5 Perceiving existence

5.1 Vyāsatīrtha's case for realism: an overview

In the opening chapters of the *Nyāyāmṛta*, Vyāsatīrtha responds to his Advaita *pūrvapakṣin* by presenting a case against Ānandabodha's arguments to prove that the world is "illusory". Once again, the three inferences that Vyāsatīrtha assigns to Ānandabodha in the *pūrvapakṣa* are:

1. "The world is illusory, because [it is] perceptible; just like the silver [superimposed] on mother-of-pearl" (*jagan mithyā, dṛśyatvāt; śuktirūpyavat*).
2. "The world is illusory, because [it is] finite; just like the silver [superimposed] on mother-of-pearl" (*jagan mithyā, paricchinnatvāt; śuktirūpyavat*).
3. "The world is illusory, because [it is] insentient; just like the silver [superimposed] on mother-of-pearl" (*jagan mithyā, jaḍatvāt; suktirūpyavat*).

All three inferences should establish that the world has the quality of "illusoriness" (*mithyātva*) by analogy to the case of perceptual error in which someone mistakes a piece of mother-of-pearl for silver. Technically, the property of illusoriness is the *sādhya*—the "probandum" or the thing that is to be established by the inference. The above inferences establish that illusoriness is present in the world on the grounds that the word possesses three different qualities: perceptibility (*dṛśyatva*), finitude (*paricchinnatva*), and insentience (*jaḍatva*). The "silver" in the mother-of-pearl/silver confusion is the example (*dṛṣṭānta*).

Ānandabodha believes we are able to make these inferences because we have already observed that in each inference there is a universal relationship between the probandum and the reason. This universal relationship is what is termed "pervasion" (*vyāpti*). I will discuss this concept in detail in Chapter 7. For the moment, it is enough to say that it entails that the probandum is invariably concomitant with the reason; that is, that the probandum is present wherever the reason is present. Ānandabodha's inferences are based on three separate *vyāpti*s: (1) everything that is perceptible is illusory; (2) everything that is finite is illusory; and (3) everything that is insientient is illusory. According to Ānandabodha, we have observed each of these universal relationships in the same place: the mother-of-pearl/silver confusion that serves as the example in each inference. In each inference, the reason is a property that characterises the world but not *brahman*. The objects we experience in the everyday world are perceptible, but *brahman* is self-illuminating consciousness; it cannot be perceived by some further knowing subject. Similarly, the things we see in the world around us are finite in terms of space and time, but *brahman*

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110728521-005

is infinite from this point of view. Likewise, the objects we perceive in the outside world are insentient, but *brahman* is pure awareness.

The first chapters of the *Nyāyāmṛta* are primarily concerned with systematically refuting these inferences. Vyāsatīrtha analyses each component of the inferences in turn. He draws on the leading works of Advaita philosophy to supply formal definitions for each of these concepts. He begins with the probandum (*mithyātva*) before moving on to analyse the three reasons. Vyāsatīrtha tries to show that, no matter how their component parts are analysed, the inferences are always fatally flawed. He also attempts to prove that the inferences conflict with the other means of knowledge, including perception, scripture, and other inferences, and that this should lead us to abandon them.

In these first parts of the *Nyāyāmṛta*, Vyāsatīrtha's critique returns again and again to the analysis of the concepts of "existence" (*sattva, sattā*[1]) and "nonexistence" (*asattva*). By the time Vyāsatīrtha was writing, a rich discussion of these concepts had already been undertaken among Indian philosophers. In the *Nyāyāmṛta*, Vyāsatīrtha considers the definitions of these concepts given by the Advaitins, the classical Vaiśeṣikas, and certain Buddhists, among others. All of these traditions tended to think of "existence" as a kind of property which is present in certain things, but they had very different views about how exactly to define it. Buddhist philosophers like Dharmakīrti (*fl.* 640) argued that "existence" can be defined in terms of practical efficacy. The classical Vaiśeṣikas, by contrast, understood "existence" to be a universal/natural kind (*jāti*) which inheres in certain parts of the real world. Advaitin philosophers like Citsukha and Madhusūdana, on the other hand, argued that existence can be defined in cognitive terms as the capacity to become the object of certain types of mental awareness. These questions about existence and nonexistence were closely bound up with questions about perception, in particular whether existence is a perceptible property and whether we can perceive/cognise nonexistent entities like the hare's horn.

The *Nyāyāmṛta* is primarily a critical work aiming to undermine the arguments of Advaitin philosophers. It is nevertheless possible to identify a set of positive positions accepted implicitly by Vyāsatīrtha which hang together behind this critique to make a positive case for the reality of the world. The following is a brief outline of the main philosophical positions implicit in Vyāsatīrtha's case against the Advaitins.

1 The terms *sattva* and *sattā* are both formed from the present active participle of the verbal root *as* combined with an abstract suffix, and both can be translated as "existence". However, Vyāsatīrtha consistently uses the terms *sattva* and *sattā* in different ways in the *Nyāyāmṛta*. He usually uses the term *sattā* to refer to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of existence as a universal/natural kind present in substances, motions, and tropes. By contrast, he usually uses the term *sattva* when discussing the Mādhva and Advaita theories of existence.

This should serve to give the reader an overview of the main arguments discussed in this chapter and the next.

1. We can directly perceive the existence of the objects of our perceptions.

Vyāsatīrtha argues that Ānandabodha's inferences cannot succeed because they are "contradicted by perception" (*pratyakṣabādhita*). This is because Vyāsatīrtha believes that our perceptions reveal to us that their objects exist. This should not be confused with the argument that we can *infer* the existence of the objects of our perceptions based on the fact that we perceive them. Vyāsatīrtha maintains that we can directly perceive properties that we call "existence" in the individual things that we encounter through our sense faculties. For instance, when I perceive this computer in front of me, I not only perceive that it is a substance with certain qualities, I also perceive that it exists. In his *Tattvoddyotaṭīkā*, Jayatīrtha claims that *all* our perceptions tell us that their objects exist.[2] In the *Sattvanirukti* ("Determination of Existence") chapter of the *Nyāyāmṛta*, Vyāsatīrtha states that at least certain perceptions (e.g., "This pot exists", "The table exists") show us that the objects we perceive in the world around us truly exist.[3]

2. Illusoriness and existence are mutually incompatible properties; we cannot consistently claim that the world both exists *and* that it is illusory.

Even if Vyāsatīrtha manages to establish that the world of our experience has the property of "existence", his arguments against Ānandabodha's inferences only succeed if the judgment that the world "exists" is truly incompatible with the thesis that the world is illusory. Advaitin philosophers do not necessarily deny that the world has some sort of existence, because they assign it a provisional/transactional existence (*vyāvahārika-sat*). So the road is open to them to argue that our everyday perceptions only grasp this lesser, provisional type of existence, whereas inference and scripture have the power to teach us that, from the ultimate point of view, the world is a mere illusion. According to this line of argument, our perceptions that the objects of our experience exist cannot contradict Ānandabodha's inferences, because those inferences and our perceptions are actually grasping two different levels of existence.

Vyāsatīrtha actually agrees that none of the definitions of existence defended by earlier philosophers in India truly contradict the Advaitins' case that the world is illusory. However, he argues that the new definitions of existence and nonexistence

2 See *Tattvoddyotaṭīkā*, TU: 125.

3 See NAB, 1:248.

he presents in the *Nyāyāmṛta* truly contradict the Advaitins' claims. If we define existence as he does, then we cannot consistently claim both that the world "exists" and that it is "illusory".

3. Existence and nonexistence can ultimately be defined in terms of absence (*abhāva*).

One of Vyāsatīrtha's most important intellectual contributions to his school was to draw together Madhva and Jayatīrtha's arguments to formulate coherent definitions of existence and nonexistence, which he offers to the Advaitin in a "spirit of friendship"[4] in the *Nyāyāmṛta*. The Mādhvas follow the classical Vaiśeṣika philosophers in admitting into their ontology a separate category called "absence" (*abhāva*) to account for negative judgments such as "Anna is not at work" or "Devadatta is not Yajñadatta". According to Vyāsatīrtha, existence and nonexistence can be defined by the quantification of absence across space and time. Briefly, to say that something "does not exist" is to say that it is *absent* from all times and places; to say that it *does* exist is to say that it is present in at least one location at one point in time. So "existence" simply means the quality of being connected with space and time. Perception reveals to us that the objects of our experience are existent simply because it shows us that those objects exist in at least one location at at least one point in time.

4. Perception itself can tell us that the "existence" we perceive in these objects will never be sublated.

Advaitin philosophers like Citsukha and Madhusūdana[5] defined "existence" as "omni-temporal non-sublatability" (*traikālika-abādhyatva*). To say that something "truly exists" is to say that it can never be sublated/falsified by future experience. According to Advaitin philosophers, only *brahman*—self-illuminating awareness—can never be sublated, and so only *brahman* truly exists. If existence is defined as such, then how can perception tell us that its objects exist? Our perceptual faculties seem only to be able to tell about things as they are in the present moment; how could they tell us about what will or will not happen at some indeterminate point in the future?

Responding to this kind of objection, Vyāsatīrtha holds—consistent with his definitions of existence and nonexistence—that all we need to do to grasp that something exists is to apprehend that it is present in at least *one* place at at least *one* time. This still leaves open the possibility that our current perceptions of existence will

4 See below, p. 133, for a discussion of this passage in the *Sattvanirukti*.

5 Citsukha endorses this definition of *sattva* in the *Tattvapradīpikā*; see for instance TP: 47.

be sublated at a future time. However, Vyāsatīrtha argues that we can be sure this will never happen, because certain types of perception can apprehend *future states* as well; as such, perception itself can tell us that our perceptions of the existence of objects in the external world will not be defeated in the future. Vyāsatīrtha does not argue that our external sense faculties (the visual-faculty and so on) can apprehend future states; he claims that only the witness (*sākṣin*)—the "internal faculty", which is the very essence of the individual self—can do this. Refusing to accept this position would rule out the possibility of knowledge altogether.

5. Perception is stronger than inference; if inference and perception contradict one another we must abandon our inferences as faulty.

Even if it is true that perception stands in contradiction to Ānandabodha's inferences, why should we automatically abandon the conclusions of these inferences in favour of our perceptions? Why not abandon perception instead? In the *Nyāyāmṛta*, Vyāsatīrtha argues that perception is innately stronger than inference because it can inform us about subtle aspects of the everyday world that inference and scripture cannot. He also argues that perception is stronger than inference because inference depends on perception to function. We can only infer things if we are aware of the various components of the inference (the inferential subject, the probandum, and so on) through perception prior to making the inference. So, if Ānandabodha's inferences conflict with perception we must abandon them in favour of perception and not vice versa.

6. Existence and nonexistence are "fully contradictory" properties.

The Advaitins' opponents had long argued that their doctrine of indeterminacy is simply a disguised contradiction. Vyāsatīrtha crafted his own definitions of existence and nonexistence partly to give substance to this old objection. As I will show below, existence and nonexistence as Vyāsatīrtha has defined them are what could be called "fully contradictory" properties: they are both mutually exclusive (nothing can both exist *and* not exist) *and* collectively exhaustive (everything that we can conceive of must have either one of these properties). Vyāsatīrtha accepts that the absence of existence is simply identical with the absence of nonexistence and, vice versa, that the absence of nonexistence is identical with the absence of existence. Advaitin philosophers claim that the world is indeterminate in the sense that it lacks both existence and nonexistence. However, Vyāsatīrtha argues that if existence and nonexistence are fully contradictory properties, then proving that something is "*neither* existent *nor* nonexistent" really amounts to the claim that it is "*both* existent *and* nonexistent".

7. We can have cognitions of nonexistent things.

Advaitin philosophers claim that the "silver" in the mother-of-pearl/silver confusion cannot be nonexistent. If it were, how could we cognise it at all? Advaitin philosophers are therefore implicitly committed to the position that we cannot perceive nonexistent things. Vyāsatīrtha follows Jayatīrtha in arguing that we *can* cognise nonexistent things in a way that undermines the Advaitins' argument. Madhva himself had a sort of "master argument" against the Advaitins' proof for indeterminacy. He argued that it is simply contradictory to claim that one cannot cognise some entity or domain of entities. The fact that we can utter meaningful statements about the entities in question demonstrates that we *can* somehow cognise them: how else could we have the type of mental judgments that allow us to refer to them in language? The fact that we can make meaningful statements about nonexistent things like hares' horns and the sons of barren women shows that we must somehow have cognitions of them, and Vyāsatīrtha defends this position in the *Nyāyāmṛta*.

8. Perceptual illusions are just cases where we have perception-like experiences of things that do not exist.

As the Advaitin philosopher Citsukha realised,[6] point (7) still leaves open the question of what *type* of cognitions we can have of nonexistent things. Specifically, can we have the type of vivid, perception-like cognitions of hares' horns and the like as we do in perceptual illusions, and, if so, how? In the *Nyāyāmṛta*, Vyāsatīrtha follows Jayatīrtha in defending what Jayatīrtha christened the "neo-misidentification[7]-theory" of error (*abhinava-anyathā-khyāti-vāda*). Vyāsatīrtha argues that perceptual illusions are mundane events which are perfectly compatible with the realist positions he is defending. In fact, illusions are simply cases of mistaken identity. Our sense-faculties malfunction and dupe us into believing that some individual that really is part of the world around us is identical with something it is not. The "silver" in the mother-of-pearl/silver confusion is just as nonexistent as a flower that grows in the sky. Our cognition of the "silver" might ultimately be *based on* an actually existing piece of silver we have previously experienced but, strictly speaking, the "silver" does not correlate to any particular part of the real world.

6 See below, p. 157, for a discussion of this argument in Citsukha's *Tattvapradīpikā*.

7 My translation of *anyathākhyāti* here reflects Jayatīrtha's understanding of perceptual error as entailing the misidentification of two individuals. The term might be translated differently when discussing some versions of the Nyāya *anyathākhyāti* theory of perceptual illusion.

In this chapter and the next, I show how these positions hang together to undermine Ānandabodha's three inferences, and thereby offer a case in favour of realism about the empirical world.

5.2 The classical Vaiśeṣika scheme of reality

To understand Vyāsatīrtha's theory of existence in the *Nyāyāmṛta*, it is necessary to take a brief excursion into classical Vaiśeṣika metaphysics. As discussed above, Vyāsatīrtha is firmly committed to the ontological theory Madhva developed in texts like the *Anuvyākhyāna*, *Tattvasaṅkhyāna*, and *Tattvaviveka*. Nevertheless, Madhva and the philosophers who followed him were all trained in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika ontology as well. Indeed, the influence of classical Vaiśeṣika metaphysics can be seen throughout the *Nyāyāmṛta*, with Vyāsatīrtha regularly referring back to Vaiśeṣika theories about the natural world. In the *Nyāyāmṛta*, along with Buddhist and Advaita theories of existence, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theories of absence and of "existence" as a universal/natural kind forms the backdrop to Vyāsatīrtha's treatment of existence.

Like Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika philosophy is connected with a set of *sūtra*s, which have been dated to the first century of the common Common Era. However, these *sūtra*s came to be neglected and classical Vaiśeṣika thought largely evolved in the form of commentaries on the sole surviving work of the sixth century philosopher Praśastapāda, the *Padārthadharmasaṅgraha*. In the tenth century two commentaries were composed on Praśastapāda's work by Vyomaśiva (*fl.* 950) and Śrīdhara (*fl.* 991). Another important manual of Vaiśeṣika philosophy was Śivāditya's (*fl.* 1150) *Saptapadārthī*. By the time Vyāsatīrtha was writing at the turn of the sixteenth century, the two leading works in Vaiśeṣika thought were Udayana's (*fl.* 984) commentary on the *Padārthadharmasaṅgraha*, the *Kiraṇāvalī*, and Vallabha's (*fl.* 1140) independent work, the *Nyāyalīlāvatī*. Vyāsatīrtha's *Tarkatāṇḍava* clearly shows that he had a deep awareness of the earlier Nyāya/Vaiśeṣika texts, and that he was familiar with both Udayana and Vallabha. He was also familiar with the works of Gaṅgeśa's son, Vardhamāna (*fl.* 1345), who wrote commentaries on both the

Nyāyalīlāvatī and the *Kiraṇāvalī*.[8] The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika text that Vyāsatīrtha draws on most frequently in the *Nyāyāmṛta* is Gaṅgeśa's *Tattvacintāmaṇi*.[9]

In the generation just prior to Vyāsatīrtha, a significant amount of literature was written on Vaiśeṣika metaphysics by philosophers based in Mithila. Śaṅkara Miśra (*fl.* 1430) wrote a manual of classical Vaiśeṣika in the form of a commentary on the *Padārthadharmasaṅgraha* entitled the *Kaṇādarahasya*. He also wrote a commentary on the *Nyāyalīlāvatī* entitled the *Kaṇṭhabharaṇī*, and a further commentary on the *Vaiśeṣikasūtra*s themselves known as the *Vaiśeṣikasūtropaskāra*.[10] Another Mithila-based philosopher named Vācaspati Miśra (II) (*fl.* 1440) wrote a commentary on the *Nyāyalīlavatī*, apparently entitled the *Vardhamānendu*.[11]

These Mithila-based Naiyāyikas still defended what I refer to here as the "classical Vaiśeṣika" philosophy. This classical scheme largely reflects the metaphysical scheme articulated by Praśastapāda, although there were many important innovations by subsequent thinkers. In Vyāsatīrtha's own lifetime, this classical picture came under attack from a radical Bengali Navya-Naiyāyika named Raghunātha Śiromaṇi (*fl.* 1510). In a brief work usually known as the *Padārthatattvanirūpaṇa* ("Determination of the Truth about the Categories"), Raghunātha systematically demolished the classical system of Vaiśeṣika categories and proposed a heavily revised version to take its place. As Jonardan Ganeri has demonstrated, Raghunātha's work stimulated a renewed interest in metaphysics among Navya-Nyāya philosophers. In particular, the *Padārthatattvanirūpaṇa* inspired new texts by philosophers such as Jayarāma Nyāyapañcānana (*fl.* 1650) and Veṇīdatta (*fl.* 1740).[12] However, while later Mādhvas engaged in detail with Raghunātha's ideas along with those of his commentators,[13] Vyāsatīrtha himself was clearly not aware of Raghunātha, and his works largely reflect the classical Vaiśeṣika metaphysics.

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8 Vyāsatīrtha (TT, 4:347–348) refers to the *Nyāyalīlāvatī* explicitly when critiquing Vallabha's position that there are really four types of pseudo-reasons in inference. He also refers to the *Nyāyalīlāvatī* when discussing the Nyāya theory of word-denotation (TT, 2:52). Vyāsatīrtha shows a deep knowledge of Vardhamāna's commentary (the *Prakāśa*) on Udayana's *Nyāyakusumāñjali* in the *Īśvaravāda* of the *Tarkatāṇḍava*. See TT, 1:361–377.

9 For a discussion of some of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers Vyāsatīrtha was familiar with as seen in the *Tarkatāṇḍava*, see Williams (2014).

10 For a summary of all Śaṅkara Miśra's Vaiśeṣika works, see Bhattacharyya and Potter (1993: 423–453).

11 See Bhattacharyya and Potter (1993: 455) for an outline of Vācaspati's works.

12 See Ganeri (2011) and Williams (2017b) for recent discussions of Raghunātha's metaphysical arguments in the *Padārthatattvanirūpaṇa* and that text's impact on metaphysics in Bengal and Mithila.

13 See above, pp. 40–43, for a discussion of the familiarity of later Mādhva thinkers with Raghunātha and Gadādhara.

I have chosen to present this background in classical Vaiśeṣika primarily based on Udayana's brief manual, the *Lakṣaṇāvalī*, which has been studied and translated into English by Musashi Tachikawa. I have also drawn from Udayana's *Kiraṇāvalī*, his *Lakṣaṇamālā*, and Śaṅkara Miśra's *Kaṇādarahasya*. It is not clear that Vyāsatīrtha was aware of any of these texts, since he does not reference them in his works directly. However, they do present an accurate and authoritative overview of the major features of the classical Vaiśeṣika philosophy that Vyāsatīrtha would have been familiar with.

Like the Mādhvas, the classical Vaiśeṣikas were realists about the world of our senses. According to them, our everyday perceptions of the world around us must be the touchstone of metaphysical analysis. The underlying assumption is that reality must conform to the way we think and speak about it. The ultimate goal of Vaiśeṣika metaphysical analysis is to specify how reality must be in order to account for, in the most parsimonious way possible, the factual occurrence and validity of the true judgments that can be made by human beings.

The classical Vaiśeṣikas held that, upon analysis, everything there is comes under one of either six or seven "categories" (*padārthas*). The interpretive translation of *padārtha* as "category" is largely based on parallels with Aristotelian thought. It could be more literally translated as "a thing for which a word stands". A category is an irreducible correlate of speech and thought. To say that something is a "separate category" (*padārthāntara*) is effectively to advance an irreducibility thesis about it. A category cannot be reductively defined in terms of other, more fundamental realities; the categories are the elementary correlates of thought and speech, which mark the horizon of metaphysical analysis. The property of "categoriness" (*padārthatva*) is therefore a "universal-positive" (*kevalānvayin*) property, a property that is present in all things words can refer to. Praśastapāda accepted that there are six, and only six, categories: substance (*dravya*), trope (*guṇa*), motion (*karman*), universal (*jāti*), ultimate differentiator (*viśeṣa*), and the inherence relator (*samavāya*). In the *Lakṣaṇāvalī*, Udayana accepts all of these categories as constituting the "positive categories".[14]

14 *abhidheyaḥ padārthaḥ. sa dvividhaḥ—bhāvābhāvabhedāt. tatra nañarthaviṣayatvarahitapratyayaviṣayo bhāvaḥ.* (Tachikawa, 1981: 56.) "A category (*padārtha*) is what can be named. [Category] is of two sorts, because of the difference between positive and negative [categories]. Of those [two], the positive is what is the object of a judgment whose object cannot be expressed by a negative particle". With the exception of Candramati's *Daśapadārthaśāstra*, the early Vaiśeṣika thinkers, including Praśastapāda, did not consider absence to be a separate category. However, Vaiśeṣika philosophers like Śrīdhara, Udayana, and Vallabha did regard it as such. An early work where absence is systematically integrated into the Vaiśeṣika system of categories is Śivāditya's (*fl.* 1150) *Saptapadārthī*. See Matilal (1968: 99–103) for a discussion of the history of absence among Nyāya/Vaiśeṣika thinkers.

In the *Lakṣaṇāvalī*, Udayana presents several definitions of "substance". The principal function of a substance is to act as the substrate of *guṇa*s, a term which is usually translated as "quality", but is better rendered by "trope" (see above, Chapter 3, p. 61, fn. 27). A substance could thus be defined to be something that contains tropes. A problem with defining substancehood this way is that, according to the Vaiśeṣikas, substances do not contain tropes in the first moment in which they come into being. Udayana therefore defines substancehood (*dravyatva*) as "not being the locus of the *permanent* absence of tropes"; that is, a substance must be the locus of a trope at some point in its existence.[15]

According to the classical scheme defended by Udayana, there are nine substances: four atomic substances—earth, water, fire, and wind; a pervasive, sound-conducting substance known as the "ether"; time, space, and the individual selves; and the internal faculty (*manas*). Like the Mādhvas, classical Vaiśeṣika philosophers accepted the existence of atoms, although Raghunātha attacked this view during Vyāsatīrtha's lifetime. The first four material substances can be both atomic and composite according to the classical view. Atoms are eternal whereas all composite things are non-eternal.[16] In themselves, atoms are not perceptible by ordinary human beings, although they may be perceived by god and by certain advanced practitioners of yoga.[17] The "particle" (*truṭi*) is the smallest thing that is perceptible to human beings. The particle is in turn composed of atomic-dyads (*dvyaṇuka*), which are themselves composed of the eternal atoms. In the *Lakṣaṇāvalī*, Udayana states that there are twenty-four kinds of trope. In the *Lakṣaṇamālā* he gives a full list and explanation of them.[18]

Beginning with Praśastapāda, classical Vaiśeṣika included an extensive discussion of physics. Classical Vaiśeṣika philosophers usually considered motion (*kriyā*, *karman*) to be a separate category. Motions can be perceived through the sense faculties. Śaṅkara Miśra says that the existence of the universal "motionness" is established on the basis of everyday perceptions such as "[This thing] moves".[19] Like tropes, motions inhere in substances. The category of motion includes, according to Udayana, "throwing upwards" (*utkṣepana*), "throwing downwards" (*apakṣepaṇa*), "contraction" (*ākuñcana*), "expansion" (*prasāraṇa*), and "general motion" (*gamana*).

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15 *tatra guṇātyantābhāvānadhikaraṇatvaṃ dravyatvaṃ.* (Tachikawa, 1981: 56.) "Among those [categories] substancehood consists in 'being the locus of the constant absence of trope'".

16 See Tachikawa (1981: 34–37) for a discussion of the atomic theory found in the *Lakṣaṇāvalī*. See also Tachikawa (1981: 17–21) for a discussion of atomism in earlier Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika texts.

17 For a discussion of the ability of yogins to perceive atoms and Raghunātha's critique of this theory, see Potter (1957: 43–44) and Williams (2017b: 629–631).

18 See Tachikawa (1981: 72–74) for this list in the *Lakṣaṇāvalī*

19 KR: 152.

These motions are considered to be the non-inherence causes of the tropes contact (*saṃyoga*) and disjunction (*vibhāga*). Bodies are initially set in motion because they possess other tropes like "heaviness" (*gurutva*) or "fluidity" (*dravatva*).[20]

The classical Vaiśeṣikas further accepted a category of "ultimate differentiator" (*viśeṣa*s). According to Śaṅkara Miśra,[21] ultimate individuators differentiate eternal substances from one another; we need to postulate them in order to account for how yogins, who have extraordinary abilities to perceive atoms, can distinguish one atom from another. The classical Vaiśeṣikas also accept a mass-relater called "inherence" (*samavāya*). Inherence is taken to be a singular, permanent relator through which wholes inhere in their parts, tropes and motions inhere in substances, and universals inhere in tropes, motions, and substances. Udayana simply defines inherence as "the permanent relator" (*nityaḥ sambandhaḥ samavāyaḥ*).[22] The Mādhvas do not accept the classical Vaiśeṣika inherence-relator, and Vyāsatīrtha devotes a section of his *Tarkatāṇḍava* to refuting the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika doctrine.[23]

5.3 Absence and existence in classical Vaiśeṣika

Vyāsatīrtha studied the works of the classical Vaiśeṣikas in depth, and the ontology I sketched in the above features regularly in his arguments in the *Nyāyāmṛta*. Throughout the text, he frequently uses the formal arguments Vaiśeṣika philosophers used to prove the existence of the different parts of this scheme as examples to evaluate arguments made by the Advaitins. Moreover, when giving formal definitions of concepts, he often tries to show that they can be taken to apply to different parts of the Vaiśeṣika universe. Vyāsatīrtha's arguments against Ānandabodha's inferences were influenced in particular by Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers' theories of existence and absence. His own definitions of "existence" and "nonexistence" can only be understood against the backdrop of the classical Vaiśeṣika interpretation of these concepts.

All of the categories outlined above are "positive" categories of being according to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers. However, like the Mādhvas, the classical Vaiśeṣikas accept that alongside these positive entities, reality further includes negative things/absences (*abhāva*s). They claim that we need to postulate absence as a separate category in order to account for negative judgments ("The pot is not on the floor", "This table is not a piece of cloth", etc.). Udayana simply says that "absence

20 Tachikawa (1981: 82–83).

21 See KR: 167.

22 See Tachikawa (1981: 84–85).

23 See TT, 1:471–480.

is the object of a judgment expressed by a negative particle" (*nañarthapratyaya-viṣayo 'bhāvaḥ*).[24] The particular scheme of absence that became standard in Navya-Nyāya works found an early expression in the writings of Vācaspati Miśra.[25] According to this scheme, there are primarily two types of absence: relational absence (*sāṃsargika-abhāva*), and identity absence (*tādātmya-abhāva*). Whereas for Mādhva philosophers "difference" is a fundamental part of reality, the classical Vaiśeṣikas take it that difference is simply identity absence.

Udayana[26] says that relational absences are divided according to their duration across time. To say that some location has the "prior absence" (*prāgabhāva*) of something is to say that the thing in question will come to be present in that location at a later time. To say that some location has the "posterior absence" (*dhvaṃsa*) of something, by contrast, is to say that that thing was present in the location in question beforehand, but that it is no longer present there. (This is the objective correlate of judgments such as "The pot has been destroyed".) I follow Ingalls (1951) throughout this volume in translating the term *atyantābhāva* as "constant absence". It refers, in other words, to a permanent or omni-temporal absence. In Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika works "constant absence" is not identical with outright nonexistence, even if other thinkers in Indian philosophy might use the term in this way. In fact, in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thought, the "counterpositive" of a constant absence (i.e. the absentee itself) must be something that has already been established to exist in some part of the real world (a "well-established" [*prasiddha*] entity).

Most Navya-Naiyāyikas distinguished sharply between presence/absence (*bhāva*/*abhāva*) on the one hand, and existence/nonexistence (*sattva*/*asattva*) on the other. They generally followed the classical Vaiśeṣikas and held that existence is a special type of "universal" (*jāti*, *sāmānya*). Other translations for the term *jāti* include "natural kind", "universal", and "class character". Udayana's definition of *jāti*/*sāmānya* in the *Kiraṇāvalī*, which was largely accepted by later authors, is "an eternal, unitary thing that occurs in multiple [other] things" (*nityam ekam anekavṛtti sāmānyam*).[27] Universals can be present only in individuals belonging to the first three Vaiśeṣika categories (substances, tropes, and motions). They are related to individuals belonging to these categories by the inherence-relator. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers accept that we can perceive universals directly. They

24 See Tachikawa (1981: 84–85).

25 Matilal (1968: 100) points out that the ninth century Naiyāyika Jayanta Bhaṭṭa had already accepted a very similar scheme of absence with slight variations.

26 Tachikawa (1981: 84–85).

27 See KĀ: 15. The purpose of the specification "eternal" (*nityam*) in this definition is to stop the definition from applying to contact tropes. Like universals, contact tropes inhere in multiple individuals, but unlike universals they are not taken to be eternal.

hold that we perceive them through the same sense-faculty that perceives the substance/trope/motion to which the universal in question belongs.[28]

According to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers, we are forced to postulate universals in order to explain what they termed "consecutive discourse" (*anugatavyavahāra*). Consecutive discourse essentially consists in a series of judgments of the form "*a* is F", "*b* is F", "*c* is F", and so on, where *a*, *b*, and *c* stand for individual things and F for a single predicate. An example could be the set of judgments: "This individual here is a man", "That other individual is also a man", and "This third individual is likewise a man". While the individual differs across these judgments, the predicate remains the same in each case. According to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers, the most economical explanation for the fact that we make such "consecutive judgments" is that there is a single, unitary property ("manhood", for instance), which inheres in the different individuals referred to in those judgments.

According to classical Vaiśeṣika philosophers, "existence" is simply a special sort of universal. Universals can be arranged hierarchically, according to the extent of their scope, i.e. the number of distinct individuals they occur in. According to Śaṅkara Miśra, "existence" is distinguished from all other universals by virtue of the fact that it has the greatest scope. Śaṅkara Miśra says that universals are of two types: the "higher" (*para*) and the "lower" (*apara*). The "higher" is the universal that is the pervader (*vyāpaka*); the lower is the universal that is pervaded (*vyāpya*). Of those, the higher is existence (*sattā*). Existence therefore pervades all other universals.[29] As a universal, existence inheres in individuals belonging to the first three categories—substances, tropes, and motions.

In the sixteenth century, Raghunātha challenged the view that existence is a universal. He argued, by contrast, that "existence" and "nonexistence" are simply identical with the states of being present or being absent (*bhāvatva/abhāvatva*). Like Raghunātha, Vyāsatīrtha rejects the theory that existence is a universal. In fact, he rejects the whole category of "universals" altogether. Like Raghunātha, moreover, Vyāsatīrtha argues that existence and nonexistence can ultimately be explained

28 See Chakrabarti (1975: 367–368) for a discussion of how universals are perceived according to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers.

29 *tad idaṃ sāmānyaṃ dvividham—paraṃ aparaṃ ca. paraṃ vyāpakaṃ, aparaṃ vyāpyam. tatra paraṃ sattā; tad dhi sāmānyam eva, na tu kuto viśeṣo 'pi. tasyāś ca sākṣādvyāpyāni dravyatvaguṇatvakarmatvāni, paramparāvyāpyāni tu pṛthivītvarūpatvotkṣepaṇatvādīni.* (KR: 163.) "This 'universal' is of two sorts—the highest and the lower. The highest is the pervader, the lower is the thing pervaded. Of those, the highest is existence (*sattā*); for it is something entirely generic, and not something more particular than something else. And the universals substancehood, tropeness, and motionness are directly pervaded by [existence], whereas earthness, colourness, upward-motionness, and so on are *indirectly* pervaded by it."

in terms of presence/absence. However, he argues that further quantification is needed to truly explain what "existence" and "nonexistence" mean.[30]

5.4 The Mādhva critique of universals

Mādhva philosophers were deeply influenced by Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theories about knowledge and metaphysics, but they were independent thinkers who defended distinctive positions. While he often adopts aspects of Navya-Nyāya philosophy in the *Nyāyāmṛta*, Vyāsatīrtha gives a wide-ranging critique of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika metaphysics in the *Tarkatāṇḍava*. Like the classical Vaiśeṣikas, Madhva and his followers accept that reality contains "absences" as well as positive entities. They also follow Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers in holding that absences can be divided according to the span of time they occupy. Madhva himself said that there is prior absence (the absence of something before it comes into existence), posterior absence (the absence of something after it has come into existence and then disappeared), and constant absence (*sadābhāva*) (the permanent absence of something from some location).[31]

Despite these similarities, there are significant differences between the Mādhva and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theories of absence. As described above, classical Vaiśeṣikas generally held that absence can be divided fundamentally into two sorts: mutual absence (*anyonyābhāva*) and relational absence (*sāṃsargikābhāva*). By contrast, Madhva and his followers do not hold that mutual absence/difference (*anyonyābhāva*/*bheda*) is a distinct part of reality. Rather, they accept that difference is identical with the very essence (*svarūpa*) of things themselves. It is the very nature of things to be differentiated from one another, so we do not need to postulate a further type of entity to explain differentiating judgments.[32]

The Mādhvas also disagree with Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers about what kinds of entity can act as the "counterpositives" (*pratiyogin*s) of certain types of absence. The counterpositive of an absence is usually taken to be the absentee—the thing that the absence is "of". Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers refused to perform logical operations on unestablished (*aprasiddha*) terms like "a hare's horn". They argued that we cannot make inferences or formulate definitions involving such

30 See Potter (1957: 61–62) for a translation of the passages in the *Padārthatattvanirūpaṇa* where Raghunātha argues for the identification of existence and nonexistence with *bhāvatva* and *abhāvatva*, respectively.

31 For this classification, see for instance Madhva's *Tattvasaṅkhyāna*: 63.

32 See Sharma (1986: 92–99) for a discussion of the category of difference in the philosophy of Madhva.

terms, and that they cannot be the counterpositives of absences.[33] The Mādhvas, by contrast, argue that the counterpositive of a constant absence must be some nonexistent thing like a hare's horn or the son of a barren woman.

These particular disagreements notwithstanding, the Mādhva and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theories of absence are very similar to one another. However, the Mādhvas reject the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika category of universals/natural kinds as repeatable properties altogether. Mādhva philosophers defend a sort of nominalism. Reality, in their view, contains only particular individuals. There are no repeatable/consecutive (*anugata*) properties, as Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers claim. Thus there are as many "existences", for instance, as there are things that we would properly term "existent". As Sharma (1986: 106–107) has argued, the Mādhva rejection of repeatable properties seems to be partly due to their dispute with the Advaitins, and the fear that accepting universals might open up the door to non-dualist philosophy.[34] As I show below, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's commentary on the *Prathamamithyātvabhaṅga* chapter of the *Nyāyāmṛta* itself illustrates how Advaitin philosophers could use the principle of parsimony to help justify their monism.[35]

In the *Tarkatāṇḍava*, Vyāsatīrtha gives an extensive critique of the Vaiśeṣika theory of universals. According to the classical Vaiśeṣikas, universals are singular properties that are instantiated in multiple individual things. They are also eternal: they admit of neither creation nor destruction. However, if universals are eternal properties which inhere in individuals, what happens to them when all the individuals that instantiate them are destroyed? In the *Tarkatāṇḍava*, Vyāsatīrtha argues that the theory that there are eternal, multiply instantiated properties is ruled out by perception:

> Moreover, *perception* shows that universals arise and are destroyed, because of experiences like, "The pot has come into being", and, "The pot has been destroyed"; just as [we know that tropes like magnitude and colour arise and are destroyed on the basis of experiences like:] "The large thing has come into being" and "The large thing has been destroyed"; [or] "The dark-blue thing has come into being" and "The dark-blue thing has been destroyed".
>
> Nor can it be argued that this cognition[, that is, "The pot has come into being"/"The pot is destroyed"], having for its object the arising and [destruction] of the *qualified*-thing[, that is, the pot qualified by potness], is possible because of the arising and [destruction] merely of the

33 See Ingalls (1951: 81).

34 Sharma writes: "His [Madhva's] rejection of universal (*sāmānya*) is a direct corollary of the pluralistic implications of his Svarūpabhedavāda. He believes in the distinctiveness, nay, uniqueness of each individual and particular. He could ill afford, then, to recognize a single universal class-essence running through a number of particulars, which will surreptitiously open the door to monism in the end. He therefore, sets his face resolutely against the universal and gives it no quarter".

35 See below, Chapter 9, pp. 248–251, for a discussion of the relevant passages.

> *qualificandum*[, that is, merely the particular pot, and not potness too]. For, one could equally claim the contrary[; that is, that the judgment, "The pot has been destroyed", having for its object the pot qualified by potness, is based on the destruction of the *qualifier*, i.e. potness].
>
> Moreover, it would follow that judgments such as "The large thing has come into being", and so on, are as such[—that is, that they have for their object the arising/destruction of the qualificandum, namely, the thing that possesses the magnitude trope in question].[36]

"Cowness", for instance, is, according to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas philosophers, a universal that inheres in all the individual things we refer to as "cows". What would happen if all the individual cows in the world suddenly disappeared from existence? Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers are bound to argue that the universal "cowness" must somehow continue to exist, but where and how? In the *Tarkatāṇḍava*, Vyāsatīrtha argues that perceptual experiences such as "The pot arises", or, "The pot is destroyed", show that universals, if they do exist at all, must come into being and be destroyed.

The obvious retort to this argument is that it is not the universals themselves that come into being and disappear, but the individuals in which they inhere. Under this view, the awareness "The pot is destroyed" has for its object the destruction of a compound entity—the individual pot *combined with*/*qualified by* the universal (potness), which inheres in it. However, it is only the individual pot—the qualificandum—and not the qualifier itself (potness) that actually disappears from being. One might compare this to the case of a man holding a stick, argues Vyāsatīrtha. Here the stick is the qualifier and the man is the qualificandum. The destruction of the man does not necessarily lead to the destruction of the stick. However, Vyāsatīrtha argues that there is a crucial dissimilarity between these two cases. In the case of the combination man and stick, we still perceive that the stick continues to exist as part of reality even after the man has disappeared from existence. In the case of universals, by contrast, there is no perception of the sort, "The universal continues to exist in this place". In the *Tarkatāṇḍava*, Vyāsatīrtha uses these and a number of other arguments to refute the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of universals/natural kinds.

According to Vyāsatīrtha, then, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of existence as a universal/natural kind is untenable because that category simply does not exist. If existence is not a universal, then what is it? Madhva, Jayatīrtha, and Vyāsatīrtha all accept that existence is a property which is present in the innumerable entities that make up reality. However, Mādhva philosophers hold that existence is not a single, multiply instantiated property. Rather, each individual existent thing has a unique

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36 *kiṃ ca sthūlam utpannam, sthūlaṃ naṣṭam; nīlam utpannam, nīlaṃ naṣṭam iti vad ghaṭa utpannaḥ, ghaṭo naṣṭa ity anubhavāt pratyakṣād eva jātyutpattināśau. na ca viśiṣṭotpattyādiviṣayeyaṃ dhīr viśeṣyavyaktimātrotpattyādināpi yukteti vācyam, vaiparītyasyāpi suvacatvāt; sthūlam utpannam ity ādibuddher api tathātvāpātāc ca.* (TT, 2:295.)

property of "existence". We group these properties together because of their natural resemblance/similarity (*sādṛśya*) to one another. There are, in other words, as many "existences" as there are objects that we would properly refer to as "existent". As Jayatīrtha puts it in the *Nyāyasudhā*: "Existence is not a single, consecutive thing; no, existence*s* are differentiated according to the thing [they are present in]".[37]

5.5 Vyāsatīrtha's definition of existence in the *Sattvanirukti*

According to Vyāsatīrtha, the classical Vaiśeṣika theory of existence as a universal fails because existence is not a single, multiply instantiated property, but rather a set of distinct properties that we group together because of their natural similarity to one another. In the *Nyāyāmṛta*, he makes it clear that he also rejects the classical Vaiśeṣika theory of existence because it does not truly have the power to contradict the Advaitins' inferences to prove that the world is illusory. Vyāsatīrtha lays out this argument in a section of the text referred to as the "Determination of Existence" (*Sattvanirukti*) in modern editions. I have translated and analysed this chapter elsewhere.[38] Here, I will focus on how Vyāsatīrtha uses his definitions of existence and nonexistence to undermine the Advaitins' arguments for the illusoriness of the world.

As Vyāsatīrtha is aware in the *Nyāyāmṛta*, some Advaitin philosophers were happy to accept aspects of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika metaphysics as a provisional account of the everyday world. The Upaniṣads may lead us to the realisation that reality is simply the non-dual *brahman*, but the Advaitins were often prepared to accept the classical Vaiśeṣika account of "existence" as a universal as a plausible description

37 The full passage of the *Nyāyasudhā* reads: *athāsattvānadhikaraṇatve vādiprativādisiddhe sattvānadhikaraṇatvam apy adhikaṃ sādhyata iti cet, na; aniṣṭānistārāt. kiṃ ca na sattvaṃ nāmaikam anugatam, kiṃ tu prativastu sattvāni bhidyante. tatra viyadāder asadvailakṣaṇye sati sattvānadhikaraṇatvaṃ sādhyamānaṃ kim ekasattvānadhikaraṇatvam, utānekasattvānadhikaraṇatvam, atha sarvasattvānadhikaraṇatvam, kiṃ vāviśeṣitasattvānadhikaraṇatvam, atha vā sarvathā sattvānadhikaraṇatvaṃ vivakṣitam?* (NS, 2:95). "*Objection*: It being established to both the proponent in the debate and his opponent that [the world] is not the locus of nonexistence, it is further established that [the world has] the property of not being the locus of existence. *Reply* (Jayatīrtha): Wrong! For this does not do away with the unwanted consequence. This being so, is the state of not being the locus of existence qualified by the state of being different from what does not exist, which is being proved in the case of everything from the heavens down, (1) not being the locus of a single instance of existence? Or, (2) not being the locus of multiple cases of existence? Or, (3) not being the locus of every instance of existence? Or not being the locus of unqualified existence? Or (4) Not being the locus of existence in any way at all?"

38 See Williams (2020a).

of practical/transactional reality.[39] However, Advaitin philosophers gave a very different account of what it means to say that something *ultimately* "exists" (i.e. that it has *pāramārthika-sattva*). According to Citsukha and Madhusūdana, to say that something "exists" from the ultimate point of view is to say that it can never become the object of a sublating awareness.[40] "Existence" is, in other words, "omni-temporal non-sublatability" (*traikālika-abādhyatva*). The world of our senses stands to become the object of a stultifying judgment which tells us that it is unreal, and so only the self-illuminating consciousness that is *brahman* can be said to truly "exist". So, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory that existence is a universal/natural kind present in individuals in reality does not necessarily contradict the Advaitins' stance about the world. If existence really means "omni-temporal non-sublatability", then the Advaitins can simply admit that the objects of our everyday experience have the universal existence from the *vyāvahārika* point of view, but deny that they have ultimate reality as *brahman* does.

When defining "existence" in the *Nyāyāmṛta*, Vyāsatīrtha considers a further definition of existence defended by Buddhist philosophers. According to the Buddhist philosopher Dharmakīrti,[41] existence is nothing but "practical efficacy" (*arthakriyākāritva*). Vyāsatīrtha argues that this explanation of existence fails to truly contradict the Advaitins' theory that the world is illusory. The problem is that it is implicit in Advaita philosophy that the world *does* have "practical efficacy". According to the Advaitins, we can interact with the objects in the empirical world and speak about them as we might do with the objects in a dream, even if, like all dreams, it must eventually come to an end. So neither of these definitions of existence proposed by Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Buddhist philosophers really contradict the Advaitins' thesis that the world is an illusion.

For these reasons, in the *Sattvanirukti* Vyāsatīrtha rejects both of these Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Buddhist theories of existence. He then proposes his own theory of existence, which he believes has the power to truly undermine the Advaitins' arguments to prove that the world is illusory. His analysis of existence draws on earlier remarks found scattered in the works of Jayatīrtha.

When discussing whether the term *mithyā* can refer to the Advaitins' concept of "indeterminacy" in his commentary on Madhva's *Tattvoddyota*, Jayatīrtha writes as follows:

> *Objection* (Advaitin): If the word *mithyā* does not refer to what is indeterminate, then [you] must specify what it means.

39 For a discussion of Vācaspati's views on this matter, for instance, see Phillips (1995: 34).

40 See TP: 47.

41 This is outlined by Dharmakīrti in his *Pramāṇavārttikakārikā*s, III,3. See PVBh: 175.

> *Reply* (Mādhva): True enough! We say [that it means] "nonexistent".
>
> *Objection* (Advaitin): In that case it follows that [the word *mithyā*] is meaningless! For [one] cannot [say]: "What is nonexistent exists" (*asad asti*), because [that is] contradictory. And if [the word *mithyā*] is meaningless, then it cannot be a word at all.
>
> *Reply* (Mādhva): Wrong! Because there is nonexistence in the form of "being the counterpositive of a constant absence". For, the statement "[It is] *mithyā*" does not mean "[It is] a hare's horn", or so on. For then [one] would not [say], "The hare's horn is *mithyā*".
>
> *Objection* (Advaitin): So what [does it mean]?
>
> *Reply* (Mādhva): [It means:] "It does not exist." And so the [sublating judgment] "The silver is in fact *mithyā*" (*mithyaiva rajatam*) means "There is the constant absence of silver".
>
> *Objection* (Advaitin): How can something that itself is nonexistent have the quality of being a counterpositive?
>
> *Reply* (Mādhva): Why do you ask "how"? For, unlike [the trope] colour and so on, the state of being a counterpositive does not depend on the existence of its locus. For, "being a counterpositive" is nothing more than "being an object of a cognition that is conducive to a cognition of an absence". And we shall demonstrate [later in this work] that there can be a cognition even of what does not exist.[42]

In this passage, Jayatīrtha says several things about the term *mithyā* and its relationship to the term nonexistence (*asattva*) that are pertinent to Vyāsatīrtha's analysis of existence/nonexistence in the *Nyāyāmṛta*. He here reflects upon the meaning of *mithyā* in the context of the judgment that sublates the perceptual error where mother-of-pearl is mistaken for silver. What does the judgment "The silver is *mithyā*" actually tell us about the "silver" in this illusion?

Jayatīrtha's Advaita *pūrvapakṣin* contends that the word indicates that the silver is "indeterminate". In contrast, Jayatīrtha says that the term *mithyā* indicates that the silver is simply "nonexistent" (*asat*). In response to Jayatīrtha's claim, the Advaita *pūrvapakṣin* asks what the term *mithyā* could mean if lacks a referent altogether. Words should have some object that they refer to, yet if the term *mithyā* simply refers to what is "nonexistent" it must surely lack a referent, and its very status as a "word" is thrown into question. Jayatīrtha responds to this objection by arguing

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42 *anirvacanīyasya yadi na mithyāśabdo vācakas tarhi tadvācyaṃ vācyam. satyam. asad iti brūmaḥ. evaṃ tarhi nirarthaka iti prāptam. na hy asad astīti sambhavati, vyāhatatvāt. nirarthakatve ca padatvavyāghāta iti cet, maivam. atyantābhāvapratiyogitvalakṣaṇasyāsattvasya vidyamānatvāt. na hi mithyety asya śaśaviṣāṇādikam ity arthaḥ. tathā sati śaśaviṣāṇaṃ mithyeti na syāt. kiṃ nāma? tan nāstīti. tathā ca mithyaiva rajatam ity asya nāsti rajatam, rajatātyantābhāvo 'stīty arthaḥ. svayam asataḥ kathaṃ pratiyogitvam iti cet, kim iha katham? na hi pratiyogitvaṃ rūpādivad dharmisattāsāpekṣam, abhāvajñānopayogijñānaviṣayatāmātrasya pratiyogitvatvāt. asato 'pi pratītim upapādayiṣyāmaḥ.* (*Tattvoddyotaṭīkā*, TU: 32).

that "nonexistence" refers to a specific property, namely "being the counterpositive of a constant absence" (*atyantābhāvapratiyogitva*). When we claim that the "silver is *mithyā*", we are simply saying that it the counterpositive of a constant/absolute absence (*atyantābhāva*). Jayatīrtha here seems to use the term *atyantābhāva* to refer to a total/absolute absence from reality in general.

Jayatīrtha goes on to consider an objection to this position which would become important for Vyāsatīrtha in his debate with the Naiyāyikas in the *Tarkatāṇḍava* and with the Advaitins in the *Nyāyāmṛta*. Jayatīrtha has argued that the term "nonexistent" refers to a specific quality, namely, "being the counterpositive of a constant absence". Yet how can something completely nonexistent like a "square-circle" have properties at all? Existent things like substances and tropes may be able to have qualities, but how can a mere nonentity be said to possess any kind of property? In response, Jayatīrtha argues in this passage of the *Tattvoddyotaṭīkā* that to explain the fact that we can meaningfully assert certain things about nonexistent entities, we need to accept that some properties (counterpositiveness and nonexistence, for instance) do *not* require an existent locus. They stand in contrast in this respect to other properties (colour, heaviness, and so on) that can clearly can only be present in an existent substrate. In support of this, Jayatīrtha's commentator Vedeśatīrtha points out that a pot, for instance, is said to have the property of being the counterpositive of a prior absence even before it comes into existence.[43]

In the *Tarkatāṇḍava*, Vyāsatīrtha builds on Jayatīrtha's observations to articulate this as the theory of *asadāśrayadharma*s, or "location-free properties". I will discuss this theory in detail below in Chapter 7. What is of interest for the moment is the explanation of "nonexistence" Jayatīrtha gives in this passage, and how Vyāsatīrtha elaborates on this and similar remarks by Jayatīrtha to define existence in the *Sattvanirukti* chapter of the *Nyāyāmṛta*. In the *Sattvanirukti*, Vyāsatīrtha follows Jayatīrtha and argues that "existence" and "nonexistence" can be defined in terms of the category of absence (*abhāva*).

Vyāsatīrtha begins the chapter by claiming that Ānandabodha's inferences are contradicted by perception, which tells us that its objects exist. He then gives voice to an Advaita *pūrvapakṣin* who proposes a series of definitions of "existence", only to find them all wanting:

43 *rūpādikaṃ yathā dharmisattāsāpekṣam, na tathā pratiyogitvam, prāgabhāvādidaśāyām asato 'pi ghaṭādes tatpratiyogitvadarśanāt. kālāntare sattvasya cedānīm anupayogād iti bhāvaḥ.* (*Tattvoddyotaṭīkāṭippaṇī*, TU: 33.) "The property of counterpositive-ness does not depend on the existence of [its] substrate in the same way that properties such as colour and so on do. For, [we] observe that a pot, though it does not exist in the period of [its] prior absence, still has the property of being the counterpositive of [its prior absence]. And the fact that the pot exists at some other point in time is of no consequence to [its nonexistence] *now* [i.e. during the period of its prior absence]."

> *Objection*: (Mādhva): And [the reasons you, the Advaitin, have given in your inferences,] perceptibility[, insentience, and finiteness,] are contradicted by perceptions such as "The pot exists" and so on.
>
> *Reply:* (Advaitin): Just what is this "existence", which is [putatively] established by perception? Is it—
> (1) the highest universal;
> or, (2) the state of being different from what does not exist;
> or, (3) practical efficacy;
> or, (4) being the object of an episode of knowledge;
> or, (5) *having the capacity* to be [an object of an episode of knowledge];
> or, (6) not being an object of an episode of *error*;
> or, (7) [something's] not being the counterpositive of an absence that occurs in that thing's own locus and at that thing's own time;
> or, (8) non-sublatability?[44]

Vyāsatīrtha's Advaita *pūrvapakṣin* dismisses definitions (1)–(3) on this list summarily, claiming that they merely prove something that he already accepts (*siddhasādhana*), and thus do not truly contradict his claim that the world "illusory". Definition (1) captures the view of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers, according to whom existence is a universal. Definition (3) refers to Dharmakīrti's view that existence is simply practical efficacy. As discussed above, neither definition necessarily stands at odds with the Advaitins' position. The Advaitin can accept that the world has "existence" defined as the "highest universal" or "practical efficacy" while still maintaining that it lacks ultimate existence in the form of "omni-temporal non-sublatability". So neither of these definitions really contradict the Advaitin's claim that the world is "illusory".

Vyāsatīrtha goes on to critique the remaining definitions of "existence" given in the list above, arguing that they all suffer from insuperable difficulties. Having initially argued that he is not obliged to state his own definitions to the Advaitins, he goes on to state them as follows:

> But in a spirit of friendship—"Existence" is said to be: "*Not* being the counterpositive of an absence belonging to all times and all places"; what is superimposed and what is completely nonexistent *are* both the counterpositives of [such an absence].[45]

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44 *san ghaṭa ity ādipratyakṣabādhitāś ca dṛśyatvādayaḥ. nanu kim idaṃ sattvam, yat pratyakṣasiddham—(1) parajātir vā? (2) asadvailakṣaṇyaṃ vā? (3) arthakriyākāritvaṃ vā? (4) pramāviṣayatvaṃ vā? (5) tadyogyatvaṃ vā? (6) bhramāviṣayatvaṃ vā? (7) svasamānādhikaraṇasvasamānakālīnaniṣedhāpratiyogitvaṃ vā? (8) abādhyatvaṃ vā?* (NAB, 1:248.)

45 *sauhārde tu—trikālasarvadeśīyaniṣedhāpratiyogitā / sattocyate 'dhyastatucche taṃ prati pratiyoginī* // (NAB, 1:249.)

Vyāsatīrtha continues to explain his definition of "existence" as follows:

> "Existence" is "*not* being the counterpositive of an absence belonging to all times and places".
>
> [This definition of existence] does not fail to apply to [contact (*saṃyoga*)], since if a contact trope is present in a region determined by something, then [the constant absence of that same contact trope] cannot be present in the region determined by that thing[, and thus contact cannot be said to be absent from *all* locations].
>
> Since it has been stated that even the constant absences of the ether and so on also are *not* universal-positive properties, [the definition of existence] does not fail to apply to the ether and so on.
>
> Since it has been stated that both what is nonexistent and what is superimposed *are* both counterpositives of the [sort of] absence [I have just] described[, my definition of existence] does not apply inappropriately to those cases.
>
> If [one] is of the opinion that in judgments like "Cowness is never present in a horse" and the like, it is only the *connection* [with cowness] which is denied, the word "place" may be disregarded.[46]

Here, Vyāsatīrtha defines existence by the universal quantification of absence across space and time. To say that something does not exist is to say that it fails to be present in *any location* at *any time*. To say that something "exists", on the other hand, is to say that it has the absence of this quality; in effect that it is present in *at least one* location at *some point* in time. Each entity, in other words, has a "location-range", a set of locations in which it is present. This range is extended temporally, as well as spatially. According to Vyāsatīrtha, something is existent if it has a non-null location-range. Something is existent, in other words, if it is present in just one location at a single point in time.

Like Jayatīrtha, Vyāsatīrtha defines existence/nonexistence in terms of absence. It might seem that Vyāsatīrtha is simply begging the question by defining existence in terms of this category—what exactly is "absence"? However, Vyāsatīrtha and the Mādhvas accept absence as a separate category for the same reasons that Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers do. According to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers, explanations need to end somewhere, and absence is simply the irreducible category that we need to postulate in order to explain judgments like "Anna is not in the

46 *sarvadeśakālasambandhaniṣedhāpratiyogitvaṃ sattvam. yadavacchinne saṃyogaḥ, tadavacchinne tadatyantābhāvo neti na tatrāvyaptiḥ. gaganāder apy atyantābhāvaḥ kevalānvayī nety uktatvān na gaganādāv avyāptiḥ. tuccham adhyastaṃ coktapratiṣedhapratiyogīty uktatvān nātivyāptir api. aśve gotvaṃ kadā cid api nāstīty ādau tatsaṃsarga eva niṣidhyata iti mate deśapadam anapekṣitam.* (NAB, 1:249.)

sauna", or "Anna is not at work". Vyāsatīrtha's definitions are thus grounded in our everyday experiences of the world around us.

In this passage, Vyāsatīrtha anticipates objections that his definition of existence fails to apply to two parts of the world accepted in Mādhva and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika ontology. The first is contact tropes (*saṃyoga*s). Contact tropes appear in substances as they come into contact with one another. They explain judgments such as "The pen is on the table" or "The bird is on the tree", for instance. The problem is that Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers accepted that contact tropes are be "non-locus pervading", in the sense that they are only present in part of their locus. The standard example used to illustrate this is the contact trope that appears in a monkey as it clings to a tree. The monkey is only in contact with a small part of the tree as it hangs from one of its branches. While the particular contact trope that binds the monkey to the tree in this case can be said to be present in one part of the tree, it clearly cannot extend to the whole tree. Consequently, we can say that the contact trope is simultaneously both present in and absent from the tree.

This potentially causes a problem for Vyāsatīrtha's definition of existence. Contact tropes are clearly accepted by both the Mādhvas and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers to exist. Yet if existence means "not being absent from all places at all times", then this definition might fail to apply to non-locus pervading properties like contact-tropes. The monkey-contact trope might be present in the tree, but it is also permanently absent from the same tree; as such it could be said to be absent from all possible locations, including the ones in which it should exist.

In response, Vyāsatīrtha says that with further parsing even contact tropes cannot be said to be absent from all locations. The contact trope binding the monkey to the tree can, from one perspective, be said to be "absent from the tree". Yet the *particular portion* of the tree with which the contact trope is connected cannot possess the constant absence of that same trope; the monkey contact trope cannot be said to be absent from the precise segment of the tree's branch that the monkey is in contact with, for instance. Hence even non-locus pervading contact tropes must all be present in at least one part of reality—the specific portion of the substance with which the contact trope itself is in contact with, however that portion is delineated. So even contact tropes must be present in some part of the spatio-temporal world, and the definition Vyāsatīrtha has proposed for existence does not fail to apply to them.[47]

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47 Rāmācārya explains Vyāsatīrtha's argument as follows: *vṛkṣabhinne sarvatra deśe vidyamānasya saṃyogaviśeṣātyantābhāvasya vṛkṣe saṃyogo neti pratītyā vṛkṣe 'pi sattvena sarvadeśīyasyāpi saṃyogātyantābhāvasya sarvāvacchedena vṛttyabhāvād yadavacchinne saṃyogaḥ, tadavacchinne tadatyantābhāvo neti na tatrāvyāptiḥ.* (*Nyāyāmṛtataraṅginī*, NAB, 1:257.) "The constant absence of

Vyāsatīrtha also raises the question of whether his definition of existence can be taken to apply to eternal, pervasive substances such as the ether, space, time, and the self. According to the Naiyāyikas, these substances have no substrate: they do not occur "in" anything. The constant absences of these substances were thus held to be "universal-positive" properties, properties that are present in every part of reality. This being so, it seems that "existence" as Vyāsatīrtha has defined it fails to apply to them, since they are permanently absent from every part of reality. Vyāsatīrtha's answer to this objection is simply that he does not accept that such eternal substances are permanently absent from all locations. Elsewhere in the *Nyāyāmṛta*, for instance, he accepts that space and time are present in both themselves and in each other. He accepts that space and time are "self-instantiating" qualities, like "knowability" and "nameability". They must instantiate themselves. Hence they do occur in some parts of reality, and his definition of existence must apply to them.[48]

Vyāsatīrtha's definitions of existence and nonexistence are deliberately crafted to undermine Advaita philosophy. Unlike the definitions proposed by Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers and Dharmakīrti, this definition of existence seems to truly stand in contradiction to at least some of the definitions of "illusoriness" proposed by Advaitin philosophers. When formulating these definitions of exis-

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a contact trope is present *everywhere* (*sarvadeśīya*), since the constant absence of the particular contact trope [that connects a monkey to one part of a tree], being present everywhere besides the tree, is absent from the tree also, on the strength of the judgment, '[This] contact is not present in the tree'. Nevertheless, since [the absence of this contact trope] is not present to the *full extent* of [its locus] (*sarvāvacchedena*), the constant absence [of the contact trope] cannot be present in the area determined by the thing that determines the area in which the contact trope [itself] is present; hence there is no failure of [Vyāsatīrtha's definition] of existence to apply [to contact tropes]."

48 *nanv athāpi gaganādinityadravyātyantābhāvasya kevalānvayitvena sārvadaiśikatvād gaganādau sārvadaiśikaniṣedhapratiyogitvasyaiva sadbhāvenāvyāptir ity ata āha—gaganāder apīti. uktatvād iti. deśakālāv api sadā, sarvatra deśakālāv ity abādhitapratītyā prameyatvābhidheyatvavat svavṛtty anyonyavṛttī cety uktatvena deśakālayor deśakālayor eva sattvena na sārvadaiśikaniṣedhapratiyogitvam, ato nāvyāptir ity arthaḥ.* (*Nyāyāmṛtaprakāśa*, NAB, 1:274.) "*Objection*: Nevertheless, since the constant absences of eternal substances such as the ether[, the self, time, and space,] are universal-positive properties, they must be present in all locations; hence the ether [and the other eternal substances] must each be the counterpositives of an absence present in all locations, and ['existence' as you have defined it] cannot apply to them. With this objection in mind does [Vyāsatīrtha] say— 'Of the ether and so on …' (*gaganāder api*). 'For, it is said …' (*uktatvāt*). On the basis of the uncontradicted judgment, 'Space and time are everywhere and always', even space and time are both present in themselves and in each other, as is the case with [self-instantiating properties such as] 'knowability' and 'nameability' [which are both present in themselves and in one another]. It having been argued thus, space and time [themselves] are [both] present in both space and time, and hence [they] cannot be the counterpositives of an absence belonging to all places, and [the definition of existence given by me, Vyāsatīrtha,] does *not* fail to apply to them. This is what [Vyāsatīrtha] means."

tence/nonexistence, Vyāsatīrtha seems to have had in mind particularly the definitions of illusoriness that he ascribes to Prakāśātman and Citsukha. As we saw in Chapter 4, according to Prakāśātman, to say that something is "illusory" is to say that it is "the counterpositive of an omni-temporal absence in what was taken to be [its own] substrate" (*pratipannopādhau traikālikaniṣedhapratiyogitvam*). In other words, something is illusory if it is permanently absent from the very locus where it was mistakenly taken to exist. The definition Vyāsatīrtha ascribes to Citsukha explains illusoriness in a very similar way. According to Citsukha, illusoriness consists in something's "being the counterpositive of a constant absence that shares a common locus with that thing itself" (*svasamānādhikaraṇātyantābhāvapratiyogitvam*).

Vyāsatīrtha's definition of existence in the *Sattvanirukti* clearly renders existence incompatible with both of these definitions. Both definitions of illusoriness effectively state that to be "illusory" is to be the counterpositive of an omni-temporal absence in all possible locations. However, something cannot be the "counterpositive of a permanent absence in its own substrate" if it is present in that substrate at at least one point in time. So Vyāsatīrtha's definition of existence does seem to stand in direct contradiction to these definitions of illusoriness. As I will show below in Chapter 6, Vyāsatīrtha's definitions here are also intended to undermine the Advaitins' doctrine of indeterminacy, insofar as they are crafted to give firm ground to the charge that indeterminacy as the Advaitins understand it is simply a contradiction in terms.

5.6 Is existence perceptible? Some challenges from Advaitin philosophers

For the remainder of this chapter, I will focus on Vyāsatīrtha's claim that Ānandabodha's inferences are ruled out by perception. Vyāsatīrtha claims that "existence" as he has defined it is a property that is perceptible through our sense-faculties. In the *Sattvanirukti*, he claimed that Ānandabodha's inferences are ruled out by everyday perceptions like "The pot exists". Yet why should we be confident in the reliability of our perceptions, given that they might be sublated by later judgments? We regularly "perceive" that such-and-such is the case, only to find out later that we were quite wrong. Moreover, Advaitin philosophers do not have to accept Vyāsatīrtha's definitions of existence and nonexistence. Advaitins like Citsukha and Madhusūdana accepted that to say that something "exists" is actually to say that it will never become the object of a sublating judgment. How can perception tell us that its judgments will never be sublated? And even *if* existence is perceptible, why should we aban-

don inference in favour of perception? Why would our perceptions have greater epistemic force than inference in this case?

In the *Nyāyāmṛta*, just after the *Sattvanirukti*, Vyāsatīrtha gives an extensive discussion of these issues in an effort to show that perception has the power to truly undermine all of Ānandabodha's inferences. He begins by considering the argument of the Advaitins that "existence", defined as "permanent non-sublatability", cannot be perceived, since perception cannot tell us that its objects will never be sublated at a future point in time. Vyāsatīrtha questions whether the Advaitin philosopher who poses this objection wants to reject perception as a means of knowledge altogether, or whether he is simply stressing that perception can only tell us about what is present in the current moment:

> *Objection* (Advaitin): Nevertheless, how does perception apprehend that [its objects] will *never* be sublated? On the other hand, [we Advaitins] do accept that [the objects of our perceptions] are not sublated *temporarily*, just as the "silver", for instance[, is taken to exist for a time before this notion is cancelled by the sublating awareness].
>
> *Reply* (Mādhva): [In your opinion,] is it the case that (1) perception is simply not a valid means of knowledge? Or [do you opine that] (2) even though [perception] *is* a valid means of knowledge, [it] cannot grasp the fact that [its objects] are not sublated in all three times, since [it] can only grasp what exists in the present moment?[49]

In case the Advaitin maintains the first alternative and rejects perception as a means of knowledge altogether, Vyāsatīrtha asks him what grounds he has for doing this:

> Further, in case [you accept] (1), do [you] reject the veridicality (*prāmāṇya*) [of perception]—that is, [its] representing the truth [about its objects]—, which veridicality is apprehended intrinsically, because (1) [perception] is contradicted by inference? Or (2) because [perception] is contradicted by scripture? Or (3) merely because there is doubt that [something] will sublate [perception] at a future point in time?
>
> The first two [of these reasons] are untenable, because[, in both cases,] there is mutual dependency—if [perception and inference] are both valid, then perception is invalid because it contradicts them; and, given that [perception is invalid, scripture and inference] are valid because they do not contradict [another] means of knowledge [i.e. perception]!
>
> The veridicality of perception, on the other hand, which is stronger [than inference and scripture], does not depend upon [its] *not* standing in contradiction to them; hence there is no mutual-dependency[, on my part, for arguing that perception is stronger than inference and

49 *nanu tathāpi kathaṃ pratyakṣam ātyantikābādhyatvagrāhi? tātkālikābādhas tu rūpyāder iveṣṭa iti cet; kiṃ pratyakṣam apramāṇam eva? uta pramāṇam api vartamānamātragrāhitvāt trikālābādhagrahākṣamam?* (NAB, 1:276.)

> scripture]. For, the lion does not worry about the presence of baby bunnies when he enters the forest![50]

Vyāsatīrtha observes in this passage that the Advaitin might reject perception as a means of knowledge because it conflicts with inference and scripture, which the Advaitins take it tell us that the empirical world is illusory. However, Vyāsatīrtha observes that there is an inherent circularity in this argument. If it is necessary that something does "not conflict with other *pramāṇa*s" in order to be a valid source of knowledge, then how do we choose? What criterion can we use to determine *which* means of knowledge we should abandon in case they conflict? Perception can only be dismissed as a means of knowledge if it conflicts with scripture and inference, but in order for inference and scripture to be valid in the first place we need to dismiss the idea that perception is a *pramāṇa*!

The obvious response to this is to ask why we should, in that case, favour perception as Vyāsatīrtha wants to. However, Vyāsatīrtha argues that the validity of perception does not depend on whether it is consistent with the other *pramāṇa*s, because there is good reason to believe that perception is a stronger means of knowledge than inference and even scripture. The lion does not concern himself with lesser animals when he decides to enter the forest!

Vyāsatīrtha explores several lines of argument in the *Nyāyāmṛta* to establish the superior strength of perception in relation to scripture and inference. Later in the text, he argues that perception is stronger than inference because inference is causally dependent on it. We can only make inferences on the basis of the data that perception supplies us with. For instance, we can only infer that there is fire on a mountain because there is smoke on the same mountain if we have already perceived the mountain, some different instances of fire, the smoke, and so on. Similarly, we can only gain knowledge from scripture/testimony if we perceive language and its various properties using our perceptual faculties. Somewhat further on from the passage just translated, Vyāsatīrtha argues as follows:

> … Moreover, since it is something that [inference and scripture] depend upon (*upajīvya*), perception is stronger [than inference and scripture], just like *śruti* [is stronger] than *smṛti* [because *smṛti* derives from *śruti*]. And [inference and scripture depend on perception] because the causes of inferential knowledge—the inferential subject, the probandum, the reason, the pervasion, and so on—and the causes of verbal knowledge—the essential nature of speech,

50 *ādye 'pi svataḥprāptasya tattvāvedanarūpaprāmāṇyasya tyāgaḥ kim anumānavirodhāt? āgamavirodhād vā? bhāvibādhakaśaṅkāmātreṇa vā? nādyau, tayoḥ prāmāṇye tadvirodhenākṣasyāprāmāṇyam, sati ca tasmin mānāvirodhena tayoḥ prāmāṇyam ity anyonyāśrayāt. akṣasya tu prabalasya prāmāṇyam anumānāgamāvirodhāpekṣaṃ neti nānyonyāśrayaḥ. na hi siṃhaḥ śaśaśāvakābhāvam apekṣya vanaṃ gāhate.* (NAB, 1:276.)

> as well as the properties of [that speech], consistency[, expectation, and proximity], the consistency of the introduction and the conclusion [in scripture], and so on—and the essential natures of inferential and verbal knowledge, as well the veridicality [of inferential and verbal knowledge], are all apprehended through perception.[51]

Inference depends on perception; we can only make inferences on the basis of the data our sense-faculties supply us with. Scripture is similarly dependent on sense-perception; we can only hear/read verbal testimony through our sense-faculties. Vyāsatīrtha takes it that this causal dependency itself could establish the superior epistemic strength of perception over scripture and inference. Nevertheless, he also argues that the superior strength of perception does not even rely on this dependency relationship, because perception is innately (*jātyā*) stronger than inference and scripture:

> And perception is *by its very nature* stronger than inference [and scripture], because [it] apprehends particulars like [fine] lines, sub-lines, and so on which cannot be apprehended through [inference and scripture]; and because [perception] cancels things like confusion about which direction [one happens to be facing], which cannot be cancelled by inferential knowledge [or knowledge derived from scripture]. For, it is observed in the case where [one] infers [incorrectly] that fire is cold [because it is a substance] that, even though the inference does not depend [on *tactile* perception] since the subject [of the inference, i.e. fire,] and [the other components of the inference] are established through the visual-faculty and so on too, the perception of heat is *by its very nature* stronger [than inference].[52]

Perception, Vyāsatīrtha argues, can tell us things about the world that inference and scripture cannot. For instance, it can tell us about the existence of minute lines present on the surface of objects, whereas inference and scripture can reveal to us nothing about such details. Moreover, perception can bring an end to delusions and doubts that apparently cannot be resolved through inference and scripture. If we mistakenly believe that we are facing east when we are, in fact, facing west, only perception can tell us that we are wrong; neither inference nor scripture are able to do so. This argument might seem problematic: surely verbal testimony and inference could convince us that we are wrong in such cases? For instance, someone trustworthy might tell us that we are in fact facing west, or we might infer that the direction we are looking in is the west because the sun rises there. However,

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51 *kiṃ copajīvyatvāt prābalyam akṣasya, śruteḥ smṛtita iva. tac cākṣeṇānumitikāraṇasya pakṣasādhyahetuvyāptyādeḥ, śābdadhīhetoḥ śabdasvarūpasya taddharmasya yogyatādeḥ, upakramopasaṃhāraikarūpyādeḥ, anumitiśābdadhīsvarūpatatprāmāṇyādeś ca grāhyatvāt.* (NAB, 1:312.)

52 *pratyakṣasyānumityāditaḥ prābalyaṃ ca tadagṛhītarekhoparekhādiviśeṣagrāhitvād anumityādyanivartitadiṅmohādinivartakatvāc ca jātyaiva. dṛṣṭaṃ hi vahniśaityānumāne dharmyādeś cakṣurādināpi siddhyānupajīvyatve 'py auṣṇyapratyakṣasya jātyaiva prābalyam.* (NAB, 1:276.)

Śrīnivāsatīrtha argues that it is a matter of experience that these cannot ultimately dispel our delusion. Even though we might be told we are wrong, and even though we might make a correct inference, it is only when we *witness* the fact that the sun does not rise there that we truly realise that the direction we are looking in is, for instance, west and not east.[53]

To support his claim that perception is innately stronger than inference, Vyāsatīrtha observes that there are cases where certain types of perception undermine inference, even though the inference in question does not depend on the specific type of perception involved. Vyāsatīrtha adduces the famous example of the fallacious inference: "Fire is cold, because [it is] a substance" (*vahniḥ śītaḥ, vastutvāt*). The idea is that some unfortunate person makes this "inference", only to plunge their hand into the fire and find out that it is very hot indeed! In this case, the inference is cancelled by perception, specifically a tactile perception. This may seem a strange example to use, because, as Vyāsatīrtha acknowledges, perception does communicate the various parts of this inference to us; for instance, we might only know about the fire in front of us through our faculty of sight. However, his point is that the particular perceptual *modality* by which we become aware of the fire in the first place (the visual-faculty) is different from the modality by which we become aware that the fire is hot (the tactile-faculty). Even though the inference does not depend on tactile-perception specifically, it still can be undermined by the tactile-perception that occurs when the person who made the false inference plunges her hand into the fire.

5.7 The witness and our perceptions of veridicality

Vyāsatīrtha has claimed that perception is innately stronger than inference, and that if the two come into conflict, we need to abandon our inferences as fallacious rather than concluding that perception is faulty. Thus, since Ānandabodha's inferences contradict perception, which tells us that the objects in the world around us exist, we should abandon those inferences on this ground alone. However, as Vyāsatīrtha observes in the *Nyāyāmṛta*, the Advaitin could also attempt to cast doubts

53 Śrīnivāsatīrtha explains: *pratīcyāṃ prācītvāropeṇeyaṃ prācīty ādyāptavākyajanyajñāne neyaṃ prācī sūryodayaśūnyatvād ity ādyānumānikajñāne ca saty api yāvat pratyakṣeṇa sūryodayādikaṃ na paśyati, tāvat sa bhramo na nivartata ity arthaḥ.* (*Nyāyāmṛtaprakāśa*, NAB, 1:308) "If [someone] mistakes west for east, then even if they are told by a reliable person, 'This is not east!' and, likewise, even if they make the inference, 'This is not east, because the sun does not rise here', so long as they do not *see* through perception the sun rising [in that place], the delusion ['This is east, not west'] is not dispelled. This is what [Vyāsatīrtha] means."

on perception's status as a means of knowledge by arguing that the things it tells us about its objects might still be sublated at a future time. We observe that what we took to be a piece of silver later turns out to be mother-of-pearl, or a terrifying snake a mere length of rope, so how can we be sure that our perceptions of the existence of the world around us will not likewise be sublated? The mere doubt that our perceptions may be falsified at some future point in time should give us pause before accepting them as veridical. Moreover, as discussed earlier, Advaitins like Citsukha and Madhusūdana defined "existence" as omni-temporal non-sublatability (*traikālikābādhyatva*). For them, if we are to know that something "exists" through perception, we somehow need to perceive that it will *never* become the object of a sublating judgment, even in future times.

So it seems that in order to tell us that its objects truly and ultimately "exist", perception must be able to apprehend future events as well as present ones. This might appear to contradict common sense, and there was a widespread assumption among Indian philosophers that perception can only apprehend what exists in the present moment. *Pūrvamīmāṃsāsūtra* 1,1.4, for instance, states that perception cannot apprehend *dharma* (in the sense of proper conduct), "because [perception] consists in the apprehension of what is presently existent" (*vidyamānopalambhanatvāt*).[54] Madhva and Jayatīrtha had already dealt with this argument of the Advaitins extensively in works such as the *Pramāṇalakṣaṇa*(*ṭīkā*) and the *Nyāyasudhā*.[55] Vyāsatīrtha devotes a large part of the *Nyāyāmṛta* to building on their arguments to refute this position. In a key passage on this subject, he argues as follows:

> The second [reason you, the Advaitin, have given to show that Ānandabodha's inferences are not sublated by perception], namely that perception cannot grasp the quality of "not being liable to sublation in all three times", is also not tenable.[56] For, [existence in the form of "omni-temporal non-sublatability"] cannot amount to "existence in all three times", since even in our view that [quality] is absent from the [parts of] the world that are non-eternal. Rather, [existence defined as omni-temporal non-sublatability] is the absence of whatever *non*existence it is that occurs in all three times.
>
> And [the absence of the nonexistence occurring in all three times] is apprehended even when [something or other] is apprehended to exist at just *one point* in time. Hence perception, insofar as it grasps the existence [of something] in the thing that was taken to be [that thing's own]

54 For a translation and discussion of this *sūtra*, see Taber (2005: 44) and Bhatt (1962: 147–148).

55 See for instance PL: 212–213, for Madhva and Jayatīrtha's response to this challenge of Advaitin philosophers.

56 Vyāsatīrtha resumes his discussion after a long interlude where he lays out his arguments to prove that perception is stronger than inference because inference depends upon it. See above, p. 140, for the beginning of this argument.

> substrate, establishes that [that thing] does *not* have illusoriness in the form of "being the counterpositive of an omni-temporal absence in what was taken to be [its own] substrate".
>
> For, perception (*sākṣātkāra*), insofar as it apprehends the existence (*astitā*) [of something] in that thing's own time, rules out the absence [of that thing] in all three times; hence it *does* apprehend permanent non-sublatability. For, in the case of the Veda too, the factor that determines the non-sublatability of [the Veda's] object is simply the veridicality *of the knowledge* [that the Veda produces]; the determining factor [in this respect] is *not* [the Veda's] being speech, or its apprehending the existence of its own object in such a way that is not restricted to the present time, or [its] apprehending the existence of its own object as being connected to all times [and places]. For, [if it were so that the factor that determines the non-sublatability of the knowledge generated by the Veda were any of the latter factors,] then it would follow that [even] the object of the speech of an *unreliable* person that has the three aforementioned qualities would be eternally beyond sublation!

Vyāsatīrtha goes on to explain his theory that the veridicality of perception is apprehended by the witness consciousness:

> And the veridicality [of some cognition]—that is, [its] representing [its object] as it truly is—is apprehended in the case of perceptual cognitions by the very thing that apprehends the cognition itself, viz. the witness, in just the same way as [the witness apprehends the veridicality] of cognitions produced by *śruti*; for, veridicality is "intrinsic". And there is no sublation or fault ascertained [in the case of our perceptual cognitions that the world exists], as there is in the case of our cognitions of [the fake] silver and so on, by virtue of which [the veridicality of those perceptions] would be cancelled.[57]

In this passage, Vyāsatīrtha addresses the Advaitins' argument that in order to know that the objects of our perceptions exist, we would need to perceive the fact that those perceptions will never be sublated at some point in the future. Vyāsatīrtha asks his Advaitin opponent what "permanent non-sublatability" means. It clearly cannot imply that the object in question exists perpetually. While the Mādhvas accept the existence of eternal substances (time, the individual souls, etc.), they accept that the world is populated by *non-eternal* things like pots, tables, and chairs, too.

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57 *nāpi pratyakṣaṃ kālatrayābādhyatvagrahākṣamam iti dvitīyaḥ. tad dhi na kālatraye 'pi sattvam, manmate 'py anityaprapañce tadabhāvāt; kiṃ tu kālatrayavṛtti yad asattvam, tadabhāvaḥ. sa ca kadā cit sattve gṛhīte 'pi gṛhīta eveti pratipannopādhau sattvagrāhiṇā pratyakṣeṇa tadupādhau traikālikaniṣedhapratiyogitvarūpamithyātvābhāvasiddhiḥ. svakāle hy astitāṃ gṛhṇan sākṣātkāras trikālagam / pratiṣedhaṃ nirundhāno gṛhṇāty evātyabādhyatām // vede 'pi hi viṣayasyābādhyatve jñānaprāmāṇyam eva tantram; na tu śabdatvaṃ vā, vartamānakālādyanavacchedena svaviṣayasattvagrāhitvaṃ vā, sarvakālādisambandhitvena svaviṣayasattvagrāhitvaṃ vā tantram; uktaprakāratrayayuktānāptavākyaviṣayasyātyantābādhyatvāpātāt. tac ca tattvāvedanarūpaṃ prāmāṇyaṃ śrautajñānasyevākṣajñānasyāpi jñānagrāhiṇā sākṣiṇā gṛhyate, prāmāṇyasya svatastvāt. na ca rūpyādijñāneṣv iva bādho vā, doṣo vā niścitaḥ, yena tad apodyeta.* (NAB, 1:444–445.)

Vyāsatīrtha argues, by contrast, that to perceive that something is never liable to sublation we simply need to perceive that it is present in at least one place at at least one point in time, and explains, in effect, how his definition of existence in the *Sattvanirukti* shows that perception can contradict Ānandabodha's thesis that the world is "illusory".

According to the definitions of existence and nonexistence that Vyāsatīrtha gave in the *Sattvanirukti*, to say that something "exists" is to say that it is *not* absent from all locations at all times. To perceive that something exists, in other words, we simply need to perceive that it is not *non*existent, that is, that it does not fail to exist in any location at any time. Once we apprehend the presence of the object in front of us, even for a moment, we perceive that it has the absence of nonexistence defined as such, and so we perceive that it exists. So perception can apprehend the absence of illusoriness, if by illusoriness we mean something's "being the counterpositive of an omni-temporal absence in what was taken to be [its own] substrate" (*pratipannopādhau traikālikaniṣedhapratiyogitvam*). When we perceive that something or other exists in some location at some particular time, we automatically rule out that it is absent from all possible locations at all possible times. So perception can apprehend existence, and it thus contradicts Ānandabodha's inferences to establish the illusoriness of the world.

Perhaps this does not get to the roots of the Advaitin's objection, however. Perception may be able to tell us that its object is present in a specific place and time, as Vyāsatīrtha claims, yet it might not be able to show us that this judgment will never be sublated. Vyāsatīrtha's commentator Ānanda Bhaṭṭāraka points out an obvious response to the argument Vyāsatīrtha has just made: Non-veridical experiences also apprehend their objects in this way. When I mistake a length of rope lying in front of me for a snake, I perceive the "snake" existing in a particular place and time. Given that there might be no way to distinguish between non-veridical cognitions and veridical ones at the time they occur, why should we not conclude that our *erroneous* judgments about reality confirm that their objects exist in all three times? In other words, how can we know that our perceptions are veridical at the time they occur, given that so many of our judgments have been sublated in the past?

Vyāsatīrtha argues that the distinction lies in the fact that the witness (*sākṣin*) apprehends the veridicality of cognitions in the case of veridical cognitions, and not in the case of non-veridical ones. His point is that the Advaitin is committed to this too, at least in the case of the Veda. The Advaitin does accept, after all, that the Veda itself can tell us something that is permanently beyond sublation, because the Advaitins believe it can tell us that *brahman* is identical with the inner-self of all beings. Vyāsatīrtha, following Mādhva epistemological theory, argues that the veridicality of mental judgments is apprehended "intrinsically" (*svataḥ*). The witness apprehends the cognition, and in doing so it automatically apprehends the cognition's

veridicality as well, unless it also perceives some factor (a fault in the perceptual faculties, for instance,) that blocks it from apprehending this veridicality. Unlike in the case of illusions such as the mother-of-pearl/silver error, in veridical perception the witness detects neither sublation nor a fault in the perceptual faculties that could block the perception of its veridicality.

One route out of this for the Advaitin would be to argue that the Veda has some property that perception lacks, which would allow us to be confident in the veridicality of the things it teaches. For instance, the Advaitin could argue that it is because the Veda, unlike perception, has the quality of being *speech* that we know that its object can never be sublated; or that, unlike perception, the Veda apprehends the existence of its object as extending beyond the present time. However, Vyāsatīrtha argues that with this, the Advaitin is caught in a *reductio ad absurdum*; if any of these are accepted as the criterion for veridicality we would have to conclude that even an unreliable person's testimony is true. The veridicality of perceptual judgments is apprehended in exactly the same way that the veridicality of the knowledge generated by the Veda is perceived: it is perceived by the witness.

So we know that our true judgments will not be sublated because the *sākṣin*, the very thing that perceives the judgments themselves, guarantees that they will never be. This leads to the question: how can the witness perceive the *future* nonsublatability of its objects? In a way, Vyāsatīrtha has still not answered the Advaitin's objection. Knowing that a cognition is "veridical" seems to entail knowing that it will never be sublated by another cognition, even in future times. It still seems that perception has to somehow "reach out" and apprehend future states if we are to be sure that what it tells us about its objects is veridical. Vyāsatīrtha, following Madhva and Jayatīrtha,[58] takes the position that we *can*, in fact, perceive future states. While we clearly cannot do this through the external sense-faculties (sight, touch, taste, smell, hearing), we can do so through the "essential faculty" (*svarūpendriya*),[59] that is, the witness itself:

> Moreover, the witness, which apprehends future time periods, *does* grasp the absence of the future sublation of its [*direct*] objects—the ether[, time, space,] and so on—as well as that of pots and so on, which are *indirectly* its object, by means of grasping the veridicality of the flawless knowledge [of its indirect objects such as pots and so on]. For, there obviously can be no apprehension of veridicality that does *not* include the nonsublation of the object!
>
> And it is our *opponent*[, the Advaitin,] who must abandon his position that perception apprehends only what exists in the present moment. For otherwise the illusoriness [which the Advaitin opines to be present] in the silver and so on—that is, its "being the counterpositive of an

58 See for instance PL: 212–213.

59 For a discussion of the witness as the "essential faculty", see above, p. 73.

> omni-temporal absence in what was taken to be [its own] substrate"—would not be perceptible[, yet the Advaitin believes it *is*].[60]

The Mādhvas accept that the witness can perceive certain external objects; it can perceive bare time and space, as well as the ether. Vyāsatīrtha here argues that the witness perceives the fact that its direct objects will never be sublated in future times. The witness does not apprehend other things like pots and so on directly. However, it does apprehend that these objects are eternally beyond sublation by apprehending that the perceptions we have of them through our external sense-faculties will never be sublated. When the witness apprehends the veridicality of a perceptual judgment, it apprehends that that judgment will never be sublated in future times too.

Vyāsatīrtha's claim that the witness must be able to perceive future states as well as present ones might sound implausible, but in this passage he tries to catch the Advaitin in a sort of *tu quoque* argument. The problem as he sees it is that Advaitin philosophers themselves make specific claims about what perception can tell us. In this passage, Vyāsatīrtha observes that Advaitin philosophers claim that we can *perceive* the "illusoriness" of, for instance, the "silver" we mistake a piece of mother-of-pearl for. If Prakāśātman/Citsukha's definition of illusoriness is accepted, then to perceive that the silver is "illusory" is to perceive that it is absent from the mother-of-pearl *in all three times*. How could we perceive this, if perception is limited to the present moment? So the Advaitins seem to be in the same boat as the Mādhvas. They too need to accept that perception can somehow grasp things beyond the present moment if they want to claim that we can perceive the illusoriness of the objects of our perceptual errors. Unless they accept the proposition that the witness can somehow perceive future states, then important Advaita philosophical positions become untenable. The Advaitin cannot have it both ways; they must either accept that perception can tell us about things outside the present moment, or abandon their claim that we can perceive the illusoriness of our illusions.

Vyāsatīrtha concludes this section of the *Nyāyāmṛta* by restating his claim that Ānandabodha's inferences are "ruled out by perception" since perception shows us that its objects truly exist, and thus cannot be "illusory" in the way Advaitin philosophers define that term:

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60 *kiṃ cānāgatakālagrāhī sākṣī svaviṣayasya gaganādeḥ sākṣātsvāviṣayasya ghaṭāder api nirdoṣataddhīprāmāṇyagrahaṇadvārā bhāvibādhābhāvaṃ gṛṇhāty eva; na hi viṣayābādham anantarbhāvya prāmāṇyagrahaṇaṃ nāma. tyaktavyaṃ ca pareṇaiva pratyakṣasya vartamānamātragrāhitvam; anyathā rūpyādeḥ pratipannopādhau traikālikanişedhapratiyogitvarūpaṃ mithyātvaṃ pratyakṣaṃ na syāt.* (NAB, 1:445–446.)

> Therefore [the reasons in your inferences, namely,] perceptibility[, finitude, and insentience], are contradicted [by perception,] since perception grasps [that the world has] the absence of illusoriness in the form of "being the counterpositive of an omni-spatiotemporal absence in the very locus where [it] was taken [to exist]".[61]

5.8 Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter has focused on a single claim that Vyāsatīrtha makes against Advaita philosophy. According to Vyāsatīrtha, Ānandabodha's inferences to prove that the world is an illusion are all ruled out by perception, which tells us that its objects exist. This aspect of Vyāsatīrtha's case against Ānandabodha hinges on his definition of existence. Vyāsatīrtha draws extensively on Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy in the *Nyāyāmṛta*, but he ultimately argues that the classical Vaiśeṣika theory of existence as a universal/natural kind is implausible. Vyāsatīrtha believes that it is implausible because the category of universals/repeatable properties itself is intellectually indefensible. Another drawback of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of existence from Vyāsatīrtha's point of view is that it fails to undermine Advaita philosophy. The Advaitins can still accept this aspect of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophy, but argue that "existence" in this sense simply forms part of the everyday, transactional world that will ultimately be sublated by awareness of *brahman*.

In the *Sattvanirukti*, Vyāsatīrtha argues, by contrast, that existence is not a special sort of universal, nor "practical efficacy" (as Dharmakīrti defined it). Rather, existence is properly defined as the quality of being connected with space and time. Perception tells us that its objects "exist" by telling us that they are present in just a single location at just one point in time. Moreover, the witness, which apprehends the veridicality of such judgments, has the power to show us that they will not be sublated even in future times. Unlike the case of perceptual illusions like the rope/snake illusion, we know that these judgments are true because the witness—the very same faculty that is responsible for the perception of these internal states in the first place—grasps the veridicality that is present in them, given that there is no factor to prevent it from doing so.

All of this is beside the point, of course, if perception does not have the power to overrule inferences. Vyāsatīrtha argues that, in the end, seeing is believing: elaborate metaphysical inferences do not have the power to undermine our everyday perceptions of reality. Perception, Vyāsatīrtha argues, is innately stronger than inference, since it can inform us about subtle aspects of reality where inference and

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61 *tasmāt pratyakṣasya pratipannopādhau traikālikaniṣedhapratiyogitvarūpamithyātvābhāvagrāhitvād bādhitā dṛśyatvādayaḥ.* (NAB, 1:446.)

scripture fail to illuminate us. Given that perception truly contradicts the conclusions of Ānandabodha's inferences, we must abandon those inferences and reject the Advaitins' interpretation of scripture as being inconsistent with perception.

The arguments in this chapter have all focused on the nature of "existence" and how veridical perceptions show us that Ānandabodha's inferences are wrong. In the next chapter, I will focus on Vyāsatīrtha's arguments about the nature of nonexistence and perceptual error in the context of his critique of indeterminacy. Advaitin philosophers argue that the "silver" we might mistake a lustrous piece of mother-of-pearl for is indeterminate from the point of view of its ontological status: it does not truly exist, yet nor is it completely nonexistent. Vyāsatīrtha, following Jayatīrtha, responds by arguing that we can in some way cognise things that do not exist; in fact, perceptual illusions are simply cases where we mistake some aspect of reality for a fictitious object that lacks existence in the external world. It will also become clear how Vyāsatīrtha's definitions of existence and nonexistence serve to buttress the old argument that the Advaitins' concept of indeterminacy is simply a contradiction.