (*prakāra*). More specifically, the self is qualified by the first-order perception of silver, and that first-order perception is further qualified or identified by its having silverhood as its predicative content (*rajatatvaprakāratva*). This introspective awareness would be expressible in the form, "I have an awareness of silver as qualified by silverhood" ("*rajatatvaprakāra rajataviśeṣyakajñānavān aham*"). (If that sort of introspective report seems far-fetched, we should bear in mind with Viśvabandhu Tarkatīrtha (Shaw 1996: 236) that while the content of introspective awareness is propositionally structured and hence linguistically expressible, it is not to be conflated with its linguistic form, nor does language play a necessary role in generating the awareness. The perceptual nature of an *anuvyavasāya* implies that it is to be distinguished from the verbal report that may follow from it.)

The problem is that, prior to the introspection of the first-order perception, there is no awareness of the qualifying property, "having silverhood as its predicative content." Sure, the first-order perception possesses silverhood as its predicative content; but, while it is aware of silverhood, the perception is not reflexively aware of its own property of having silverhood as its predicative content. That property is only cognized when the introspective awareness identifies the first-order perception; there is no awareness of it prior to the introspection.

perception is that of seeing the floor as having no pot on it (“*ghaṭābhāvavad bhūtaḥ*”). Per Gaṅgeśa’s causal rule, this qualificative perception of the floor must have been preceded by a prior awareness of the qualifying pot-absence. However, absences cannot be perceived non-conceptually; one never sees a “bare” absence which is not qualified by its absentee (*pratiyogin*) and locus (*adhikaraṇa*) (*TCM*, 866.13-14; Chatterjee 2016: 547). That being so, it would seem that the perception of a floor as lacking a pot would arise without the qualifying pot-absence needing to be first known by a prior awareness of a qualifier.<sup>37</sup> Anticipating this problem and attempting to keep his causal rule intact, Gaṅgeśa claims that there is a prior awareness of the qualifying pot-absence, albeit in a perception which instead presents the pot-absence as qualified by the floor (“There is no pot on the floor”; “*bhūtaḥ ghaṭābhāvah*”). Even though the pot-absence is first presented as a qualificand, it can go on to serve as a qualifier in the subsequent awareness of the floor (*TCM*, 867.02-04).<sup>38</sup> This move initially suffices for saving the causal rule,

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Consequently, we have another case where a qualificative awareness—i.e., the *amuvyavasāya*—arises without depending upon a prior awareness of the relevant qualifier.

<sup>37</sup> *TT*, 491.01-07: “*api ca tvayā api ghaṭābhāvavad bhūtaḥ itī jñāne abhāvarūpaviśeṣaṇasya... pūrvam ajñātasya eva bhānam itī svīkṛtatvāttatra vyabhicārah.*”

<sup>38</sup> To complete Gaṅgeśa’s causal story of absence-perception, the prior perception of the pot-absence as qualified by the floor can be preceded by the non-conceptual perception of the floor. Something else to note: In the qualificative perception of the absence-as-qualificand, there is also the extra-ordinary sensory connection with the absent pot established by a prior memory of a pot.

Yet, there are still some basic flaws in this story. Specifically, it is not obvious how the pot-absence is cognitively transferred from being a qualificand in the first awareness to a qualifier in the second awareness. In their translation and comments, Phillips and Tatacharya (2009: 637-638) attribute Gaṅgeśa with the view that a quick, “one-step” inference bridges the gap: After perceiving the absence as qualified by the floor, one then inferentially concludes that the floor is qualified by the absence. Phillips and Tatacharya write: “Admittedly, there occur absential cognitions to be analyzed as having the floor not as qualifier but as qualificandum, with an *absence of a pot* as the qualifier. But these are not perceptual. They are the results of one-step inferences from perceptual cognitions, such as from a perception where the qualifier is the floor and the qualificandum the absence of a pot” (2009: 638).

This interpretation is highly peculiar, though. As far as I can tell, it has no grounding in Gaṅgeśa’s text or its commentaries. The perceptual awareness of a floor as qualified by the absence of a pot (“*ghaṭābhāvavad bhūtaḥ*”) is a canonical example of absence-perception (*TS*, 137.18-19). Gaṅgeśa would take this awareness to be generated through the specific sensory relation of *indriya-sambaddha-viśeṣaṇatā* (*TCM*, 613.05; later Naiyāyikas would more precisely call it *samyukta-viśeṣaṇatā*), whereby the sense faculty is connected with the pot-absence through that absence’s being the qualifier of the floor which is in physical contact with the sense

since, as is the case with non-conceptual awareness, a previously cognized qualifier does not first have to be presented as such in order to qualify an object in a subsequent qualificative state. That is, the pot-absence does not have to first appear as a qualifier in order to subsequently be presented as the qualifier of its locus; it is enough that the qualifying absence was just part of the prior awareness's content.

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faculty. This type of sensory relation was posited by Naiyāyikas as early as Uddyotakara, in part to account for the perceptibility of absences.

That Gaṅgeśa thinks the awareness of the floor as qualified by a pot-absence is perceptual should be clear from the context of his discussion in the *Nirvikalpakavāda*. Indeed, the whole motivation for Gaṅgeśa's story about absence-perception is that he is trying to square his acceptance of the fact that an absence can be perceived as a qualifier of the floor with his insistence that all qualificative perceptions must be generated by a prior awareness of a qualifier. Since an absence can't be perceived non-conceptually, Gaṅgeśa thus posits that it is first perceived as a qualificand. But, the subsequent awareness of the absence-as-qualifier ought to be no less perceptual.

So, if it is possible for the awareness of the absence-as-qualifier to be perceptual, then it is mysterious as to why, even when the relevant sensory connections are present, an inference would be needed to generate such an awareness. I am not aware of any Nyāya thinker who believes that inferences can produce states of perceptual awareness. Also, it's not clear why an inference is needed to transition from the awareness of absence-as-qualificand to the awareness of absence-as-qualifier, when no inferential process is invoked to transition from a non-conceptual awareness of a qualifier-not-as-qualifier to the qualificative awareness of that qualifier-as-qualifier. Additionally, there is no obvious way of understanding how such a "one-step" inference is supposed to be structured—it wouldn't seem to follow any standard form of *anumāna*.

Part of the problem may be that Phillips and Tatacharya slip up in interpreting Gaṅgeśa's answer to the following objection: If an absence is perceived through the sensory relation of *indriya-sambaddha-viśeṣaṇatā*, that is, if it is perceived as the qualifier of an object which is connected with a sense faculty, then how is that absence first supposed to be perceived as a qualificand (*viśeṣya*)? Gaṅgeśa replies by claiming that the absence is grasped as a qualificand through the presentation of the floor as its qualifier. Being-a-qualifier (*viśeṣaṇatā*) is a self-linking relation (*svabhāvapratyāsatti*, or *svarūpasambandha*) between the qualifier and its qualificand; the qualifier's relation to a qualificand is not ontologically distinct from its being a qualifier. Hence, through apprehending the floor as a qualifier, one will also apprehend the absence-as-qualificand. Since the absence is not being presented as a qualifier, the absence would not need to be perceptually presented through the sensory relation of *viśeṣaṇatā*. (See *TCM*, 867.05-07. Later Naiyāyikas will just say that the absence is perceived through a separate sensory relation of *saṃyukta-viśeṣyatā*, which presents the absence as a qualificand of what is in contact with a sense faculty.)

However, in their translation, Phillips and Tatacharya evidently jump to the conclusion that the absence does not need to be perceptually presented at all: "[The absence] is grasped through the qualifierhood relation to the floor, that is to say, through a sensory connection that is self-linking—this is what we mean (by our talk of qualifierhood as the sensory connection in perception of absences). We do not mean that an absence appears (perceptually) as a qualifier" (2009: 637). It is true that an absence does not perceptually appear as a qualifier in the first awareness, "There is no pot on the floor." But, Gaṅgeśa certainly thinks that the absence perceptually appears as a qualifier in the subsequent awareness, "The floor lacks a pot." His statement that the absence does not appear as a qualifier is just referring to the first awareness of the absence-as-qualificand, which he also clearly thinks is perceptual. Gaṅgeśa even admits that one can visually perceive the absence of color as

Still, Vyāsatīrtha finds Gaṅgeśa’s attempt at fitting the perception of absences into his general causal rule to ultimately result in several undesirable consequences. Firstly, Gaṅgeśa would have reason to posit that the awareness of an absence-as-qualifier (“The floor lacks a pot”) must be preceded by an awareness of that absence-as-qualificand (“There is no pot on the floor”), only if the rule were first established that all qualificative awareness is produced by a prior awareness of the relevant qualifier. On the other hand, the truth of this rule could only be established if there were no known counter-examples; but, it is precisely to eliminate absence-perception as a counter-example to his rule that Gaṅgeśa posits this special sequence. Vyāsatīrtha thus finds Gaṅgeśa’s posit to be guilty of explanatory circularity (*anyonyāśraya*; *TT*, 491.10).<sup>39</sup>

Next, he shows how this ad hoc story about perceiving absences undermines the basic rationale for thinking that the awareness of a qualifier has any exclusive causal priority. According to the Naiyāyika, the prior awareness of a qualifier uniquely determines the structure of the subsequent qualificative awareness by picking out which object will be its predicative content (*prakāratva*). Sensory contact (*sannikarṣa*) alone is unable to serve this function, since the sense faculty is equally in contact with a qualificand and its qualifying feature. So, again the Naiyāyika will ask: If a qualificative awareness is not caused by a prior awareness of the relevant qualifier, then why is it that only the qualifying feature of an object takes on the role of a predicate, and never the qualificand? Why do we only perceive the apple as being red, and never the red as being apple? The Naiyāyika’s answer, of course, is that the predicative content of a qualificative awareness is determined by the content of the *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna* which produced it; the prior awareness of a qualifier just is an awareness of that object which goes on to be

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qualifying air, which is itself invisible (Ibid., 637-638). If this awareness of invisible air can count as a visual perception of an absence as a qualifier, then surely the awareness of a pot-absence as qualifying a floor can be perceptual, rather than inferential.

<sup>39</sup> *ND*, 491.21-492.12

presented as a qualifier in a subsequent predicative awareness. And, in cases where the object presented as a qualifier has itself never yet been cognized by the subject in a predicative awareness, it must have been supplied to that awareness by a prior non-conceptual state.

Nonetheless, Gaṅgeśa's story about absence-perception would appear to give the game away. Sure, the awareness of an absence-as-qualifier ("The floor lacks a pot"; "*bhūtaḥ ghaṭābhāvat*") could be preceded by an awareness in which the absence does not appear as a qualifier ("There is no pot on the floor"; "*bhūtaḥ ghaṭābhāvaḥ*"). But, this prior awareness of an absence-as-qualificand also identifies the absence as being an absence, and more specifically as having a pot as its absentee (*pratiyogin*). These two properties—"being an absence" (*abhāvatva*) and "having *x* as its absentee" (*pratiyogitva*)—are also presented as qualifiers of the pot-absence. Consequently, there would also need to be a prior awareness of these properties in order for them to feature as predicative contents (*prakāra*) in the qualificative awareness of the absence-as-qualificand. The problem is that these two properties cannot be known prior to the absence itself being known. The qualifying property "having a pot as its absentee" is not an independent feature of the world that can be known prior to being aware of that particular absence of a pot.<sup>40</sup> And, if absences can't be perceived non-conceptually, then the property of being an absence also cannot be perceived non-conceptually. Therefore, while Gaṅgeśa may have initially answered the question of how an absence can be first perceived as a qualifier despite being invisible to non-conceptual awareness, his solution has just pushed the problem back one step: Insofar as the perception of an absence-as-qualificand has the sort of absence-related predicative content mentioned above, there will need to be an explanation of how those properties can be presented as qualifiers without first being presented in a non-conceptual awareness of a qualifier. Absent

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<sup>40</sup> *TT*, 491.05-07

such an explanation, the perceptual awareness of absence is one example where properties can figure as qualifiers without being first known in a prior *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna*. That being the case, we have found at least one serious counter-example to Gaṅgeśa's causal rule that all qualificative awareness is generated by a prior awareness of a qualifier.

Gaṅgeśa's failed explanation of absence-perception raises a deeper question for the overall plausibility of his general causal account. The awareness of a qualifier is supposed to have a unique causal role in the production of a qualificative awareness by virtue of the fact that its content determines which object is presented as the predicative content (*prakāra*) of the subsequent awareness. But, we may then ask: What exactly determines which part of a *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna*'s content will go on to serve as a predicative content? This question naturally arises because the predicative content of a qualificative awareness does not have to be presented as the predicative content in a prior *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna*. Gaṅgeśa allows that an awareness of an absence-as-qualificand can also supply the qualifier of a subsequent qualificative awareness. Moreover, non-conceptual perception arises from an indiscriminate sensory contact with an object, and presents both a qualifier and its qualificand without distinguishing which one is which.<sup>41</sup> So, it's not clear how a *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna* itself selects only one part of its content and not another to serve as the predicative content in a subsequent qualificative awareness.

Vyāsaṭīrtha considers two possible rules which would answer the above question (*TT*, 494.05-10). First, the object which appears as the predicative content of the qualificative awareness is just that object which was cognized by the prior awareness of a qualifier. For example, it is a stick which appears as a qualifier in the qualificative perception, "The man has a stick" ("*daṇḍī puruṣaḥ*"), just because that perception was preceded by a prior *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna*

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<sup>41</sup> *TT*, 494.01-03

which took the stick as its object. However, this rule is guilty of begging the question (*ātmāśraya*). Why does the stick appear as the qualifier (*viśeṣaṇatvena*) in the qualificative awareness of that man? Answer: the stick appears as the qualifier because it was the object of a prior awareness *of a qualifier*. Yet, this presupposes what needs to be explained—it is just assumed that the prior awareness of the stick naturally has the status of being an awareness of the relevant qualifier, thereby ensuring that the stick will go on to appear as the qualifier in the qualificative awareness.<sup>42</sup> The assumption that the stick is destined to be presented as a qualifier just because it was cognized by a prior awareness of a qualifier seems particularly unwarranted if that prior awareness has multiple objects as its content. According to the rule being proposed, any one of these objects could go on to be the qualifier in the subsequent qualificative awareness, because they were also presented in the prior awareness.

The other possible rule deemphasizes the status of the prior awareness as being an awareness of a qualifier, since one apparently can't determine that status until one already knows which of its objects actually ended up being presented as a qualifier in the subsequent qualificative awareness. Instead, the alternative is to posit that the predicative content of a qualificative awareness is whichever object was cognized in that prior awareness which generated the qualificative awareness. In linking the predicative content of the qualificative awareness to the content of the awareness that produced it, we would have an independent basis for identifying which prior awareness is the awareness of a qualifier, and hence explaining why the predicative content of the subsequent awareness is what it is. In other words, rather than having to beg the question by presuming that we already could identify a prior awareness as

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<sup>42</sup> *TT*, 494.05-08: “*kiṃ ca phalībhūtajñāne yadvīśeṣaṇatvena bhāṣate tadviśayaśakjñānena janyaṃ yajjñānaṃ tattatprakāraṅkāmiti vā niyamaḥ...? nādyah, ātmāśrayāt*”; see also *ND*, 494.20-22.



being an awareness of the relevant qualifier, we could identify that awareness just by finding whichever *jñāna* caused the subsequent *viśiṣṭa-jñāna*. Nonetheless, there is a counter-example to this rule: The inferential knowledge “The mountain is on fire” is taken by Naiyāyikas to be produced by a prior awareness of the invariable concomitance (*vyāptijñāna*), “Wherever there is smoke, there is fire.” According to the rule being proposed, the invariable concomitance should appear as the predicative content of the inferential knowledge, but it evidently does not—the inferential knowledge qualifies the mountain as having fire, not as having an invariable concomitance with anything. (It is usually said that the *hetu* “smoke” is instead qualified by the invariable concomitance in the preceding *parāmarśa-jñāna*.)

Thus, since neither of these two possible rules plausibly captures why any object of a prior *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna* should or shouldn’t become the predicative content of a subsequent *viśiṣṭa-jñāna*, Vyāsatīrtha concludes that Gaṅgeśa may as well throw up his hands and ground his causal explanation on mysterious factors like the invisible karma of the experiencing subject (*bhojaka-adṛṣṭa*), which would of course be no explanation at all.<sup>43</sup> If Naiyāyikas have no clear rule for why, from the total contents of a prior awareness, only one type of object and not another should become the predicative content of a subsequent awareness, then they ultimately have no clear reason for why it must be an awareness of a qualifier that is specifically responsible for producing a qualificative awareness. And, given the various cases where the total predicative content of a qualificative awareness could not have been cognized in a prior awareness—as in the first-time perception of a pot-absence on the floor—Gaṅgeśa’s causal rule would have no independent explanatory plausibility with which it could turn back such counter-examples.

<sup>43</sup> *TT*, 494.07-10: “... *yajjñānanyam yajjñānaṃ tattatprakāarakamiti vā? ... nāntyah, anumityādaḥ vyāptyādeḥ prakāratvāpātāt. tasmāttvayāpi prakāratvaniyamo bhojakādṛṣṭādibhireva vācyah.*”

Ultimately, the exceptions would prove fatal to both Gaṅgeśa's rule, and its status as the evidential basis from which Gaṅgeśa infers the existence of non-conceptual perception.

### **5. Producing qualificative awareness—no non-conceptual perception needed**

At this point, Naiyāyikas may demand to know how Vyāsaśrītha would himself explain the production of a qualificative awareness, if the prior awareness of a qualifier isn't causally necessary. Unlike a non-conceptual/pre-predicative awareness, a qualificative awareness is one in which a relational tie (*sambandha/vaiśiṣṭya*) is cognized; so if, as Jayadeva argued, there was no prior awareness of the relation's qualifying relatum (*pratiyogin*), one would not know what was related to what and in what way. To perceive a relation between two things, one must perceive the relata; and to perceive how those relata are specifically related to each other—e.g., does the blue inhere in the pot or the pot inhere in the blue?—one must first have knowledge of the qualifying relatum. Yet, given the above difficulties in providing any fixed rule for how the content of one awareness becomes cognized as the qualifying relatum in another awareness, we ought to find a simpler and more parsimonious way of discharging the Naiyāyikas' demand. Even though a relation cannot be perceived independently of its relata, there is no reason why it can't be perceived at the same time that the relata are perceived. Just as the qualifying relatum and the qualificand are simultaneously in contact with a sense faculty, so too is the relation that binds them together in the world. So, the perceptual awareness of the relata will also be an awareness of the relation, in which case a qualificative awareness of all three could arise just from a direct sensory connection with the world—no prior awareness of the qualifying relatum needed (*TT*, 495.03-06).

On the other hand, the perception of a pot-absence does require prior knowledge of the absent pot which qualifies the absence, where that prior knowledge can't be furnished directly by the senses (since the pot is of course absent). But, the qualificative perception of a pot-absence is not produced by a prior awareness just in virtue of being an awareness of the relevant qualifier. Instead, the prior awareness is the cause of the qualificative perception by virtue of its predicative content specifically containing the property of potness which serves to delimit the pot's role as the absentee of the subsequently perceived absence. More simply put, the absence is perceived as a pot-absence, and not the absence of something else, because that perception is caused in part by a prior awareness (typically a memory) of a pot as qualified by pothood. (Put in Nyāya terms, the prior awareness is a *pratiyogitā-avacchedaka-prakāraka-jñāna*; the property of pothood is the predicative content of the first awareness that then delimits the pot's being a qualifying absentee (*pratiyogin*) of an absence in the subsequent awareness.) This is just to say that the prior awareness can fulfill its causal role in generating the qualificative awareness of an absence only if it has the right sort of predicative content. Accordingly, Naiyāyikas can't use this case to form a general rule that would grant a unique causal role to a non-predicative, non-conceptual awareness of a qualifier, in which case there wouldn't be any reason to posit the existence of non-conceptual awareness.

Gaṅgeśa would resist the implication that this complex type of prior awareness can't be used as evidence for his general causal rule. After all, a *pratiyogitā-avacchedaka-prakāraka-jñāna* is just a *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna* like any other, so it still corroborates Gaṅgeśa's rule.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> The same objection just raised concerning absence-perception was addressed by Gaṅgeśa in the context of inferential knowledge (*TCM*, 860.03-06; Phillips and Tatacharya 2009: 617-618). His opponent claims that it is not merely in virtue of its being an awareness of a qualifier (*viśeṣaṇajñānatvena*) that the prior awareness of fire serves as a cause for the inferential conclusion that the mountain is on fire. That is because if one were aware of the qualifying fire as being a substance, rather than as being fire as such, then one would instead infer that the mountain is merely substance-possessing. Thus, the prior awareness of the qualifier must be a *viśeṣaṇatā-*

In response, Vyāsatīrtha thus argues (*TT*, 496.04-497.11) that even if the awareness of a qualifier is allowed to have a causal role in producing certain types of qualificative awareness, non-conceptual awareness still remains unestablished, because Gaṅgeśa has overlooked another basic counter-example to the invariable concomitance rule underpinning his inference: Memories (*smṛti*) are a form of qualificative awareness, and yet their immediate cause is the activation of a memory trace (*saṃskāra*), which is not itself a state of awareness (*jñāna*). Consequently, there are qualificative states of awareness that are not produced by an awareness of a qualifier, in which case Gaṅgeśa’s inference is totally invalidated. An obvious reply would be that a prior awareness of a qualifier is still a cause of the memory, just that it produces the memory by means of employing a memory trace (*saṃskāra-dvārā*) as an intermediary cause (*vyāpāra*). But this reply isn’t available to Naiyāyikas, since it would contradict their own understanding of how intermediary causes operate. An intermediary cause is something that regularly causes some effect, having itself been produced by the chief instrumental cause (*kaṛaṇa*) of that effect. For instance, a stick is used to spin a potter’s wheel that then gives rise to a clay pot—hence, the stick is the instrumental cause of the pot through its intermediary operation of the spinning wheel. On the other hand, the stick itself does not qualify as an intermediary cause, because even though a potter uses the stick to produce the pot, she presumably does not first generate the stick that then immediately generates the pot. Similarly, because a prior awareness of a qualifier is able to generate a qualificative awareness without the intervention of a memory trace—

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*avacchedaka-prakāra-jñāna*, that is, an awareness whose predicative content is that property which will serve as a delimiting mode of presentation for the qualifier in the inferential conclusion. In other words, when the prior awareness predicates fire with the property of firehood (*vahnitva*), and not substancehood (*dravyatva*), then the mountain can be predicated by that fire *qua* fire, not *qua* substance; the property of firehood will thereby delimit the fire’s being a qualifier of the mountain. In response, Gaṅgeśa insists that the more general causal rule still holds even in the case of inference—the prior awareness of fire-as-fire is still just a specific kind of awareness of a qualifier (*viśeṣaṇajñāna*), so we can still generalize from the example of inferential knowledge to claim that all qualificative awareness is similarly produced by a prior awareness of a qualifier.

particularly in cases of seeing an object for the first time—a memory trace cannot technically be counted as the *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna*'s intermediary causal operation.<sup>45</sup> So, the counter-example to Gaṅgeśa's rule would remain: There are states of qualificative awareness—viz., memories—that are not produced by a prior awareness of a qualifier.

Of course, qualificative memory-states arise from the traces left by prior states of experiential, non-mnemonic awareness (*pūrvānubhava*). That being so, it would appear that Gaṅgeśa's causal rule could still stand: An awareness of a qualifier, by virtue of also being an instance of prior non-mnemonic experience, could produce a qualificative memory through using a memory trace as an intermediary causal. As a result, memory would no longer be a counter-example to the rule that all qualificative states of awareness are produced by an awareness of a qualifier. However, this appearance is misleading: The awareness of a qualifier would be generating the qualificative memory just by virtue of its being an experiential awareness, and not by virtue of its specifically being an awareness of a qualifier, since not all *viśeṣaṇa-jñānas* produce a qualificative awareness by employing a memory trace as an intermediary cause. Such employment of a *vyāpāra* is not optional, either—a sense faculty always generates a sensory connection with an object on its way to producing a perceptual awareness, for example. Thus, Gaṅgeśa's rule would have to be revised to avoid the counter-example of memory. Specifically, the cause of qualificative awareness would have to be delimited in terms of its being a state of prior experience, and not its being an awareness of a qualifier—that is, the *kāraṇatā-avacchedaka* would become *pūrva-anubhavatva* instead of *viśeṣaṇa-jñānatva*. Revising the rule in this way would come at the expense of denying that the awareness of a qualifier *qua*

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<sup>45</sup> *TT*, 496.07-497.03

awareness of a qualifier has the sort of exclusive causal role which is supposed to motivate the postulation of non-conceptual perception.

Though, there is another way to eliminate memory as a counter-example to the original rule: Gaṅgeśa could retain the awareness of a qualifier as the cause, and restrict the effect in question just to states of experiential, non-mnemonic awareness (*anubhava*), thus excluding memory from the scope of the rule. The rule would now claim that all states of non-mnemonic awareness are produced by a prior awareness of a qualifier, thereby skirting memory as a counter-example and keeping the rule as a basis for inferring non-conceptual perception. Still, the Naiyāyika remains trapped, since this rule would now entail that non-conceptual perception also has to be produced by a prior awareness of a qualifier, since it too is a state of experiential awareness. For Gaṅgeśa, non-conceptual perception is supposed to be the one case of awareness which isn't generated by a prior awareness of a qualifier, precisely in order to stop the infinite regress that would result if every qualificative awareness were produced by a prior qualificative awareness of some qualifier.

One simple solution by the Naiyāyika would be to restrict the rule further, so that only cases of qualificative non-mnemonic awareness (*viśiṣṭānubhava*) are produced by a prior awareness of a qualifier—now, both memory and non-conceptual perception would be eliminated as absurd counter-examples. But, Vyāsatīrtha blocks this further restriction by claiming that it would render the rule unparsimonious (*gaurava*).<sup>46</sup> The Naiyāyika would surely

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<sup>46</sup> *TT*, 497.03-05. Vyāsatīrtha is here drawing on a similar move made by Rucidatta, whose own arguments will be discussed below; see *TCMP*, 865.17-18. Rucidatta goes further than Vyāsatīrtha in giving an explanation for the loss of parsimony that results from restricting the awareness of a qualifier to be the cause only of qualificative states of experiential/non-mnemonic awareness (i.e., *viśiṣṭānubhavatva*). Absent this restriction, the delimiting property of something's being an effect of a *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna*—i.e., the *janyatā-avacchedaka* or *kāryatā-avacchedaka*—would just be the property of being a non-mnemonic experience, or *anubhavatva*. Gaṅgeśa would accept that the property of *anubhavatva* is a natural kind (*jāti*—see Phillips 2011: 26-28 for discussion), whereas the property of *viśiṣṭānubhavatva* is presumably not. As a result, the unqualified causal rule would be

protest that mere appeals to parsimony aren't sufficient to overturn an extra qualification of a rule if it's warranted (*prāmāṇika*). Yet, it is the warrant of the Naiyāyikas' rule—i.e., that all qualificative states of awareness (including or excluding memory) are produced by a prior *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna*—which is now in doubt, particularly since the two core challenges raised by Vyāsatīrtha remain for even the restricted version of the rule: 1) how to account for examples of qualificative states like absence-perception which aren't produced by the specific sort of *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna* that would motivate Gaṅgeśa's proof of non-conceptual perception; and 2) how to explain why a *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna* has any unique causal role in supplying the predicative content of a subsequent awareness. Absent any counter-arguments for why the restricted rule would be justified, the rule that all states of non-mnemonic awareness are produced by a prior awareness of a qualifier would leave Naiyāyikas faced with the following dilemma: Either accept that non-conceptual perceptions are also generated by a prior awareness of a qualifier, or just accept that they are themselves concept-laden, qualificative states.<sup>47</sup> Accepting either option would force the Naiyāyika to admit that the notion of non-conceptual perception—i.e., a non-qualificative state which is not generated by a prior awareness of a qualifier—is incoherent.

## 6. Rucidatta and Vyāsatīrtha on defeating the regress objection

As a last retreat, Naiyāyikas will invoke the specter of infinite regress: If non-conceptual perceptions were also produced by an awareness of a qualifier, or if there were only concept-

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more parsimonious due to having more explanatory power (*balavattva*) through its tracking the natural-kind property of *anubhavadva*. For his part, Vyāsatīrtha wouldn't make such an appeal, since Dvaita Vedāntins are nominalists who don't take natural kinds to be real (see Sharma 1962: 69-71). But, given that Gaṅgeśa does take *anubhavadva* as a natural kind, it seems that he wouldn't be able to resist Rucidatta's parsimonious rejection of the restricted causal rule, in which case he couldn't resist the undesirable consequence that non-conceptual perception, being a state of experiential awareness (*anubhava*), would also be produced by an awareness of a qualifier.

<sup>47</sup> *TT*, 497.06-07

laden states of awareness, then every awareness, qualificative or not, would need to be generated by a prior awareness of a qualifier, which would itself need to be generated by a prior awareness of a qualifier, and so on into infinity. To block this regress, Vyāsatīrtha points out that memory is one type of qualificative awareness which, as was just shown, does not itself have a prior awareness of a qualifier as a necessary cause. A *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna* would instead be necessary only for the production of qualificative states of non-mnemonic awareness (*anubhava*; i.e., perception, inferential knowledge, etc.). That being the case, it is possible for a qualificative memory-state to serve as an awareness of a relevant qualifier and contribute to the production of a subsequent qualificative state of non-mnemonic awareness—no infinite regress follows here, because the memory is not itself produced by a prior awareness of a qualifier (*qua* awareness of a qualifier).<sup>48</sup> Rāghavendratīrtha (17<sup>th</sup> cent.) offers an example to illustrate how memory can halt the regress: One’s first perception in this life of a previously unseen cow as a cow—that is, one’s first awareness of a cow as qualified by cowhood—can be caused by a memory of cowhood which has been generated by the activation of a memory trace left by one’s prior experience of a cow in a past life. Just as the memory traces of experiences in past lives supposedly enable the newborn infant to recognize its mother’s breast as a source of nourishment, memory traces from

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<sup>48</sup> *TT*, 497.07-11: “*na caivam anavasthā. kvacid viśiṣṭajñānasya smaraṇarūpatayā tatra viśeṣaṇajñānānapekṣaṇāt. janyaviśiṣṭānubhavaṃ praty eva hi janyaviśeṣaṇajñānaṃ hetuḥ. na tu smṛtiṃ praty api ity uktam.*” “Nor does a vicious regress follow [if non-conceptual awareness does not exist and all awareness is instead qualificative], because at some point in the causal series, there is a qualificative awareness which, by virtue of its being a memory, does not depend on a prior awareness of a qualifier. For an awareness of a qualifier is the cause only of qualificative states of non-mnemonic experience (*viśiṣṭānubhava*)—it is not also the cause of states of memory, as was said earlier [i.e., in the section starting with *TT*, 496.05-07, according to *ND*, 497.19-20].” Vyāsatīrtha is again following the suggestion of Rucidatta (see footnote 46), who also states that the awareness of a qualifier serves as a cause only for non-mnemonic experiential states, not for memory, in which case the cause of a first-time qualificative awareness can be a memory, instead of a non-conceptual perception, without triggering a vicious regress; see *TCMP*, 865.18-20.



past lives can similarly enable someone to perceptually identify a cow for the first time in this life.<sup>49</sup>

The invocation of memory traces from past lives to explain one's first perception of a cow is obviously controversial even in the context of the Indian debate, given that Gaṅgeśa's inferential proof explicitly cites the first-time qualificative perception of an object as the one case where a prior non-conceptual awareness of a qualifier must be postulated, lest there be an infinite regress of prior qualificative awarenesses. Also, if the memory of a past life were instead allowed to furnish the predicative content of the qualificative perception, then there would be the absurd consequence that a direct perceptual awareness of either the cow or anything else would be impossible, since memories from past lives evidently would be able to overpower the contact of one's senses with immediately present objects (*TCM*, 863; *TT*, 486). All that said, we have already seen how Vyāsatīrtha undermines the regress objection—which is Gaṅgeśa's most important line of supportive reasoning (or *anukūla-tarka*) in defense of non-conceptual perception—by claiming that a qualificative state of memory can help give rise to another qualificative awareness without itself being immediately produced by an awareness of a qualifier. As for the absurd consequences just mentioned, accepting that a memory of cowhood experienced in a past life contributes to the perceptual classification of a cow in this life is no less plausible than admitting a similar story in the case of the newborn infant, one which Gaṅgeśa and most other Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thinkers accept.<sup>50</sup> More to the point, it's not clear why the same sorts of absurd consequences concerning memory wouldn't follow in the case of the

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<sup>49</sup> *ND*, 497.16-17

<sup>50</sup> See, e.g., *NS* 3.1.18-24 and commentaries thereon. *TCMśa*, 159.02-04: “*ata eva stanapānapravṛttāvapy upāyecchākāraṇatvena grhītasyeṣasādhanatvajñānasyāpi kalpanaṃ dr̥ṣṭānurodhitvāt kalpanāyāḥ.*” “Therefore, in the case of intentional activity such as the suckling of a mother's breast, there is the postulation of even an awareness of [the breast's] being a means for achieving what is desired—this awareness being understood as the cause of a desire for attaining the means—since this postulation accords with what is observed.”

infant, since the infant presumably would also have to perceive its mother's breast as being a means for attaining what is desired (*iṣṭasādhanatā*) in order to then act towards it. This first-time perceptual classification would be assisted by an awakened memory trace of an experience in a past life, but there is never any indication from Naiyāyikas that the influence of such memory on the infant's perception would prevent any further perceptual awareness in its life from ever arising. In general, Naiyāyikas have no problem with memory traces playing an assistive causal role in the generation of concept-laden perceptual states, whether that role is specific to perceptual recognition as Gaṅgeśa thinks<sup>51</sup>, or whether it extends to all concept-laden perceptual states as was the view of earlier Naiyāyikas like Vācaspati.<sup>52</sup>

Still, there may be lingering doubts about the threat of infinite regress, as well as the lack of a plausible explanation for what would activate a memory trace of cowhood from a past life. (Recall Gaṅgeśa's claim that the infant's memory trace would be awakened by a specific type of unseen karmic force that is necessary for its survival, whereas no such force should be invoked in the case of seeing a cow for the first time.) In order to address these doubts, Vyāsatīrtha mentions several arguments which he attributes to some unnamed source (*kecit*; *TT*, 497.12-499.08). As it turns out, these arguments mostly come from Gaṅgeśa's own commentator, Rucidatta (see Bhattacharyya 1993: 61-63). Whereas Vyāsatīrtha has shown how Gaṅgeśa's causal rule must be revised in order to exclude memory (memory being an example of a qualificative awareness that doesn't have a prior awareness of a qualifier as a necessary cause), Rucidatta goes in the opposite direction, suggesting that the causal rule could incorporate all forms of awareness with no further qualification. Accordingly, the most parsimonious version of

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<sup>51</sup> *TCM*, 881.02-03

<sup>52</sup> *NVT* 1.1.4, 116.14-16

the rule would now be that all awareness—concept-laden or non-conceptual, mnemonic or non-mnemonic—is produced by an awareness of a qualifier. This new rule would obviously seem to entail an infinite regress, since an awareness of qualifier is also an awareness which would hence need to be produced by a *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna*, and so on. Nevertheless, it is important to note that not all regresses are vicious, and that positing a regress can sometimes be epistemically warranted (*prāmāṇika*). For instance, a sprout comes from a seed; that seed had to have come from another sprout, which had to have come from another seed, and so on. This sort of regress into an indefinite series of causes can be benign rather than vicious, particularly if one assumes with most Indian philosophers that time is beginningless and hence that causal chains can stretch back into an infinite past (see also Matilal 1968: 83, 2002: 428). The mere fact that the cause of some effect is itself dependent for its existence on some other prior cause, and that prior cause is dependent on still another prior cause, etc., should not prevent us from positing an indefinite causal series if there is good reason for doing so. Hence, if one accepts Gaṅgeśa’s reasons for taking an awareness of a qualifier to be a necessary cause of all qualificative awareness (*viśiṣṭajñāna*), but drops the qualifier “*viśiṣṭa*” due to considerations of parsimony, then one will be justified in positing a “real” regress (*vastvanavasthā*) of awareness-states, not an undesirable hypothetical regress.<sup>53</sup> So, just as seeds and sprouts give rise to each other in an indefinite causal

<sup>53</sup> *TT*, 498.01-08; compare with *TCMP*, 864.11-16. Rucidatta first addresses Gaṅgeśa’s charge (*TCM*, 864.01-03; see footnote 23 above) that if the (qualificative) awareness of cowhood were caused by just another (mnemonic) awareness of cowhood, then the exact same property of being an awareness (*jñānatva*) would delimit both the effect and the cause, which would presumably make the cause and effect indistinguishable from each other. In response, Rucidatta specifies that the *kāryatā*- or *janyatā*-*avacchedaka* should be the property of being an awareness, whereas the *kāraṇatā*- or *janakatā*-*avacchedaka* should be the property of being an awareness of a qualifier (*viśeṣaṇajñānatva*)—now, the two delimiting properties are distinct. Gaṅgeśa also can’t claim that the inclusion of the term “*viśeṣaṇa*” in the *kāraṇatā*-*avacchedaka* would not be parsimonious, since his own proposed rule would meet the same objection, as it too delimits the cause of qualificative awarenesses in terms of its *viśeṣaṇa-jñānatva*, and would render cause and effect indistinguishable from each other if *viśeṣaṇa-jñānatva* weren’t the *kāraṇatā*-*avacchedaka*. Finally, Rucidatta says that it doesn’t matter whether or not the same property delimited both *kāryatā* and *kāraṇatā*—either way, a vicious regress would not follow. Just as seeds can ultimately produce more seeds in an indefinite causal series, in which case the property of seedhood

series, the memory of cowhood from a past life and the perception of a cow in this life can also give rise to each other in an indefinite causal series extending across lifetimes. In that case, the notion of non-conceptual perception would be rendered obsolete, since its major explanatory value for Gaṅgeśa was to block the sort of infinite regress that, as Rucidatta now implies, does not actually need to be blocked.

Rucidatta next addresses the objection that if all awareness is generated by a prior awareness of a qualifier, and this causal chain can extend unbroken across an indefinite number of lifetimes, then states of unconsciousness like death (*prāyaṇa*) would be impossible. That is, if states of awareness were constantly being produced by prior states of awareness without cease, then there would be no time at which one would not be undergoing an awareness. However, this absurd consequence would only follow if, within the causal series, the awareness-states had to be contiguously connected (*aviralalagna*). According to the story now being proposed, the first-time experience of some object in this life is caused by one's memory of that sort of object as experienced in a past life. In turn, this memory has a past-life experience as its own cause, the two being linked by the activation of a memory trace which is carried over from one's past life. And, that experience in a past life can have as its ultimate cause a memory of an experience from yet another past life, etc. The point is that this causal account obviously presupposes the existence of death, since it takes the series of experiences and memories to be broken up between "pre-death" and "post-death" states of life.<sup>54</sup> With death providing some points at which the

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(*bījatva*) would delimit both cause and effect, let one awareness generate another in a similarly indefinite causal series, with awarenesshood (*jñānatva*) delimiting both cause and effect. Or, if one thinks that cause and effect can't be delimited by the same property, then delimit the seed's or awareness's causehood in terms of its existing prior to its effect (i.e., its *pūrva-bījatva* or *pūrva-jñānatva*). Regardless, if these causes and effects still come into existence in dependence on their own causes, then any regress that follows would be benign rather than vicious.

<sup>54</sup> *TT*, 498.09-15; *TCMP*, 864.15-18. Note that Phillips and Tatacharya (2009: 632) are wrong to imply that Rucidatta himself accepted the objection that a regress of states from past lives would make death impossible.

series of awareness-states can temporarily pause, the proposed causal account would no longer be threatened within the entailment of a viciously unceasing regress.<sup>55</sup>

There would still seem to be at least one obvious problem with holding a memory from a past life responsible for generating a perceptual experience in this life (*TT*, 498.16-499.05): For example, what if you are now hearing a person utter a type of sound that you've never heard before, not even in a past life? (Say that you are learning Sanskrit and you hear your teacher pronounce a retroflex sibilant sound “*ṣa*” that you've never heard in English.) There wouldn't be any memory of a past experience which could supply the predicative content to your first-time qualificative perception of the newly experienced sound. Instead, a non-conceptual perception of the new sound would have to step in to fill that role. Vyāsaśīrtha responds to this objection on behalf of Rucidatta by drawing on Gaṅgeśa's own causal explanation of cases like absence-perception. Having experienced some sound before in a past life or otherwise, one can recollect

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<sup>55</sup> Rucidatta goes on to suggest that his response to the objection from the impossibility of death has the further result of rendering the inclusion of the term “qualificative” in Gaṅgeśa's inference meaningless (*TCMP*, 864.18-20). Recall the form of Gaṅgeśa's inference: The first-time perception of a cow as a cow must be generated by a prior awareness of a qualifier, because that perception is a qualificative awareness. Additionally, that prior awareness of a qualifier has to be non-qualificative/non-conceptual, to avoid an infinite regress. One initial objection which can be raised against this inference is that if non-qualificative awareness is not yet known to exist prior to the statement of this inference, then it is pointless to include the term “qualificative” (“*viśiṣṭa*”) in the probans “qualificative awareness,” since we don't yet know what is meaningfully distinguished by that term. (On the other hand, if non-qualificative awareness is already known to exist prior to the statement of the inference, then the inference itself is pointless.) However, if the term is dropped so that the probans just becomes “because [the first-time perception] is an awareness” (“*jñānatvāt*”), then even the awareness of a qualifier (*viśeṣaṇa-jñāna*) would also have to be generated by an awareness of a qualifier, leading to an apparently vicious regress. Plus, if non-qualificative awareness-states did exist, as the inference was originally intended to establish, then they present a counter-example to the concomitance rule of the inference as now stated, since they are states of awareness which aren't supposed to be produced by a prior *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna* (*TCM*, 862.01-04). Gaṅgeśa responds to these objections by arguing that the term “qualificative” is not pointless. Without it, an invariable concomitance rule couldn't be ascertained between the properties of being an awareness and being produced by an awareness of a qualifier, because such a concomitance would be defeated by the infinite regress and the counter-example of non-conceptual perception. The term “qualificative” needs to be included in the probans (“being a qualificative awareness”) precisely to prevent the concomitance rule from being defeated (*TCM*, 865.09-13). However, Rucidatta denies Gaṅgeśa's line of reasoning here, claiming that the term “qualificative” is still pointless and should be dropped, since, in having warded off the impossibility of death, there would be no vicious regress and hence no counter-example of non-conceptual perception which needs to be warded off.

that sound as being a sound; that is, one can have a memory of the sound as being qualified by the property of soundhood (*śabdatva*). This memory can then serve as a *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna* to generate a qualificative perception which identifies the new type of sound perceived (e.g., “*śa-tva*”) as residing in the particular sound currently being perceived, with this particular sound presumably being identified as a sound due to one’s prior memory of soundhood. In other words, this first qualificative awareness takes the newly perceived sound-universal as a qualificand, and takes the particular sound it resides in as its qualifier (e.g., “There is *śa-tva* in this sound”). Then, the new type of sound can serve as the qualifier for the particular sound, now presented as a qualificand (“This sound is ‘*śa*’, or “This sound possesses *śa-tva*”). Gaṅgeśa accepts the same sort of move in his account of absence-perception, where an absence which is previously presented as a qualificand can go on to serve as the qualifier in a subsequent awareness. In both cases, we can circumvent the need for a prior non-conceptual awareness of a qualifier. A similar story can be told for the perception of other newly experienced sensory properties for which one has no corresponding memory: Another relevant property from one’s past experience can be recalled and used to initially identify the new property, at which point one can then use the new property to identify its particular instances.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> The above objection and response allude to an inferential proof of non-conceptual perception defended by Śāśadhara and abandoned by Gaṅgeśa. The inference claims that a perception of some object as being qualified by a newly arisen sensory property like color must be generated by a prior non-conceptual perception, because that perception of the object is a qualificative perception. Since this recently arisen color has never been experienced before, the qualificative perception could not have gotten its predicative content from a prior memory of the color, so it must be getting its content from a non-conceptual perception instead (*NSD*, 46.13-14; *TCM*, 860.13-14). Gaṅgeśa’s prima facie opponent rejects this line of argument (*TCM*, 861.01-06). For example, the qualificative perception of a pot would classify it as possessing a certain type of color, e.g., a shade of white. So, the perception would be doubly qualificative (*viśiṣṭavaiśiṣṭyabodha*), in that it presents the pot which is qualified by a white color, and that white color as qualified by the property of being white (*śuklatva*). Now, a doubly qualificative awareness must also be preceded by an awareness of a qualifier, which in this case would be a qualificative perception of the newly arisen color which is being classified as a shade of white. This qualificative perception of the new color as being white can in turn get its predicative content from a prior memory of whiteness—not a non-conceptual perception of whiteness—since one will have experienced whiteness in one’s prior experience with other shades of white. Alternatively, the memory of whiteness can also have as its content the newly arisen color itself, given that Naiyāyikas allow the whiteness-universal to serve the

Ultimately, Rucidatta suggests that Gaṅgeśa either has to accept the explanation just offered about how memory can serve as the requisite awareness of a qualifier in generating one's first qualificative perception of a previously unseen object, or face a vicious regress of his own. Needless to say, doing the former would defeat the whole purpose of Gaṅgeśa's proof, which was to explain this very case of first-time perceptual identification without invoking the problematic involvement of memories from past lives and thereby triggering an infinite regress. On the other hand, if we follow Rucidatta's appeals to parsimony in establishing the general rule that all states of awareness are produced by a prior awareness of a qualifier, then the existence of non-conceptual perceptions should still trigger an infinite regress—non-conceptual states are also states of awareness, so they too would have to be produced by a prior awareness of a qualifier. Even a non-conceptual perception which arose at the first moment of birth could still be generated by a prior awareness of a qualifier in a past life through the power of unseen karmic forces (*adr̥ṣṭa*), forces which are admitted by Gaṅgeśa as a general cause of all awareness-states

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function of establishing an extraordinary cognitive relation (*sāmānyalakṣaṇasannikarṣa*) with all past, present, and future instances of whiteness (see Sinha 1934: 79-81).

Śaśadhara rejects the appeal to such an extraordinary cognitive relation (*NSD*, 46.14-17). Through knowing the whiteness-universal, one cognizes all instances of whiteness only in a general way. But, the current qualificative perception demonstratively presents the pot as being qualified by "this" newly arisen color—i.e., "The pot possesses this color" ("*etadr̥pavān ghaṭaḥ*"), not "The pot possesses a color" ("*r̥pavān ghaṭaḥ*"). Because the prior memory does not demonstratively cognize the new color as being currently close at hand, it cannot be what supplies the predicative content to the current qualificative perception of the color, since it's a rule that if a prior awareness of a qualifier is itself qualificative, then it must present that qualifying content in the same way as it is presented in the subsequently produced qualificative awareness (or else there would be the absurd possibility that a totally unrelated awareness could supply the same qualifying content to the subsequent awareness). Non-conceptual perception is exempt from this rule, as it does not present its contents as being a certain way whatsoever.

All that said, Śaśadhara overlooks the response mentioned by Gaṅgeśa and hinted at by Vyāsatīrtha, namely that the memory of whiteness would first contribute to the qualificative perception of the new white color, before producing the doubly qualificative perception of the pot as possessing that white color. The intermediate stage of perceiving the new color as white ("This color is white") can be the place where the demonstrative content "*this* white color" enters, being supplied directly by the contact of the visual faculty with the white color itself, and being presented as a delimiting property of the qualificand (i.e., "thisness"/"*idantā*" would be the *viśeṣyatā-avacchedaka*; see Ganeri 2011: 140). Then, this white color can be presented in the doubly qualificative perception as belonging to the pot.

(Bhattacharyya 1993: 63). If, in order to preserve his posit of non-conceptual perception, Gaṅgeśa were to maintain that the karmic generation of non-conceptual states by prior awareness-states does not entail a vicious regress, then Rucidatta would point out that the same is true for his preferred memory-based explanation: A first-time qualificative perception could be preceded by a prior mnemonic awareness of a qualifier which is itself karmically generated by an experiential awareness in a past life, but the regress into an indefinitely long series of awareness-states in past lifetimes need not be vicious, either. The final dialectical result is this: Gaṅgeśa's claim that non-conceptual perception is the cause of a first-time qualificative perception is, at best, on a par with the competing claim that a qualificative state of memory can serve the same causal role. The posit of non-conceptual perception would no longer merit any theoretical privileging by virtue of its uniquely blocking the threat of a regress.<sup>57</sup>

For his part, Vyāsatīrtha does not need to go as far as Rucidatta in revising Gaṅgeśa's causal rule, and so does not need to bite the bullet of an infinite regress of *viśeṣaṇa-jñānas* in the same sort of way.<sup>58</sup> If the awareness of a qualifier has to be given some necessary causal role, then let it be the cause of non-mnemonic experiential awareness (*anubhava*), rather than all awareness-states in general. A memory from a past life could then provide the predicative content to a first-time qualificative perception without technically triggering a vicious regress, since mnemonic states are exempt under the new rule from needing to be caused by a prior awareness of a qualifier (again, *qua* awareness of a qualifier). And even this revised rule is a charitable concession to Gaṅgeśa: Vyāsatīrtha's own considered position is that most states of qualificative perceptual awareness are directly generated by one's sensory contact with objects

<sup>57</sup> *TT*, 499.07-08; *TCMP*, 864.22-25

<sup>58</sup> Rāghavendraīrtha (*ND*, 499.14-15) indicates that since Rucidatta's arguments originate from some undesirable assumptions (*arucibīja*), Vyāsatīrtha's own view, i.e., that the regress of *viśeṣaṇa-jñānas* is broken by memory, is what should be understood in the last analysis.



and properties in the world. Perceptual awareness can thus reflect the metaphysical structure of the world without the convoluted intervention of a non-conceptual awareness which has to disassemble this structure before it can be subsequently seen as it is. If knowledge of some specific structural element—such as an absence—requires that one have prior knowledge of other structural parts—e.g., the absentee—then that knowledge can be first supplied by a prior qualificative awareness which identifies those parts in a way that is relevant for their being cognitively integrated into a relational complex with the element in question. There is no role for non-conceptual, non-qualificative awareness to play here.

### 7. Are there non-conceptual states of awareness of which we must be unaware?

Although later Navya Nyāya thinkers evidently did not engage with, and were likely unaware of, the specific objections made by Vyāsatīrtha against Gaṅgeśa’s proof of non-conceptual perception, some of them still addressed the general problems that were already being pointed out by Rucidatta, having to do with the admissible contents of non-conceptual perception, the counter-example of memory for Gaṅgeśa’s causal rule, the role that an awareness of a qualificand does or does not play in generating qualificative states, and so on.<sup>59</sup> Rather than

<sup>59</sup> We may note that the later Naiyāyikas Gadādhara and Mahādeva both apparently abandon Gaṅgeśa’s causal rule in light of the counter-example posed by memory, which is again a form of qualificative awareness that is not produced by a prior awareness of a qualifier. The *kāryatā-avacchedaka* in the rule can’t be either *viśiṣṭa-jñānatva* or *viśeṣaṇa-jñānatva*, since memory is both qualificative and can serve as an awareness of a qualifier without itself having an awareness of a qualifier as its cause. One way of defusing memory as a counter-example would be to let the cause of a qualificative awareness just be whatever has a relevant qualifier as its content, whether or not it is an awareness-state itself. (The *kāraṇatā-avacchedaka* is now *viśeṣaṇa-viśayakatva*.) Memory-traces (*samskāra*) are not states of awareness, but they have contents and are responsible for generating qualificative memory-states. However, this move won’t work either, since a memory-trace which remains unactivated will have a relevant qualifier as its content even though it does not generate a memory-state. The counter-example of memory can’t be removed by restricting the effects in question to either qualificative forms of non-mnemonic experience (*viśiṣṭānubhava*) or non-mnemonic states in general (*smṛtyanyajñānatva*, i.e., *anubhavatva*), because the rule would become unparsimonious given that the property of being a non-mnemonic experience is not actually a natural kind (cf. footnote 46). The property of *anubhavatva* suffers from the defect of cross-cutting (*sāṅkarya*): There are types of non-mnemonic experience which are indirect (*parokṣa*), but mnemonic states are also indirect. Finally, the counter-example of memory

delve deeper into this dialectical jungle, there is another, more fundamental objection to non-conceptual perception made by Vyāsatīrtha that merits discussion. Having just concluded the section devoted to countering Gaṅgeśa’s positive proof (*sādhakapramāṇa*) by undercutting the causal rule on which it is based, Vyāsatīrtha introduces new rebutting defeaters (*bādhaka*) of non-conceptual perception and its place in Gaṅgeśa’s overall epistemology. The specific arguments we will now survey target the intrinsic imperceptibility or introspective invisibility (*atīndriyatva*) of non-conceptual perceptions, and draw absurd consequences for Gaṅgeśa’s account.

Vyāsatīrtha’s first objection is initially technical and restricted in scope, but its implications are far-reaching. He starts by pointing out that the admission of imperceptible, *atīndriya* states of awareness would make it impossible to infer from the non-observation of an otherwise perceptible object that this object is actually absent.<sup>60</sup> Atoms are imperceptible to our ordinary sense faculties, so the fact that I’m not perceptually aware of any atoms doesn’t give me reason to infer that they aren’t present. Conversely, the fact that I don’t remember seeing my roommate Maitra anywhere at home this morning (presuming I looked everywhere he could’ve been) licenses me to later infer that he wasn’t actually at home. My earlier lack of any awareness of Maitra is known as an *anupalabdhi*. Whereas Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsakas took the absence of awareness itself to be a distinct source of knowledge about real absences, Naiyāyikas will say

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could be removed without altering the causal rule, if we admitted the existence of non-conceptual states of memory (*nīrvikalpakasmarāṇa*). Just as qualificative perceptions are generated by a prior non-conceptual perception of a relevant qualifier, so too would qualificative memories be generated by a prior non-conceptual memory of a relevant qualifier. But, neither Gadādhara nor Mahādeva find the notion of non-conceptual memory plausible. In the end, the counter-example of memory can only be removed if the causal rule is restricted so that only qualificative states of perception are caused by a prior awareness of a qualifier, thus abandoning Gaṅgeśa’s goal of establishing a causal uniformity across all states of qualificative awareness in general. See *VJHV*, 76.30-77.03, 77.08-09; see also *NKau*, 200.22-201.06, 207.04-08.

<sup>60</sup> *TT*, 499.10-12

that non-observation gives us knowledge of real absences through factoring into other legitimate processes of knowing like perception or inference (see Bhatt 1989: 332-357). If the proposition, “Were Maitra at home, then he would have been observed by me” is true, then my non-observation of Maitra would be “fit” (*yogya*) for warranting my belief that Maitra is indeed absent—I would thus have what Gaṅgeśa and later Navya Naiyāyikas consider to be a *yogya-anupalabdhi*.<sup>61</sup> This memory-absence is probative just when its correlative absentee—i.e., my memory of seeing Maitra—would hypothetically exist only in the event that Maitra was actually at home in the morning. Assuming all the other necessary conditions for finding Maitra were in place, my lack of memory thus allows me to infer that Maitra was not there.

However, to infer later in the day that Maitra wasn’t at home in the morning, I not only need to know the counterfactual proposition that if Maitra were at home, then I would have been aware of him—I also need to know that I was not actually aware of him at that time.<sup>62</sup> The

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<sup>61</sup> Tatacharya (*TSBP*, 33.07-16) notes that there is a shift in how “old” and “new” Naiyāyikas understand the compound “*yogya-anupalabdhi*.” The “old” reading interprets the compound as a genitive *tatpuruṣa* (*yogyasya anupalabdhīḥ*), i.e., “the non-awareness of what is *yogya*.” What is *yogya* is some object which is fit to be perceived by the senses; in other words, “*yogya*” means “perceptible,” and is synonymous with “*dr̥śya*.” The non-observation of what is otherwise perceptible can serve as evidence that the perceptible object is not present, since if it were present, then it would’ve been perceived. The “new” reading takes “*yogya*” to be an adjective of “*anupalabdhi*”; now, it is the non-awareness itself which is “fit.” An absence of awareness is fit for proving the absence of an object when the absent awareness would have been present were the object in question also present. Of course, the absent object still has to be perceptible in order for its absence to be known from a “fit” non-observation of it. See *NSM* 62, 262.06-265.01.

<sup>62</sup> As Udayana explains (*NKus* 3.20, 427.05-428.06), a *yogya-anupalabdhi* can contribute to the knowledge of Maitra’s absence in one of two ways, depending on whether or not I am explicitly aware of having that *anupalabdhi*. Perceptual knowledge of Maitra’s absence doesn’t rely on my being explicitly aware that I lack the sort of observation which hypothetically would’ve occurred if Maitra were present. Though being unknown, this non-observation can serve as an auxiliary causal condition which assists my sense faculties in directly perceiving Maitra’s absence. This is in keeping with the general rule that, when the causal conditions which give rise to an awareness can operate without a subject being aware of them—as is the case with the sense faculties—then the awareness which arises will be directly perceptual in nature (*sākṣātkārin*). When the causal conditions for knowledge-states must themselves be known to a subject in order for them to generate the knowledge—as is the case with inference, where the subject must be aware of each step of the inference in order to arrive at its conclusion—then the resulting knowledge is not directly perceptual in nature. Distinguishing between the different conditions under which *yogya-anupalabdhi* can contribute to the knowledge of absence is relevant for appreciating why Vyāsaśārtha’s objection specifically targets the inferential knowledge of absence—see *ND*, 499.18-500.12.

problem is that the introspective invisibility of non-conceptual awareness makes the latter knowledge impossible: Given that I can never introspectively know that I am having a non-conceptual awareness of some object, it is likewise the case that I can never first-personally know that I am not having a non-conceptual awareness of that object. Without being certain that I am not aware of an object, I cannot be sure that the object is actually absent. In order to infer Maitra's absence on the basis of my not having been aware of him, I must first know that I'm not remembering Maitra, and that I did not have any perception of Maitra for me to remember. According to Gaṅgeśa, I would know this absence of awareness through direct introspection; that is, I would introspectively perceive the absence of memory in myself using my inner sense faculty (*manas*).<sup>63</sup> Yet, if there is a species of awareness whose presence or absence can never be introspectively perceived or remembered, then I can never know for sure that I lacked an awareness of Maitra. I could indeed have had a brief non-conceptual perception of Maitra; maybe this perception was interrupted by another awareness and thus never yielded a fully determinate, concept-laden awareness of Maitra which could later be recalled.<sup>64</sup> Without being

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<sup>63</sup> *TCM*, 723.10; see Phillips and Tatacharya 2009: 430-5.

<sup>64</sup> As it turns out, Vyāsaśrītha goes on to argue that non-conceptual perceptions would generally prevent any subsequent concept-laden awareness from arising at all (*TT*, 500-502). First, we need to assume with Naiyāyikas that a subject has only one state of awareness (*jñāna*) at a time (*NS* 1.1.16), and that most every type of awareness-state persists for two moments (see *NSM* 108, 461.03-04; Shaw 1996: 258, n. 12, 259, n. 16; Phillips & Tatacharya 2009: 604). Assume also Gaṅgeśa's particular story that an introspectively invisible non-conceptual perception arises at  $t_1$  and persists until  $t_2$ , at which point ( $t_3$ ) it yields a concept-laden perception. Now, the specific causal conditions which produced the non-conceptual state at  $t_1$ —e.g., sense-object contact—would still be present prior to  $t_3$ , along with the additional condition that is responsible for generating the concept-laden perception—namely, the prior occurrence of an awareness of a qualifier, i.e., the non-conceptual perception. Vyāsaśrītha first suggests that the prior co-existence of these two sets of causal conditions (*sāmagrī*) would consequently cancel each other out and prevent either type of perception from arising in the next moment, just as two equally valid but contradictory inferences (i.e., a case of *satpratipakṣa*) can prevent one from drawing a definitive inferential conclusion.

One possible reply is to claim that the prior existence of the non-conceptual state at  $t_2$  prevents another non-conceptual perception from arising at  $t_3$ , allowing the concept-laden perception to arise as expected. But, this move doesn't work, because Naiyāyikas also admit the existence of serial perceptual awareness (*dhārāvāhikapratyakṣa*), wherein one has a series of perceptual states all of the same object (with the latter perceptions being states of knowledge about the object just as much as the first perception). The existence of the

able to definitively ascertain that I was never perceptually aware of Maitra at all, my inference of Maitra’s absence could never get off the ground. Moreover, I couldn’t infer that I didn’t have any non-conceptual awareness of Maitra on the basis of my introspection that I lack a subsequent concept-laden awareness of Maitra, because non-conceptual awareness is not pervaded by

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prior perceptual states in the series don’t prevent the later perceptions from arising. (Whereas in the case of inference, one’s knowledge of an inferential conclusion or *anumiti*—together with a lack of any desire to prove the conclusion once again (see Mohanty 1992: 102-103)—will block that same *anumiti* from subsequently arising.) So, the existence of a non-conceptual perception shouldn’t be sufficient for blocking a non-conceptual perception from arising immediately after, which means that the first objection—i.e., the causal conditions for non-conceptual and concept-laden perceptions would cancel each other out—still stands.

The Naiyāyika couldn’t then attempt to argue that the two sets of causal conditions, rather than canceling each other out, instead cooperate to produce a single perception that is jointly non-conceptual and concept-laden. Indeed, Gaṅgeśa takes the view that concept-laden, predicative perceptions can also partly non-conceptual/non-predicative, in that there can be some qualifier which isn’t itself presented as being qualified by anything else. For example, the qualificative perception of a pot would be concept-laden with respect to the pot which is qualified by pothood, but non-conceptual with respect to the pothood that is not presented under any other qualifiers (see *TCM*, 868). He doesn’t consider this partly concept-laden, partly non-conceptual structure to be contradictory, just as it’s not a contradiction for Viṣṇu to have a form that is part-man and part-lion (*narasiṃhākāra*; *TCM*, 856.04).

Vyāsatīrtha evidently disagrees, though. The perceptual awareness “This is a pot” is conceptual/qualificative because it takes pothood as its predicative content (i.e., the perception is *ghaṭatva-prakāra*); a perception of the exact same objects would be non-conceptual only if it didn’t take pothood as a predicative content (*ghaṭatva-aprakāra*). There is one type of conjunctive perceptual awareness (*samūhālambanajñāna*) that takes multiple objects as its contents—e.g., “There is a pot and a cloth”—such that one could say part of the awareness takes pothood as a predicative content, and another part of the awareness doesn’t. But, this is true only in the sense that the awareness also takes clothhood as an additional predicative content. It isn’t contradictory for a single awareness to present both pothood and clothhood as qualifiers (of different qualificands), so no contradiction results from the cooperation of the distinct causal conditions for perceiving a pot and perceiving a cloth. However, it would be a contradiction for a single awareness of a pot to both take and not take pothood as its predicative content; hence, the distinct causal conditions for conceptually and non-conceptually perceiving the same pot can’t cooperate together to produce a single awareness of that pot. In that case, the first objection still stands—the opposing sets of causal conditions would prevent any perceptual awareness from arising after a non-conceptual perception.

The last and most promising response is to claim that the causal conditions for concept-laden perception are more powerful than the conditions for producing non-conceptual perception, so that even if both sets of conditions are present at  $t_3$ , only a concept-laden perception would arise, thus resolving the problem of mutual causal cancellation. Vyāsatīrtha parries this response by deriving an unwanted consequence for the Naiyāyika’s story of how a doubly qualificative awareness like “The man has a stick” (“*daṇḍī puruṣaḥ*”) is produced. In this awareness (at  $t_3$ ), the man is primarily qualified by the stick, and the stick is secondarily qualified by the property of stickhood. So, there must be a prior qualificative perception of the stick as qualified by stickhood (at  $t_{3,4}$ ), and that qualificative perception must be preceded by a non-conceptual perception of the stick and stickhood (at  $t_{1,2}$ ). Throughout this sequence, one maintains sensory contact with both the man and the stick. The

concept-laden awareness—the former can exist without giving rise to the latter, and hence the absence of the latter doesn't entail the absence of the former.<sup>65</sup>

It may seem that Vyāsatīrtha's line of argument is inconsequential, and that the holes in Gaṅgeśa's account of our inferential knowledge of absences are irrelevant to broader epistemological concerns.<sup>66</sup> But this conclusion is too quick, because the introspective invisibility

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problem, however, is that if the causal *sāmagrī* for generating concept-laden perceptions is stronger than the *sāmagrī* for non-conceptual perception, then after there is a non-conceptual awareness of the stick and stickhood, the causal conditions are in place for also generating an awareness of the man as qualified by the stick which is itself presented as shorn of any qualifying property (*muṇḍitadaṇḍa*). This kind of qualificative perception would instead arise prior to, and in place of, the perception of the stick as qualified by stickhood, with the stickhood also being presented as shorn of any qualifying properties. Of course, neither Vyāsatīrtha nor the Naiyāyika would say that we ever experience such an awareness of the man as qualified by the unqualified stick. The trouble is that, once the Naiyāyika accepts the general dominance of the *savikalpaka-sāmagrī* over the *nirvikalpaka-sāmagrī*, there is nothing in principle within the Naiyāyika's causal story to prevent such an awareness from arising after the non-conceptual perception of stick and stickhood: At  $t_3$ , there exists both sensory contact with the man (i.e., *viśeṣyendriyasannikarṣa*), and a prior awareness of the qualifying stick (i.e., a *viśeṣaṇajñāna*), so all the necessary conditions are in place for perceiving the man as qualified by the unqualified stick, rather than having to perceive just the stick as qualified by stickhood. Especially given the difficulties outlined in section 4 concerning how to determine which non-conceptual content goes on to serve as the predicative content in a subsequent qualificative awareness, there doesn't seem to be anything preventing the unqualified stick from being the qualifier in the subsequent qualificative perception of the man. If anything, this undesirable consequence drawn by Vyāsatīrtha highlights the convoluted and ad hoc character of the Nyāya account of doubly qualificative perception, making Vyāsatīrtha's own alternative account more attractive by comparison. On his view, the perception of a man as possessing a stick can arise at  $t_1$  simply from the direct sensory connection with the man, the stick, and the contact-relation obtaining between them.

<sup>65</sup> *TT*, 500.01-04

<sup>66</sup> Though, staying with its relevance to the inferential knowledge of absences, Vyāsatīrtha's argument suggests yet another problem with Gaṅgeśa's account. The *atīndriyatva* of non-conceptual awareness turns one of Gaṅgeśa's own objections to the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā account of *anupalabdhi* back on himself. To vindicate their belief in the absence of awareness (*anupalabdhi*) as being the sole source of knowledge about absences in the world, Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsakas propose that the absence of an awareness can by its own nature directly grasp the non-awareness of an object, without itself being known. This claim is made in order to avoid the infinite regress that would result if the *anupalabdhi* which makes the absence of an object known must itself be known. (The *anupalabdhi* is itself an absence, so there would need to be a 2<sup>nd</sup> *anupalabdhi* to make the 1<sup>st</sup> *anupalabdhi* known, and so on.) Yet, in cases where one has to infer the absence of an object on the basis of one's lack of an awareness of that object—as when I assert that Maitra was absent in the morning because I don't remember seeing him—then the lack of awareness must itself be known. To avoid triggering a regress in such cases, the Bhāṭṭa proposes that a second-order *anupalabdhi* remain unknown while making known the first-order non-awareness of Maitra. Presumably, an analogy with the sense faculties can be drawn: Just as a sense faculty can by its own nature generate knowledge of a certain object without itself needing to be known, a second-order non-awareness can by its own nature make it known that there is no first-order awareness of a certain object, without the second-order non-awareness itself needing to be known.

In response, Gaṅgeśa points out that because the Bhāṭṭas think that all states of awareness are *atīndriya* or introspectively invisible, it isn't possible for an absence of awareness to be known by means of *anupalabdhi*, that is, through another absence of awareness. If an awareness-state is not *yogya* or fit to be perceived, then the

of non-conceptual perceptions has a second undesirable consequence, one which threatens a fundamental principle of Nyāya philosophy that all awareness must have intentional content. For Naiyāyikas, consciousness is nothing more than the illumination of objects; a purely objectless or contentless awareness (*nirviṣayakajñāna*) is thought to be impossible. The intentionality of awareness is both a phenomenological fact and a necessary axiom of Nyāya's epistemological direct realism. Indian skeptics claim that awareness has no objective support (*nirālambana*) as a way to establish that our experience is basically a hallucination which doesn't present us with a real external world; for them, awareness is object-directed just insofar as its objects are imaginary fictions. In contrast, Nyāya realists associate the essentially object-directed character of awareness with the claim that awareness always illuminates reality—even illusions and hallucinations at some level give us access to real entities, whether presently or previously experienced (see Matilal 1986: 208-213). Indeed, Naiyāyikas are so committed to the directly intentional character of awareness that they would rather conceive of the liberated self as being totally unconscious than accept Advaita Vedānta's view that *mokṣa* is the attainment of an infinitely blissful contentless consciousness (Chakrabarti 2000: 7)

At this point, Vyāsātīrtha—who is also a direct realist—would interject by alleging that if non-conceptual states of awareness which lack any predicative content can exist in our mental lives without ever being known to us, then there just as well could be similarly unknowable states of awareness which lack any content altogether. Certainly, we would have no way of ruling out the existence of such states on the basis of first-personal introspection. And, why stop there?

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fact that I'm not aware of the state obviously cannot provide me with evidence that the state is actually absent (*TCM*, 717.01-03, 722.08-10). And so, if I am unable to know that I didn't have an awareness of Maitra, then I can't infer on the basis of that awareness-absence that Maitra himself was absent. But, this exact same objection concerning *anupalabdhi*-based inferences will rebound back to Gaṅgeśa, since he too admits the existence of a certain type of introspectively invisible awareness, namely non-conceptual awareness. Gaṅgeśa's own objection against the Bhāṭṭas thus doesn't have a leg to stand on.

As long as Gaṅgeśa is admitting the existence of mental states for which there is no phenomenological evidence, we could further posit imperceptible and non-predicative states of desire (*icchā*) and aversion (*dveṣa*), which would be an absurd result for Naiyāyikas and their theory of action.<sup>67</sup> For that matter, introspectively invisible non-conceptual states may find their way into parts of Gaṅgeśa's epistemology that he didn't intend. Vyāsaśrītha rhetorically objects that just as Gaṅgeśa accepts non-conceptual and concept-laden types of perception, there may also be non-conceptual and concept-laden types of inferential knowledge (*anumiti*).<sup>68</sup> The idea of non-conceptual inference seems incoherent on its face: Inferential knowledge is propositionally structured and involves the predication of a probandum to an inferential site; also, the process of inference relies on both memory (of a concomitance rule) and qualificative perception (of the probans as pervaded by the probandum). And yet, Gaṅgeśa's admission of an introspectively unknowable type of awareness leaves the door open to further attributing ourselves with other types of unknowable mental states like *nirvikalpaka-anumiti*—again, there is no introspective fact about our experience which would prevent us from doing so. What's more, if Gaṅgeśa is going to admit a non-conceptual form of perceptual awareness that produces none of the effects which perceptual states (*sākṣātkāra*) ought to produce, then he may as well admit a non-conceptual form of inferential knowledge that similarly fails to do any of the things that *anumiti* ought to do.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *TT*, 493.01-03. According to Nyāya, desires and aversions have intentional contents which are predicatively structured. These states are generated by a prior awareness that classifies an object as being pleasurable or painful, or as being a means of attaining some other desired or undesired object (see *NSMK* 145-146, 472.16-17 & 26-29). As a result, states of desire and aversion will themselves identify those objects as being the sorts of thing which are desirable or undesirable, or which conduce to the satisfaction of another desire. While Naiyāyikas would claim that there is no reason to admit the existence of pre-predicative desires and aversions, the fact that pre-predicative states are necessarily imperceptible still opens the door to their being present without our knowledge.

<sup>68</sup> *TT*, 503.08-504.01

<sup>69</sup> *ND*, 503.20-21



## 8. Just what are non-conceptual perceptions good for, anyway?

Facetious as Vyāsaśīrtha’s rhetorical objection may be, it stems from the legitimate observation that, on Gaṅgeśa’s own view, all forms of non-conceptual awareness are fundamentally inert posits, given that they fail to perform most of the basic causal functions which essentially constitute what it is to be an awareness (*jñāna*).<sup>70</sup> For instance, the later Naiyāyika Annambhaṭṭa (17<sup>th</sup> cent.) canonically defines an awareness-state as being that quality-trope (*guṇa*) which is the cause of all linguistic expression (*vyayavahāra*; *TS*, 114.06). By Gaṅgeśa’s own admission, however, non-conceptual states of awareness can’t ever generate linguistic expression, because they are themselves linguistically inexpressible (*avyapadeśya*; *TCM*, 441.02-03)—their content lacks the requisite predicative structure for being verbalized in a propositional statement, and the states themselves can’t be introspectively reported.<sup>71</sup> Another role for awareness is the generation of memory traces or dispositions (*saṃskāra*) that enable us to recall previous experiences and recognize their objects as being of the same type; but, Naiyāyikas consider only *savikalpaka* states of awareness to be capable of generating these dispositions (Mohanty 2000: 12). It is only through determinately perceiving some object *a* as being *F* that one forms an *F-saṃskāra* that can then causally assist the mind in its perceptual classification of other objects as being instances of *F* (Phillips 2011: 37). Additionally, non-

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<sup>70</sup> *TT*, 503.01-03

<sup>71</sup> Because *nirvikalpaka* states of awareness pose an obvious counter-example to Annambhaṭṭa’s definition of awareness as the cause of all linguistic expression, his commentator Nīlakaṇṭha instead interprets him as stating some of the properties of awareness (*svarūpakathana*), rather than pinpointing a defining characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*) which encompasses all states of awareness and nothing else. See *TSBP*, 462.19-25 for further discussion of the reasons why awareness can’t literally be defined as the cause of all linguistic expression. The defining characteristic of awareness ultimately is nothing more than the natural-kind property (*jāti*) of being a state of awareness (*jñānatva*; *TSP*, 114.20), which still belongs to non-conceptual states of awareness. This is despite the fact that our normal way of knowing that some mental state is an awareness is through introspecting its awarenesshood—that is, through introspectively noticing that I am aware of something (“*jānāmi*” *iti*)—which is unavailable in the case of unintrospectible non-conceptual states.

conceptual awareness is incapable of generating other mental states like desires and volitions. According to Naiyāyikas, the primary object of our desires is pleasure (or at least the absence of pain); as such, a desire for pleasure arises after having a qualificative awareness of pleasure as being pleasurable. There may also be some object or action or which would serve as an intermediary means of attaining the desired pleasure, in which case a desire for acquiring that object or performing that action will arise after having the predicative awareness of it as being a means for fulfilling one's primary desire for pleasure. When this predicative awareness of an object or action as being the means to fulfilling my desire also predicates that object/action as being attainable/accomplishable by my effort, then the volitional effort to attain that object or perform that act arises.<sup>72</sup> At no point in the process of action, then, could a non-conceptual, non-predicative awareness make any direct causal contribution. The same is evidently true for one's mental life as a whole.

Moreover, non-conceptual states are not only psychologically inert—they are epistemologically inert, as well. Being introspectively invisible, the non-conceptual awareness of an object could never provide the sort of epistemic certainty that would dispel one's doubts or previous illusions concerning that object, and motivate one to act without hesitation. That is, one could never entertain, even in principle, a thought such as, "I wasn't sure whether I seeing a rope or a snake, but now I know that it's just a rope because I non-conceptually perceive the rope." And, it's not merely that non-conceptual perception can't furnish a perceiver with determinate, doubt-dispelling knowledge (*niścaya*); in fact, non-conceptual states can't even begin to provide any true beliefs or veridical awareness (*pramā*) about an object at all. Each part of the term

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<sup>72</sup> *TCMśa*, 154.09-155.06. See also *NSM* 146-147, 503.01-504.03. Explicit elaborations on the predicative structure of the awareness-states which generate desires and volitions can be found in *NSMK* 146-147, 472.26-29 & 473.31-474.10.

“veridical awareness” raises problems when applied to non-conceptual perception. Given that a non-conceptual perception is subjectively unknowable, a perceiver could not be first-personally aware of having any evidence for the existence of an object on the basis of non-conceptually perceiving it; as a result, we may doubt whether the perceiver was really “aware” of the object at all. Yet, even if one casts aside this doubt, the deeper issue is that, by Gaṅgeśa’s own admission, non-conceptual states aren’t fit to be talked about as either veridical or non-veridical.<sup>73</sup> That is because the veridicality or non-veridicality of an awareness-state is tied to its predicative content; awareness is veridical if it predicates a property *F* to an object when the object is in fact *F*.<sup>74</sup> Since non-conceptual awareness-states do not possess any predicative content at all, they must therefore fall outside of the scope of veridicality altogether. Yet, as Vyāsaśīrṣa insists, states of awareness can only be veridical or non-veridical—there is no third type of awareness which is neither.<sup>75</sup> This is all the more reason to think that non-conceptual perception as posited by Gaṅgeśa could not count as a genuine type of awareness in the first place.

Perhaps, Navya Naiyāyikas should also agree. Standard Navya Nyāya classifications of awareness similarly admit of just two types—veridical (*yathārtha, pramā*) or non-veridical (*ayathārtha, apramā*)—and Gaṅgeśa himself counts perceptual awareness as one of four types of veridical awareness (*pramā*).<sup>76</sup> Consequently, we might be tempted to share Chakrabarti’s suspicions (2000, 2001) about there being any place within Navya Nyāya epistemology for non-conceptual perception. Basically, if a state is non-conceptual, then it can’t be a perceptual awareness; and if it’s a perceptual awareness, then it can’t be non-conceptual. On the other hand,

Phillips rebuffs Chakrabarti’s skepticism by claiming that the existence of a necessary causal

<sup>73</sup> *TCM*, 441.01-02

<sup>74</sup> *TCM*, 434.01-437.01-02

<sup>75</sup> *TT*, 503.03-07

<sup>76</sup> *TCM*, 567.01

relation between qualificative awareness and the awareness of a qualifier warrants Gaṅgeśa's belief in non-conceptual perception, despite the tenuous relation of this belief with his overall taxonomy of awareness-states: "In the face of overwhelming evidence for a pervasion (*vyāpti*) or causal principle, taxonomical considerations take a secondary place. A causal discovery might urge us to revise our taxonomy, but a taxonomical difficulty would not undercut the evidence for a *vyāpti*" (2001: 109).

However, even granting that taxonomic difficulties aren't sufficient for overturning a causal law, our incredulity about the place of unintrospectible non-conceptual states within Nyāya's epistemology and philosophical psychology gains greater purchase in light of the many ways Vyāsātīrtha has already undercut the evidence for Gaṅgeśa's causal law. Indeed, Vyāsātīrtha's extensive arguments provide us with overwhelming evidence against the purported law that all qualificative awareness is caused by a prior awareness of a qualifier, as well as the inferential support this law grants to Gaṅgeśa's defense of non-conceptual perception. We've seen that there are several counter-examples to this causal law within the Nyāya system itself—that is, cases of qualificative awareness which aren't preceded by an awareness of a prior qualifier, such as the perception of absences and memory (see also footnote 36). Qualificative awareness is essentially the awareness of a relation (*vaiśiṣṭya*) between a qualifier and qualificand, and so since these counter-examples arise without the prior awareness of a qualifier, they further show that Gaṅgeśa's rule runs afoul of a more general rule which he accepts, namely that a relation can't be known unless one first knows its relata.<sup>77</sup> If Gaṅgeśa's law is altered in

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<sup>77</sup> *TCM*, 866.09-10: "*daṇḍasambandha eva puruṣe daṇḍajñānaṃ vinā na jñāyata iti brūmaḥ.*" "We state that without a [prior] awareness of a stick in regards to a man [possessing that stick], a relation with a stick cannot be known." *TT*, 495.01-03: "*uktena vyabhicārena eva, 'vaiśiṣṭajñānaṃ sambandhaviśayakaṃ, sambandhajñāne ca sambandhijñānaṃ hetuḥ, sambandhi ca viśeṣaṇam' iti nirastam.*" "The previously stated counter-examples refute the claim that, 'A qualificative awareness has a relation as its content; the awareness of a relatum is the cause with respect to an awareness of a relation; and, the qualifier [in the qualificative awareness of the relation]

some way to account for these counter-examples, then that will lead to the sorts of infinite regresses that were meant to be blocked by the posit by non-conceptual perception.

Plus, to the extent that Gaṅgeśa can find a uniform causal rule to govern the production of all types of qualificative awareness, he will have to admit several undesirable outcomes: (1) The awareness of a qualifier (*viśeṣaṇajñāna*) is not the only type of awareness which has a causal role —the awareness of a qualificand (*viśeṣyajñāna*) would also be a necessary cause. (2) The type of preceding *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna* which would have a role in generating qualificative awareness-states is one which doesn't provide any inductive support for the existence of non-conceptual perception, because it has a complex qualificative content of its own (specifically, the prior awareness would be *viśeṣaṇatā-avacchedaka-prakāra* or *pratiyogitā-avacchedaka-prakāra*). The prior awareness of a qualifier needs to have this type of structured content in order to determine the manner in which the qualifier is presented in a subsequent qualificative awareness. (3) If the content of a prior *viśeṣaṇa-jñāna* does not need to have a certain type of qualificative structure, or if it can be totally unstructured as in the case of non-conceptual awareness, then there is the insuperable difficulty of explaining why one part of the prior state's content should be presented as the predicative content of the subsequent qualificative awareness. This difficulty is pressing particularly in light of Gaṅgeśa's allowance that an object does not have to be previously presented as a qualifier in order to serve as the qualifier in a subsequent awareness.

The alternative explanation that Vyāsaśīrtha and his Dvaitin predecessor Jayatīrtha (14<sup>th</sup> cent.) propose for the production of qualificative perception faces none of the difficulties mentioned above. By dispensing with the awareness of a qualifier as a necessary cause, Dvaitins

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is a relatum.”

avoid the general problems that afflict Gaṅgeśa’s attempt to find causal uniformity among every possible type of qualificative awareness, as well as the specific problems that result from positing invisible non-conceptual states of awareness.<sup>78</sup> According to Dvaitins, the predicative perceptual awareness of an object can be produced immediately after a sensory connection with that object is established. There are two special cases where a concept-laden perception requires extra cognitive intervention: Perceptually identifying an object as being the referent of a name requires that one first recall that name, and perceiving an absence requires that one first recall the object that is absent.<sup>79</sup> Otherwise, the relevant forms of non-cognitive connections between objects, external sense faculties, the internal sense faculty (*manas*), and the self are directly responsible for producing a concept-laden perceptual awareness, that is, an awareness which perceptually classifies objects as possessing certain properties and as being of a certain type. If the connections between one’s senses and an object are without any defect (*nirdoṣa*), then one can directly see that object and its structure as it is in the world.

## 9. Conclusion: The contemporary philosophical significance of Vyāsatīrtha’s refutation

To address any lingering impression that, due to its technical nature, the arguments discussed above are only relevant to the arcane and idiosyncratic context of Gaṅgeśa’s pre-

<sup>78</sup> Vyāsatīrtha at *TT*, 504.11-505.11 provides a helpful synopsis of the general difficulties or defeaters (*bādhaka*) which face Gaṅgeśa’s causal account of perception while not threatening the Dvaitin account, as well as the defeaters that specifically undermine Gaṅgeśa’s posit of non-conceptual perception. The specific defeaters are discussed in section 7 and particularly footnote 64.

<sup>79</sup> *PP*, 188.07-09. Jayatīrtha’s commentators point out that a non-conceptual awareness cannot be responsible for generating the memory of either the name or absentee that will then serve as qualifiers in the subsequent qualificative perception of the named object or absence. Some commentators (e.g., Rāghavendratīrtha (*PPBD*, 189.05-06), Viṭṭalabhaṭṭa (*PPT*, 191.12-14)) suggest that a sensory connection is directly responsible for generating the relevant memory, while other commentators (Janārdanabhaṭṭa (*PPV*, 188.15-18), Vedeśatīrtha (*PPBV*, 190.16-17)) claim that a sensory connection first gives rise to a predicative awareness that then generates the memory—for instance, one first perceptually classifies something as being an animal before one then recalls and applies the linguistic term “animal.” In either case, non-conceptual perception is cut out of the picture.

scientific theory of perception, we may briefly reconsider some aspects of Vyāsatīrtha’s refutation of *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* in the light of modern debates over the existence of non-conceptual perception. For instance, when Vyāsatīrtha offers an explanation of how memory could help one perceptually classify an object that one has never experienced before (see section 6), he can be read as responding to the problem of how one acquires a perceptual concept in the first place. To defend the possibility of perceiving an object without needing to possess any concept of what one perceives, some contemporary non-conceptualists have pointed out that certain observational concepts are ostensibly acquired only on the basis of perceptual experience (see Peacocke 2001, Roskies 2008). One learns what it is for, say, the taste of whisky to be “peaty,” and thereby develops a capacity for reidentifying this sort of taste, only by first tasting a whisky with notes of peatyness. Obviously, one has to have that perceptual experience of before one acquires a concept on the basis of it, and before one could then possess or deploy that concept in subsequent perceptual experience. Consequently, it is possible to have a perceptual experience in the absence of possessing the relevant observational concept that captures the content of that experience.

Gaṅgeśa’s own motivation for positing non-conceptual perception, and particularly his appeal for the need to block a regress of concept-laden states, can also be tied to the above argument from concept acquisition (Phillips 2011: 35): One needs to be directly acquainted with a property in a non-conceptual, unqualified manner before that property can be used to (veridically or non-veridically) classify and qualify an object in a qualificative, concept-laden perception. Chakrabarti himself articulates his own version of the argument from concept acquisition in order to defend the direct perceptibility of universals. If it is possible to learn over

time how to perceptually identify a dog, the sound of D-sharp, or the unique taste of durian, then one must be acquainted with the properties of doghood, D-sharpness, and durianhood in one's first perception of their respective property-possessors. Unless the kind-property were perceived in the first instance, one wouldn't be able to tell with a second, third, or fourth perception that this D-sharp note is the same kind as the first D-sharp note. Though of course, at the first moment of acquaintance, one need not recognize that one is seeing a dog, or hear the note as a D-sharp (Chakrabarti 2019: 36-40). Though Chakrabarti's "first-sight" argument may militate against Dharmakīrti's view that perceptual awareness is nothing more than a non-conceptual acquaintance with propertyless particulars, it nonetheless articulates one of the basic reasons why Gaṅgeśa claims that the non-conceptual acquaintance of a qualifying property is required to perceptually classify an object for the first time.<sup>80</sup>

In suggesting that past experiences stored in memory can be used to identify even a property which has never been perceived before in this life or any previous life, Vyāsaśīrtha is anticipating a parallel strategy adopted by contemporary defenders of conceptualism for responding to examples of perception which seem to outstrip a perceiver's conceptual repertoire. As stated by Rocco Gennaro, the conceptualist thesis is that "all conscious perceptual experience is structured by concepts a subject possesses" (2012: 2). To that extent, the thesis would be true even in the case of experiencing a previously unperceived property, if that experience were still structured by concepts one already possesses on the basis of past experiences. According to the

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<sup>80</sup> The first-sight argument may also be the Naiyāyika's best way of defending Gaṅgeśa's proof of non-conceptual perception. For instance, having raised the objection that memory traces from past lives could be involved in generating a first-time qualificative perception—an objection which Rucidatta and Vyāsaśīrtha believe does not lead to a vicious regress—all Gadādhara has to say in response is that non-conceptual perception is necessary just in order to account for the perception of properties which are being experienced for the first time in any life; without a prior memory of that property, the qualificative perception of it must get its predicative content from a non-conceptual perception. See *VJHV*, 76.28-29, *NSMañ*, 15.23-16.02.



account Vyāsatīrtha considers, the first-time perceptual identification of D-sharp would not need to be preceded by a direct non-conceptual awareness of D-sharpness. Instead, one may first recall a previous experience with another property, perhaps one which is more general or relevantly similar, and then use that property to perceptually classify the newly perceived D-sharpness. Then, with D-sharpness identified, one may then predicatively attribute it to its instances, that is, one may now start to possess an ability to identify and recognize other musical notes possessing D-sharpness. Similarly, contemporary conceptualists have argued that even if a perceiver might not fully possess the concepts for specific, fine-grained shades of color like red<sup>18</sup> and red<sup>19</sup>, one could still deploy less determinate concepts like *dark red* or comparative concepts like *lighter than* and *darker than* to identify what one sees (Gennaro 2012: 176-182).

But, what about the very first perception of an object in infancy? Surely, few contemporary conceptualists will accept the classical pan-Indian belief that we are born with a stock of memory traces from past lives, which enable us to recognize what we may be currently seeing for the first time in this life. To more charitably reframe this classical belief and the specific role it plays in Vyāsatīrtha's argument against non-conceptual perception, we may interpret it as being consistent with an appeal made by some conceptualists to the existence of a core set of basic and innate concepts which can kickstart our abilities for perceptual classification in infancy (see Gennaro 2012: 189-216). For example, studies have found human infant perception to be guided by nascent conceptual principles for identifying and tracking objects in a visual scene. By about four months of age, infants perceptually parse the distal environment in a way that evinces an understanding of physical objects as being bounded, coherent, three-dimensional, moveable and persisting wholes; researchers have thus concluded that infants

innately represent their environment in accordance with a basic sortal concept *object* (Baillargeon 2008, Spelke 1990). Moreover, infants individuate objects by making use of an object's properties—within the first year of life, infants progressively discern the identity of objects on the basis of their spatiotemporal location and motion, their features like shape and color, and finally more abstract kinds and categories (Xu 1999). In this way, the perceptual representations of non-linguistic infants may be said to take on a qualificative, object-property structure under the guidance of native perceptual concepts. For our purposes here, all this is just to say that Vyāsatīrtha's appeal to the possibility that a recollection of an experience from a past life may contribute to the predicative content of a qualificative perception in this life should not be dismissed by classical or contemporary non-conceptualists out of hand.

It should also be kept in mind that Vyāsatīrtha invokes the memory traces of past lives in the course of bolstering Rucidatta's internal critique of Gaṅgeśa's causal law; his own position is that predicative perceptual classification can arise simply through the presence of a direct sensory connection with the relevant objects. Vyāsatīrtha's account of how qualificative perception arises is not only more parsimonious, avoiding many of the gaps and inconsistencies within Gaṅgeśa's complex causal story, but it also shifts the terms of the Indian debate in a way that anticipates how the contemporary debate over non-conceptual perception has also had to be reframed. Heck (2007) distinguishes two basic construals of how a representational state can count as non-conceptual: Either a perceptual state is non-conceptual because it has a different type of content than conceptual states—this is the “content view”—or a perceptual state is non-conceptual because a perceiver doesn't possess the concepts that would characterize its content—this is the “state view.” The state view allows in principle that the representational content of

non-conceptual perception can be identical with the content of a conceptual judgment. For example, a non-conceptual infant and a concept-possessing adult can both perceptually represent the same palm tree; the infant just sees the palm tree, whereas the adult can judge that she is seeing a palm tree, but there is no difference in kind between the contents of their respective perceptual states. However, several non-conceptualists have argued that the state view alone is not a viable option for defending a coherent and non-trivial version of the non-conceptualist thesis. Aside from their being no agreed-upon account of concept possession which would definitively establish that the infant stands in a non-conceptual relation to its perceptual state, there are some basic tensions on whichever characterization of conceptual content one adopts—e.g., Fregean, Russellian, or possible world semantics—if one further accepts that a non-conceptual perceiver could entertain a state with the exact same content as that of a sophisticated concept-possessing perceiver. Long story short, the difficulties facing the state view can be removed only by admitting that a subject's concept-independent or concept-dependent relation to some mental state is indicative of a difference in the kind of content that state has, in which case state non-conceptualism would actually entail content non-conceptualism (Heck 2007, Bermúdez 2007, Toribio 2008, Hanna and Chadha 2011; see also Speaks 2005).

Mirroring this shift from a state view to a content view of non-conceptual content, Naiyāyikas starting with Gaṅgeśa similarly conceived of non-conceptual states as having a different type of intentional content (*viśayatā*) than that of concept-laden states; in other words, they adopted a form of content non-conceptualism. Vyāsaśrītha's refutation of Gaṅgeśa's causal arguments allows us to more directly appreciate this Navya Nyāya commitment to the content view, and correspondingly refocus the debate. If the non-conceptual perception of a qualifier has

no necessary role to play in generating concept-laden awareness, then any Naiyāyika appeals to the unique role that non-conceptual perception serves in explaining facts about concept-possession and concept-acquisition won't have any force, since that same role could be served by non-cognitive, unconscious sensory connections between an object, a sense faculty, the inner sense faculty, and the self. We are left, then, to simply ask whether it is intelligible to posit the existence of an introspectively unknowable state of awareness which has a totally different type of intentional content than all of the other types of mental states that populate our conscious experience.

I would suggest that Vyāsatīrtha's shifting our focus to the content view, as well as his appeal to non-cognitive causal processes in structuring the conceptual contents of perceptual states, represent an advance upon the standard defense of conceptualism offered by contemporary figures such as John McDowell.<sup>81</sup> But first, we can appreciate the basic convergence between them. Both Vyāsatīrtha and McDowell believe that our conscious perceptual experience of the world is fundamentally a type of propositional attitude, that is, it contains a propositionally structured content that presents the world as being a certain way. As McDowell puts it, "In a particular experience in which one is not misled, what one takes in is *that things are thus and so*. *That things are thus and so* is the content of the experience, and it can also be the content of a judgment.... So it is a conceptual content" (1994a: 26). It is striking that we find Vyāsatīrtha making the same basic claim, namely that all awareness is conceptually structured (*savikalpaka*), and takes a form expressible as "This is thus" ("*idam ittham*"; *TT*, 492.12-493.01).

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<sup>81</sup> I will be discussing the brand of conceptualism developed by McDowell in *Mind and World* (1994a), not the revised position that he adopts in his later essay, "Avoiding the Myth of the Given" (2009: 256-274).

Nonetheless, one advantage of adopting Vyāsatīrtha’s account, and of thinking within the context of the Nyāya-Dvaita debate, is that we can thereby avoid some of the excess baggage accompanying McDowell’s conceptualism. Owing to a deep Kantian/Sellarsian inheritance, McDowell has argued that the “the capacity to experience things as ‘thus-and-so’ should be seen as coeval with the capacity to judge that they are thus-and-so” (2009: 26 fn. 7). That is, the capacity to experience the world as thus and so entails that one can understand and judge that the contents of perception represent states of affairs which may obtain independently of one’s experience. In exercising this ability to form judgments and thereby draw the contents of perception out of their sensory domain, a perceiver understands her perceptual states as having normative significance within a whole web of concepts and thought-contents, or what McDowell, following Wilfrid Sellars (1991: 169), calls “the logical space of reasons.” McDowell additionally holds that the space of reasons maps onto “the space of concepts”: The only sort of contents eligible for having normative significance are those which are conceptually structured, and so the norm-governed activity of rational thought that takes place within the space of reasons will thus involve the exercise of one’s conceptual capacities. Finally, the twin spaces of reasons and concepts are, for McDowell, inseparable from the space of language: Through the acquisition of a language and the initiation into a linguistic community—developments which occur in tandem with the acquisition of conceptual capacities—knowers can participate in the discursive practices involved in appreciating reasons as such, practices like articulating reasons for their beliefs and evaluating the reasons of others. However, because McDowell presumed that experience has conceptual content only to the extent that a perceiver possesses the ability to self-consciously engage in rational, linguistically mediated thought about its experience, it is no

surprise that contemporary non-conceptualists (e.g., Peacocke 2001) have defended the existence of non-conceptual content by pointing to the similarities between adult human perceptual experience and the perceptual experience of infants and non-linguistic animals who, due to their evident lack of linguistic and inferential capacities, would fail to possess the conceptual capacities required for articulating the content of their experience. McDowell's original response was to reaffirm the necessary involvement of conceptual/linguistic capacities in perceptual experience, and thereby accept that non-linguistic perceivers do not have genuinely contentful perceptual representations of an objective world (1994a: 50).<sup>82</sup>

By contrast, both Vyāsatīrtha and Gaṅgeśa would be perfectly willing to admit that non-linguistic infants and animals can have concept-laden perceptions, because neither of them would link the predicative, classificatory content of perception to the possession of linguistic abilities for expressing that content. Sure, the content of concept-laden perceptions is such that it could be verbally reported—non-conceptual contents are necessarily unreportable by a subject—but neither thinker would confuse the ability to have a predicative perceptual experience with the ability to talk about that experience (see Phillips and Tatacharya 2009: 456-457). And sure, like McDowell, both Vyāsatīrtha and Gaṅgeśa would admit that non-conceptual perception cannot enter into a rational relation with other mental states like inferences, desires, and volitions. But, because they do not share McDowell's restrictive views concerning concept-possession and self-conscious rationality, they would not exclude infants and non-linguistic animals from the space of reasons and concepts, and would instead accept that even these creatures can have cognitive

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<sup>82</sup> In a later shift, McDowell (2009) abandoned the idea that perceptual experience has to “take the world as thus and so” and share the same type of propositional content as judgments. Perceptual content still has some unified structure that allows it to be discursively articulated by a perceiver, and that entitles the perceiver to make propositional judgments about what is perceived, but the perceptual content itself does not take a propositional form.

states which are rationally guided by their concept-laden perceptual classifications. Simply put, the Nyāya-Dvaita debate over non-conceptual perception operates free from some of the tortured distinctions—between intuition and judgment, sensory passivity and rational spontaneity, experience and belief—which have unduly constrained the parallel debate in modern Western epistemology.<sup>83</sup> If we don't conflate the propositional/predicative structure of a conceptual content with its being the content of a discursive/linguistically mediated judgment, then it becomes easier to understand how perceptual content could be non-linguistic, properly sensory, and still conceptually structured.

What, then, to make of Gaṅgeśa's belief in the existence of perceptual awareness whose content is non-linguistic, properly sensory, and non-conceptually structured? For both Vyāsaśīrtha and McDowell, any purported state of awareness which does not present a state of affairs in the world as being thus and so, and which does not present a particular object as being a certain way, would not actually be an awareness of the world and its objects at all. Given this basic sense of what it means for an awareness to have propositional content—not necessarily that the content of the awareness is literally an abstract proposition, but just that the awareness purports to present the world and its objects in a true or false, accurate or inaccurate manner—both Vyāsaśīrtha and McDowell would think that a non-conceptual awareness, whose content is

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<sup>83</sup> Mohan Matthen (2005a, 2005b) is one contemporary philosopher who offers an account of perception which is also unconstrained by these unnecessary dichotomies. He defends the "Sensory Classification Thesis," which claims that sensory systems operate by sorting and assigning perceived external objects according to classes. This thesis comes close, I think, to articulating how Gaṅgeśa and Vyāsaśīrtha would understand the conceptual structure of perceptual content. Matthen writes, "The Sensory Classification Thesis claims, in effect, that sensory awareness can be expressed in terms of a set of singular propositions, messages to the effect that a particular individual is assigned to a certain class, and is identified as exemplifying a certain property. This goes against the traditional distinction between sensation and perception, which implies that the former is more like an image from which such propositions may be extracted, but not in itself articulated in such terms, such articulation being attributed to the post-sensory process called perception" (2005a, 14).

essentially non-propositional and non-predicative, would be altogether contentless (*nirviṣaya*; *TT*, 493.01), and hence not actually an awareness of anything.

In place of a subjectively unknowable perceptual awareness with non-conceptual representational content, they would instead posit a merely causal, physical process of sensory faculties coming into contact with the world, a process which Vyāsatīrtha knows as “*indriya- artha-sannikarṣa*,” and which McDowell would call a process of “sub-personal informational transactions” (1994b: 196). This process is sub-personal in the sense that it can’t be properly ascribed to the knowing subject/*ātman*; rather, it is merely a series of mechanical events occurring in some parts of the physical organism possessed by the subject. There is no respect in which this mechanical process evinces any knowledge, understanding or even awareness of the information it is processing—put another way, the process occurs in the absence of any states of *jñāna*. Sub-personal sensory mechanisms can be the instrumental cause of one’s coming to have a perceptual awareness or *jñāna* of objects in the world, but neither is the subject aware of these mechanisms in becoming aware of those objects, nor are the mechanisms aware themselves. Awareness, and the knowledge and understanding it makes possible, can only belong to a subject who consciously experiences its environment, and who can come to appreciate that experience as having epistemic and normative significance within the context of other epistemic and normative mental states. A subject can genuinely possess a competent ability to interact with its environment—which for McDowell is constitutive of what it means to have a mind—only if it can understand in this way what its experience is telling it about its environment. And, experience can have something to say about an environment—in other words, the experience can have meaning and significance with regards to the world—only if it has a semantic value. For



both McDowell and Vyāsatīrtha, experience can only have semantic value if it has conceptually structured content. Non-conceptual, sub-personal sensory states would therefore not have any semantic value, meaning, or normative significance for a subject. Lacking such value, we could at best speak of sub-personal states “as if” they had representational content, even though they just belong to a “blind” syntactic process of manipulating informational structures.

Consequently, those states could not enable that subject to understand and interact competently with its environment, because by being devoid of any properly semantic content, it would not make the subject consciously aware of what is in its environment. If we follow McDowell’s (1994b) line of reasoning, as Vyāsatīrtha likely would, then it becomes highly doubtful that essentially non-conceptual perceptual awareness ought to be counted as a genuine state of awareness. For that matter, if the property of mindedness is restricted to members of the spaces of reasons and concepts (but not necessarily to the space of language in Vyāsatīrtha’s view), then it wouldn’t make sense for non-conceptual states to be counted as genuinely “mental” states at all.

Of course, all of the McDowellian claims just made about the connections between reason, mind, concepts, and consciousness are highly contentious, and we won’t settle the controversy here. But these claims help us to better understand why Gaṅgeśa’s account of *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* is in certain respects a fundamental departure from previous Nyāya accounts. We might interpret this departure, and the resulting difficulties it raises within Gaṅgeśa’s own account, as the result of an unprecedented attempt within Nyāya epistemology at expanding the concept of “*jñāna*” to include mental states which are subpersonal, subdoxastic,

and subconscious. Burge concisely describes the level of psychology at which these sorts of mental states are supposed to occur:

I take the subpersonal level to be a level that is not only not conscious, but is not accessible to introspective or reflective consciousness and must be gotten at only theoretically. This is true of the basic grammatical structures underlying our linguistic competence and the information-processing structures underlying our perceptual experience. (2003: 384)

Subpersonal, subdoxastic states are distinct from the experiences, desires, and memories that comprise our ordinary mental lives, in that we lack any first-personal, introspective access to them. For instance, we don't first-personally experience or form beliefs about the computational states of early visual processing involved in detecting intensities of light from patterns of retinal stimulation. Such states are subdoxastic in the sense that, being introspectively inaccessible, a subject cannot incorporate them into its doxastic practices of belief-formation and evaluation. More broadly, these states are not directly accessible to the cognitive systems involved in reasoning, speech, and action. In addition, despite whatever causal contribution they make to the phenomenology of conscious visual experience, these subpersonal states cannot be said to have a conscious phenomenal character themselves; that is, they are not states for which there is necessarily "something it is like" for a subject to have them.

Previous Nyāya thinkers evinced an understanding of unconscious mentality through their theory of *manas*, which was intended to account for unconscious cognitive functions like attention, memory, and self-monitoring (see Ganeri 2012: 249-267). For Naiyāyikas, though, the faculty of *manas* does not itself have any states of *jñāna* (unlike for Dvaitins). Hence, it is only once Gaṅgeśa developed a notion of essentially non-conceptual awareness that we find an implicit acknowledgment in Nyāya of representational states that are distinctly subpersonal and subdoxastic, and for which we have no conscious phenomenological evidence. By interpreting

*nirvikalpaka* perceptions in subpersonal terms, we may therefore understand why these perceptual states had to be specially accommodated within a framework that was primarily intended to account for the intentionality and veridicality of doxastic and phenomenologically manifest awareness-states. We also come to appreciate how Gaṅgeśa runs up against similar sorts of philosophical difficulties faced by anyone who attempts to extend personal-level notions of intentionality, representation, and awareness to the subpersonal level of mind (see Searle 1991, Kriegel 2012). Such an attempt won't be worth the trouble for someone who is already disposed to resist the idea of a necessarily subpersonal, subdoxastic, and subconscious form of awareness, due to either a belief that it must be at least possible for all mental states to be infallibly introspected by the subject (as Vyāsatīrtha and other Dvaitins hold; see Sarma 2016: 28-30), and/or because one's internalist picture of justification entails that mental states do not have any epistemic status if they are not accessible to a subject's rational reflection (McDowell 1995).

And yet, Gaṅgeśa may still have the last word. Many contemporary philosophers and cognitive scientists readily admit the existence of subpersonal, subdoxastic, and/or subconscious mental states with representational contents; so, it could be that Gaṅgeśa, with his postulation of a subpersonal, subdoxastic, and subconscious type of *jñāna* and *viśayatā*, is in good company. There are also some striking ways in which Gaṅgeśa's account of perception is compatible with certain contemporary models of visual processing. In Gaṅgeśa's view, the earliest stage of perceptual representation involves a non-conceptual, pre-predicative (and seemingly unconscious) acquaintance with an object and its identifying features, albeit separately—the object and its features are not yet bound together. Then, at a subsequent concept-laden stage of (conscious) perceptual awareness, there is a predicative and descriptive (not necessarily

linguistic) representation of an object and its properties—the object is identified by the properties it is now represented as possessing, and can be further classified with the help of a perceiver’s memory-based recognitional capacities. Similarly, contemporary psychological models take the process of perception to be divided into early and late stages (see Pylyshyn 2007, Raftopoulos 2009). In the unconscious stage of early vision, sensory features are separately registered across different feature-maps in the visual cortex; additionally, there is also a pre-predicative, non-descriptive process of object-individuation, which fixes the reference of subsequent visual predication and categorization. In the subsequent stage of intermediate-to-late vision, attentional selection stabilizes the binding of sensory features to a selected object, such that these features can be encoded as the identifying predicates of the selected object, and the selected object can now be identified as a token instantiation of its features. In binding features to objects, attention is further guided by the concepts and categories stored in memory. Through being transferred into visual working memory, an object-representation selected by attention becomes stable enough that it can be matched against similar representations stored in long-term memory. The presently perceived object with property F is compared with the mnemonic traces of previously perceived instantiations of F, and as a result, the presently perceived object becomes visually identified as a member of a class.

Though this sketch of the stages of visual processing is exceedingly brief, it suggests some ways in which Gaṅgeśa’s account of non-conceptual perception might be charitably reconstructed in naturalistic terms, the details of which we must forgo here. For now, we may simply conclude that a revised reading of Gaṅgeśa in the light of recent empirical science may be needed especially to restore the overall plausibility of his views, given how we’ve seen them so

thoroughly shaken to their foundations by Vyāsātīrtha’s *Destructive Dance*. Indeed, we might never have been motivated to reconstruct a naturalized Navya Nyāya theory of *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa*, had we not learned from Vyāsātīrtha that there are many problems with Gaṅgeśa’s account of “raw perception,” after all.

### Conflict of Interest Statement

The corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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- NSMañ* *Nyāyasiddhāntamañjarī* of Jānakīnātha Bhaṭṭācārya Cūḍāmaṇi. 1916. Misra, J., ed. *Nyāyasiddhāntamañjarī: Śrīyādavācāryaviracitayā Nyāyamañjarīsārākhyatīkayā sahitā*. Benares: E.J. Lazarus and Co.
- NSMD* *Dinakarī* of Dinakara. [see *NSM*]
- NSMK* *Kiraṇāvalī* of Kṛṣṇavallabhācārya. 1990. Sastri, N. & Sastri, S., eds. *Nyāyasiddhāntamuktāvalī of Śrī Viśvanātha Pañcānan: with the commentary Kiraṇāvalī*. Varanasi: Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan.
- NVTṬ* *Nyāyavārttikatātparyāṅkā* of Vācaspati Miśra. [see *NS*]
- PDS* *Padārthadharmasaṅgraha* of Praśastapāda. Jetly, J.S., ed. 1991. *Nyāyakandalī, being a commentary on Praśastapāda's bhāṣya, with three subcommentaries*. Vadodara: Oriental Institute.
- PP* *Pramāṇapaddhati* of Jayatīrtha. 2004. Pandurangi, K.T., ed. *Pramāṇapaddhatiḥ: Śrījanārdanaviracitā Jayatīrthavijayanāmnī ṭippanī, Śrīrāghavendratīrthaviracitaḥ Pramāṇapaddhatibhāvadīpaḥ, Śrīvijayīndratīrtha viracitā Pramāṇapaddhatiṭippanī, Śrīvedeśabhikṣuviracitā Pramāṇapaddhatiṭippanī, Śrīsatyānāthatīrthaviracitam Abhinavāṃṛtam, Śrīvyāsapurī Narasiṃhaviracitaḥ Ādarśaḥ, Śrīnivāsatīrthaviracitā Vākyārthamañjarī, Śrīviṭṭalabhaṭṭaviracitā Pramāṇapaddhatiṭippanī iti aṣṭa ṭippanī sahitā*. Bangalore: Dvaita Vedanta Studies and Research Foundation.
- PPBD* *Bhāvadīpa* of Rāghavendratīrtha. [see *PP*]
- PPBV* *Bhāvavivaraṇā* of Vedeśatīrtha. [see *PP*]
- PPT* *Ṭippanī* of Viṭṭalabhaṭṭa. [see *PP*]

- PPV *Vivaraṇa* of Janārdanabhaṭṭa. [see PP]
- PS *Pramāṇasamuccaya* of Dignāga. 2005. Steinkellner, E., ed. *Dignāga's Pramāṇasamuccaya, Chapter 1. A hypothetical reconstruction with the help of the two Tibetan translations on the basis of the hitherto known Sanskrit fragments and the linguistic materials gained from Jinendrabuddhi's Tikā*.  
<[http://ikga.oeaw.ac.at/Mat/dignaga\\_PS\\_1.pdf](http://ikga.oeaw.ac.at/Mat/dignaga_PS_1.pdf)>
- TB *Tarkabhāṣā* of Keśava Miśra. 1979. Iyer, S.R., ed. and trans. *Tarkabhāṣā of Keśava Miśra*. Varanasi: Chaukhamba Orientalia.
- TCM *Tattvacintāmaṇi* of Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya. 1973. Tatacharya, N.S.R., ed. *Tattvacintāmaṇi: With Prakāśa of Rucidattamiśra and Tarkacūḍāmaṇi on Prakāśa of Dharmarājādharin*. Vol. 1: Pratyakṣakhaṇḍa. Tirupati: Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha.
- TCMan *Tattvacintāmaṇi (anumānakhaṇḍa)* of Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya. 1990. Kamakhyanath, T., ed. *The Tattvacintāmaṇi of Gaṅgeśa—Anumāna Khaṇḍa: With the Commentary 'Rahasya' by Shri Mathuranatha Tarkavagisha*. Vol. 2: Part 1. Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan.
- TCMśa *Tattvacintāmaṇi (śabdakhaṇḍa)* of Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya. 1990. Kamakhyanath, T., ed. *The Tattvacintāmaṇi of Gaṅgeśa—Śabda Khaṇḍa: With the Commentary 'Rahasya' by Shri Mathuranatha Tarkavagisha*. Vol. 4: Part 2. Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan.
- TCMA *Āloka* of Jayadeva Miśra. 1990. Kamakhyanath, T., ed. *The Tattvacintāmaṇi of Gaṅgeśa—Pratyakṣa Khaṇḍa: With Extracts From the Commentaries of Shri Mathuranatha Tarkavagisha & Shri Jayadeva Mishra*. Vol. 1. Delhi: Chaukhamba Sanskrit Pratishthan.
- TCMP *Prakāśa* of Rucidatta Miśra. 1973. Tatacharya, N.S.R., ed. *Tattvacintāmaṇi: With Prakāśa of Rucidattamiśra and Tarkacūḍāmaṇi on Prakāśa of Dharmarājādharin*. Vol. 1: Pratyakṣakhaṇḍa. Tirupati: Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha.
- TS *Tarkasaṅgraha* of Annambhaṭṭa. 2008. Veezhinathan, N. 2008. *The Tarkasaṅgraha-dīpikā-prakāśikā: With the Commentaries Bālapriyā and Prasāraṇa*. Chennai: Sri Sri Sri Manalakshmi-Mathrubhuteswarar Trust.
- TSBP *Bālapriyā* of N.S. Rāmānuja Tatacharya. [see TS]
- TSP *Prakāśikā* of Nīlakaṇṭha. [see TS]

- TT* *Tarkatāṇḍava* of Vyāsātīrtha. 1932. D. Srinivasachar, D. & and Madhvachar, V., eds. *Tarkatāṇḍavam of Śrī Vyāsātīrtha with the Nyāyadīpa of Śrī Rāghavendratīrtha*. Vol. 1. Mysore: Oriental Research Institute.
- VJHV* *Viśeṣañajñānahetutāvādvāci* of Gadādhara Bhaṭṭācārya. 1936. Misra, B., & Shastri, D., eds. *Vādvāridhi by Śrī Śrī Gadādhara Bhaṭṭācārya and others*. Benares: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office.
- VS* *Vaiśeṣikasūtra* of Kaṇāda. 1969. Misra, N., ed. *Vaiśeṣikasūtropakṣāra of Śrīsaṅkaramiśra*. Varanasi: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office.

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