

## 6 Illusion and nonexistence in the *Nyāyāmṛta*

### 6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter analysed Vyāsātīrtha's case that the Advaitins' arguments to prove that the world is illusory are ruled out by perception. Perceptions like "The pot is existent" show us that perception can directly grasp the existence of its objects. Since perception is stronger than inference, we must abandon Ānandabodha's inferences in favour of perception. Regardless of how they are interpreted, Vyāsātīrtha argues that all of Ānandabodha's inferences are ruled out by perception in this way. In the *Prathamamithyātvabhāṅga*, Vyāsātīrtha assumes that Ānandabodha's inferences are intended to prove specifically that the world is indeterminate in the sense that it lacks both existence and nonexistence. In this chapter, I will discuss two closely related charges that Vyāsātīrtha levels against the idea that Ānandabodha's inferences can show us that the world is indeterminate. Firstly, Vyāsātīrtha argues that the example (*dṛṣṭānta*) in Ānandabodha's inferences—the "silver" in the mother-of-pearl/silver confusion—actually lacks the quality of indeterminacy. Secondly, Vyāsātīrtha argues that the concept of "indeterminacy" itself is inherently contradictory.<sup>1</sup>

Advaitin philosophers take it that perceptual illusions like the mother-of-pearl/silver confusion exemplify the property of indeterminacy. In the *Prathamamithyātvabhāṅga* as well as in a subsequent chapter of the *Nyāyāmṛta*, Vyāsātīrtha argues that there is nothing indeterminate about perceptual errors such as the mother-of-pearl/silver confusion. Such illusions are simply cases of "mistaken identity" where we take some individual in reality to be something that it is not. Following Jayātīrtha, Vyāsātīrtha presents the Mādhva theory of illusion as a sort of twist on the Naiyāyikas' theory. Like the Naiyāyikas, the Mādhvas claim that faults in the perceptual process lead the victim of the illusion to misidentify the mother-of-pearl as something it is not. What is distinctive about the Mādhva theory is their claim that the objects of illusions—the "silver", for instance,—simply do not exist as any part of reality. The *particular* silver we mistake the lustrous shell for does not exist anywhere, at any time.

This controversial claim puts the Mādhvas at odds with the other schools of realism in India. The Naiyāyikas and the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsakas, whose theories of illusion feature heavily in Vyāsātīrtha's work, developed their theory in the context of debating Madhyamaka and Yogācāra Buddhist philosophers. Like the Advaitins,

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1 See below, Chapter 9, pp. 240–247 for a translation and discussion of the relevant passages.

these Buddhist schools used perceptual illusions as a gateway to radical non-realist theories of cognition. Buddhist philosophers argue that episodes of error prove that cognition can somehow arise in the absence of an external object. The theories of the Naiyāyikas and the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsakas, on the other hand, are designed to exclude the possibility that we can have cognitions when there is no object to stimulate them. They explained illusion either as a failure to recognise reality completely, or as a case where two parts of reality are mistakenly fused together in awareness. As Matilal has discussed (1986: 201–213), the Nyāya theory of illusion was closely connected with their analysis of empty terms like “hare’s horn”. The Naiyāyikas hold that these two things (the hare and the horn) are simply different parts of reality mistakenly compounded with one another. They sought to exclude such empty terms from their definitions and formal inferences altogether.<sup>2</sup>

By contrast, Vyāsatīrtha maintains that we can explain perceptual illusions as vivid, perception-like experiences of individual things that simply do not exist as part of reality. The different components of the illusion may be based on parts of reality, but the particular “silver” that we see where there is only mother-of-pearl is a fiction conjured up by our sense-faculties. Consistently with their theory of illusion, Vyāsatīrtha and Jayatīrtha accept that words such as “sky-flower” and “hare’s horn” can generate meaningful cognitions. As I discuss in Chapter 7, they even accept that we can make true/false claims about nonexistent things and that we can make certain valid inferences about them. The upshot of this in the context of the *Nyāyāmṛta* debate is that the Advaitins’ claim that the “silver” exemplifies indeterminacy is untenable. We can account for the silver simply by assuming that it is nonexistent, and so it cannot be indeterminate in the way the Advaitins take it to be.

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2 This aspect of the Nyāya theory of unestablished terms drives a great deal of the discussion in Gaṅgeśa’s attempts to define pervasion (*vyāpti*) in his *Tattvacintāmaṇi*, for instance. The Navya-Naiyāyikas accept that there are “universal-positive” (*kevalānvayin*) properties, that is, properties that are present in every possible location. These include “nameability” (*abhidheyatva*) and “knowability” (*jñeyatva*), for instance, because everything is both knowable and nameable according to the Navya-Naiyāyikas. Since these properties are present in every possible location, their *absence* must be uninstantiated; the “absence of knowability” (*jñeyatva-abhāva*) is, as such, an empty term, just like the “hare’s horn”. Hence Gaṅgeśa argues that if pervasion were defined as *sādhyābhāvavadaṅgīkṛtām* (“[the reason’s] not occurring in something that has the absence of the probandum”), then the definition must be rejected because it refers, in certain applications, to an empty term. For, if the (putative) definition is applied to the (valid) inference “This thing is knowable, because it is nameable”, then the expression “the absence of the probandum” will refer to the “absence of knowability”, which is an empty term. On this ground, Gaṅgeśa rejects this definition and several others that refer somehow to the “absence of the probandum”. See Goekoop (1967: 60–64) for a translation of the text of the *Tattvacintāmaṇi* here and a broader discussion of these issues. See also Perrett (1999) for the significance of universal-positive properties in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thought.

The nature of nonexistence is also at the heart of debates between Vyāsatīrtha and Madhusūdana about whether indeterminacy is a disguised contradiction. Realist philosophers in India had long since argued that the claim that something is neither existent nor nonexistent is an implicit contradiction. In the *Nyāyāmṛta*, Vyāsatīrtha uses his definitions of existence and nonexistence to give substance to this charge. Vyāsatīrtha's definitions should make existence/nonexistence jointly exhaustive states of being—anything that we can name must have either one or the other of them. One consequence of this is that proving that something lacks both existence and nonexistence amounts to proving that it has both properties at the same time, which is a contradiction.

Advaitin philosophers did not want to be accused of contradiction. Citsukha rejected this charge in his *Tattvapradīpikā*, and Madhusūdana, responding to Vyāsatīrtha in the *Advaitasiddhi*, gave a novel argument to prove that indeterminacy is not really contradictory. He argues that “existence” and “nonexistence” are not jointly exhaustive qualities. In fact, nonexistence should be defined in cognitive terms. To say that something is “nonexistent” is to say that it can never be experienced as existing in any possible substrate. The Mādhva commentators of the sixteenth century who responded to Madhusūdana's arguments largely focused on attacking his definition of nonexistence. Vyāsatīrtha's sixteenth-century commentators Rāmācārya and Ānanda Bhaṭṭāraka used his arguments to give rebuttals of Madhusūdana's case, and I discuss these arguments in the final part of this chapter

## 6.2 Nonexistence in Madhva's refutation of indeterminacy

The arguments made by Advaitin philosophers like Vimuktātman, Ānandabodha, and Citsukha in favour of the indeterminacy of the objects of perceptual illusions were frequently presented as a form of “circumstantial implication” (*arthāpatti*) in Mādhva works as follows:

If [the silver superimposed on mother-of-pearl] were *existent*, then it could not be sublated; if it were *nonexistent*, then it could not be experienced (*sac cet, na bādhyeta; asac cet, na pratiyeta*).

Vyāsatīrtha uses this pithy formulation of the argument repeatedly in the *Nyāyāmṛta*. However, Advaitin philosophers had elaborated this pattern of argumentation into a full-fledged critique of the leading explanations of perceptual illusion proposed by Indian philosophers. Advaitin philosophers like Vimuktātman, Ānandabodha, and Citsukha argued that the existing theories of illusion proposed by the Buddhists, Mīmāṃsakas, and Naiyāyikas all fall short of giving a satisfactory explanation of perceptual error. They argue that we are consequently forced to accept

that there is something intrinsically inexplicable/indeterminable about illusions. I will here review some of these earlier theories before showing how Vyāsātīrtha himself explains perceptual error in the *Nyāyāmṛta*.

In the *Pramāṇapaddhati*, Jayatīrtha gives a whirlwind tour of the different theories of perceptual error accepted by Indian philosophers:

The followers of [the Mīmāṃsaka] Prabhākara and others argue that there is no such thing as cognition that does *not* correspond to its object (*ayathārthajñānam*). This is wrong, because [the existence of error] is established by experience. It is also established by reflection occurring after [the error has taken place]—“This long did I take this piece of mother-of-pearl to be silver!”

The Vaiśeṣikas [and Naiyāyikas] hold that the “silver” experienced [in the error] *does* exist in *another part* of reality [e.g. the shop of the silversmith].

The idealist Buddhists (*vijñānavādins*) hold that [the “silver”] is simply the essence of the [erroneous] cognition itself.

According to [the Vedāntin] Bhāskara, [the “silver”] exists in just that place and for just that time that it comes into being.

The proponents of the doctrine that [the world] is an illusion (*māyāvādins*) hold that [the “silver”] is neither existent, nor nonexistent, nor *both-existent-and-nonexistent*, but is simply indeterminate.

On the basis of the introspective experience that occurs after the error—“Nonexistent silver appeared [in my mind]”—[Madhva-]Ācārya holds that that the mother-of-pearl appears to be “silver”, whereby “silver” is completely nonexistent.

The Vaiśeṣikas [claim that] non-ascertainment and dream[-cognitions] constitute further sorts of non-object-corresponding cognitions.<sup>3</sup>

Jayatīrtha gives far more elaborate accounts of these different views in the *Pañcākhyātivāda* section of the *Nyāyasudhā*. One of the views Jayatīrtha critiques there is the one usually associated with the Yogācāra school of Buddhism. According to Jayatīrtha's presentation of the theory, the “silver” with which we misidentify the mother-of-pearl is, in fact, “existent”, but only as an internal, “mental” entity. In the *Pañcākhyātivāda*, he presents the theory of the Yogācārins as follows:

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3 *ayathārthajñānam eva nāstīti prābhākaraḍayaḥ; tan na, anubhavasiddhatvāt; etāvantaṃ kalam ahaṃ śūktikām eva rajatatvena pratipanno 'smīty uttarakāle parāmarśāc ca. pratitāṃ ca rajataṃ deśāntare sad eveti vaiśeṣikādayaḥ. jñānasvarūpam eveti vijñānavādināḥ. tatraiva tātkālikam utpannaṃ sad iti bhāskaraḥ. na sat, nāsat, na sadasat; kiṃ tv anirvacanīyam eveti māyāvādināḥ. asad eva rajataṃ pratyabhād ity uttarakālīnānubhavāc chuktir evātyantāsadrajatātmanā pratibhātīty ācāryaḥ. anadhyavasāyaḥ svapnaś cāyathārthajñānāntaram astīti vaiśeṣikāḥ. (PP: 85.)*

Yet other [philosophers] think that the “silver” actually exists, but only as an *internal/mental* entity. To explain—The silver cannot be, in the first place, nonexistent, because then [it] could not be experienced. Nor can it exist right before the eyes [of the victim of the illusion, that is, in the very place where it is falsely taken to exist], because then [the cognition of “silver”] would not be erroneous, and because this would stand in contradiction to the [subsequent] sublation [of the “silver” cognition by the cognition “This is mother-of-pearl”]. Nor can it exist in some other place, because there is no evidence for this.

Therefore, by elimination, [the silver] must be the form (*ākāra*) of the cognition [itself]. Moreover[, the fact that the “silver” is nothing more than the form of the erroneous cognition itself is established] by the inference: “This [silver] is identical with the cognition, because it is immediate in character when there is no connection of the [visual]-faculty [with an external object,] just like [a cognition of] cognition [itself]”. Nor [can it be argued that] if [the “silver”] is real, then [the cognition of “silver”] cannot be erroneous; for, [we, the Yogācāra Buddhists,] accept that “error” is simply the appearance of something that is really internal/mental as being external.<sup>4</sup>

The argument Jayatīrtha puts forward for the theory is very similar to the Advaitins’ argument for indeterminacy from circumstantial implication, although it leads to a radically different conclusion. The silver cannot be entirely nonexistent, since then we would not be able to cognise it at all. However, it cannot exist as part of the objective situation that gives rise to the illusion, since then our experience could not be sublated by the later realisation that what we are looking at is really mother-of-pearl. Unlike the Advaitins, however, the Buddhist who holds this position concludes that the silver must therefore enjoy an internal, mental existence as the form (*ākāra*) of the erroneous cognition itself. Cognitions under this view are “illusory” precisely because they project this internal form as though it were an external object. The subsequent sublating cognition simply cancels the externality the cognition falsely attributes to it.

Jayatīrtha has far less to say about the views of the other schools of Buddhism in the *Nyāyasudhā*. In the *Tattvapradīpikā*, Citsukha critiques a theory of perceptual illusion he attributes to the nihilistic Buddhists (*śūnyavādins*). Brahmanical thinkers ascribed to the nihilists the theory of *asat-khyāti*, which might be rendered as “cognition of something which is nonexistent”. The “silver” in the erroneous cognition “This is silver” is, under this view, simply nonexistent (*asat*). Yet how could a nonex-

4 *apare punā rajataṃ sad eva, kiṃ tv antar eveti manyate. tathā hi—na tāvad asad eva rajatam, pratītyanupapatteḥ. nāpi purata eva sat; bhrāntyanupapatteḥ, bādhavirodhāc ca. na ca deśāntare sat, pramāṇābhāvāt. ataḥ pariśeṣāj jñānākāram evāvatiṣṭhate. kiṃ cedam jñānarūpam, indriyasam-prayoge ‘saty aparokṣatvāt, jñānavat. na ca satyatve bhrāntyanupapattiḥ, āntarasyaiva bāhyatayā-vabhāso bhrama ity aṅgīkārat.* (NS, 2:313.) See NS, 2:312–313 for Jayatīrtha’s full presentation of the Yogācāra position on error. See also Sharma (1986: 180–181) for a discussion of the Yogācāra position based on Jayatīrtha’s analysis in the *Nyāyasudhā*.

istent entity enter into our consciousness? Brahmanical thinkers who discussed this theory did not give much by way of an answer to this question. Citsukha, for instance, simply says that we are able to cognise the silver because, unlike veridical perceptions, illusory cognitions somehow possess a “special potency” to manifest nonexistent objects, and that this potency amounts to their being “nescience” (*avidyā*).<sup>5</sup>

Partly in response to these arguments of Buddhist philosophers, the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsakas and Naiyāyikas both put forward theories of perceptual error which attempted to close the gap between valid and erroneous cognitions by tracing back the different components of the illusion to parts of the real world. According to these theories, all parts of our cognitions can be traced back to real-world objects, and there is thus no room for postulating that our cognitions arise in the absence of an external object or consist in merely experiencing cognition itself. At the beginning of the *Pañcākhyātivāda*, Jayatīrtha critiques the theory of the Prābhākara Mīmāṃsakas. He explains the Prābhākara's position as follows<sup>6</sup>:

*Objection:* In case [you reject the stance that perceptual error is the result of mistaking something for something else], then what exactly is the origin of [erroneous] judgments such as “This is silver”?

[We, the Prābhākaras,] say [as follows]—[The judgment] “This is silver” [actually] comprises two cognitions, one [of which] is a memory and the other an immediate experience. Of those [two cognitions], the cognition of “This” consists in the apprehension merely of a proximate substance [(the mother-of-pearl)]. For, under the influence of a fault [in the perceptual faculties, the victim of the error] fails to apprehend a particular universal that is [really] present [in that substance], i.e. “mother-of-pearl-ness (*śuktitva*)”. Just the bare substance having been apprehended, it produces a recollection of silver by invoking a mental impression [of silver], owing to the similarity [of the mother-of-pearl to silver]. And, even though [the recollection of silver] consists in the apprehension of something that has already been apprehended, a [further] fault steals away one part of [that recollection of silver]—its character as being a recollection—and [the recollection] comes to resemble a direct experience [of the silver].

Thus does the [victim of the illusion] fail to differentiate the recollection of the silver and the apprehension of the proximate object [(the mother-of-pearl)] from one another, either in terms of their nature or of their object. Hence, because of [their] similarity to a cognition of a proximate piece of silver, even though they are two different things, the apprehension and recollection—“This” [and] “silver”—lead [the victim of the illusion] to speak about [“silver”

<sup>5</sup> See Sharma (1986: 181) for a discussion of the *asatkhyāti* view.

<sup>6</sup> See NS, 2:149–277 for Jayatīrtha's explanation/refutation of this position. See also Sharma (1986: 174–177) for a discussion of the Prābhākara view of illusion based on the *Nyāyasudhā*.

and “mother-of-pearl”] as if they were non-different from one another, and to place them in grammatical apposition [with one another].<sup>7</sup>

According to this account, error strictly involves neither the active misidentification of two things, nor the misattribution of a characteristic to something that does not really possess it. Error, under this theory, occurs because we fail to cognise reality in its completeness. What appears to be a single cognition, “This is silver”, is the result of the failure of the victim of the illusion to grasp the difference between what are, in reality, two distinct cognitions. The first cognition is of the object that exists right in front of the victim of the illusion (the mother-of-pearl). Due to a fault in the perceptual process, the victim does not apprehend this object as qualified by its characteristic feature (i.e. as having the universal “mother-of-pearl-ness” [*śūktitva*]), but instead merely as a bare spatially and temporally proximate substance (“This thing here”). The similarity of the substance to silver prompts her to recall some piece of silver that she experienced on a previous occasion. However, yet another fault stops her from identifying the nature of her cognition as a recollection, and it simply appears as a bare cognition to her. There is thus nothing to differentiate the two cognitions to the victim of the illusion. She thus takes them as non-different from one another, and assigns them to the same substrate. She thus effectively assigns to the mother-of-pearl both spatio-temporal proximity *and* the quality of being silver, and proceeds to act as if the thing in front of her were a piece of silver.

As Matilal (1986) notes in his discussion of this theory, the Naiyāyikas often critiqued the Prābhākara’s stance for being cumbersome. The Prābhākara needs to postulate the occurrence of two distinct flaws to explain why the different factors that give rise to the illusion occur, and there is no apparent causal connection between these two flaws. The Naiyāyikas see their own theory as being simpler and more intuitive than the Prābhākara’s. The Naiyāyikas argue that error does entail the cognition of some real part of the world as being different from the way it truly is. For instance, in the mother-of-pearl/silver illusion, we mistakenly judge the mother-of-pearl to be a piece of silver. Jayatīrtha sometimes writes about the Nyāya theory as though it entails the misidentification of two individuals in reality with one another; that is, that we mistake the mother-of-pearl for some particular

7 *nanu tarhidaṃ rajatam ity ādipratyayasya kā gatiḥ? ucyate—rajatam idam iti dve jñāne smṛtyanubhavarūpe. tatredam iti purovartidravayamātragrahaṇam, doṣavaśāt tadgatasya śūktitvasāmānyaviśeṣasyāgrahaṇāt. tanmātram ca gṛhitam sadṛśatayā saṃskārod bodhakrameṇa rajatasmyṛtiṃ janayati. sā ca gṛhitagrahaṇasvabhāvāpi doṣavaśād <sup>1</sup>gṛhitatāṃsā<sup>1</sup> pramoṣeṇa gṛhītī-sarūpavātiṣṭhate. tathā ca rajatasmyṛteḥ purovṛttigrahaṇasya ca mithaḥ svarūpato viśayataś ca bhedāgrahaṇāt sannihitarajatajñānasārūpyeṇedam, rajatam iti bhinne <sup>2</sup>pi grahaṇasmarāṇe <sup>3</sup>bhedavyavahāraṃ sāmānādhikaraṇavyapadeśaṃ ca pravartayataḥ. (NS, 2:170.)* Emendations: (1) *conj.*; the edition reads *gṛhitatattāṃsā* here.

piece of silver that we have seen elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> However, the Nyāya approach is also widely associated with the idea that we attribute a universal to something that lacks it. In the mother-of-pearl/silver illusion, for instance, we misattribute a universal (silverness [*rajatatva*]) to what is really a piece of mother-of-pearl. The Naiyāyikas want to argue that, under their analysis, the individual components of the illusion are all real. The mother-of-pearl and the universal silverness are both parts of the real world according to the Naiyāyikas; it is simply that the mother-of-pearl lacks the silverness that we are ascribing to it. What is perhaps not real, as Vyāsātīrtha will be quick to point out, is the relator that connects these two things.

### 6.3 Vyāsātīrtha's explanation of perceptual error in the *Nyāyāmṛta*

According to Advaitin philosophers, all of these explanations of perceptual error fail to truly explain how we can have vivid, perception-like experiences of things that are not really there. We are consequently forced to abandon our attempts to explain such episodes as the mother-of-pearl/silver confusion, and conclude that they are simply indeterminate. Vyāsātīrtha agrees with the Advaitins that all of these earlier explanations fail to explain illusion, but he contends that his own, Mādhva, theory can do just that. In the *Nyāyāmṛta*, he draws on Jayātīrtha's work on illusion in the *Pañcākhyātivāda* and *Tattvodyotaṭikā* to give a theory of how such illusions occur.

Jayātīrtha's own theory of error grew to a large extent from the arguments Mādhva himself made against the doctrine of indeterminacy. Mādhva argued that one of the assumptions underlying the Advaitins' argument in favour of indeterminacy from circumstantial implication is faulty. The argument is based on the assumption that we cannot experience nonexistent things. However, Mādhva argued that it is simply self-contradictory to argue that we cannot experience something that does not exist. The very fact that we can make judgments about something implies that we must have had some kind of cognition of it in the first place. In his critique of Advaita philosophy in the *Viṣṇutattvanirṇaya*, Mādhva explains this argument against the Advaitin's argument for indeterminacy in a short passage as follows:

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<sup>8</sup> See Williams (2017a) for a discussion of how Jayātīrtha presents the Nyāya theory and differentiates his own explanation of illusion from it. See Matilal (1986) for a general discussion of the Nyāya position. For a discussion of the Nyāya theory as it is presented in Gaṅgeśa's *Tattvacintāmaṇi*, see Phillips (2020a: 267–304). For a discussion of the Nyāya position and Appayya Dīkṣita's response to it in his *Parimala*, see Duquette and Ramasubrahmanian (2009).



Nor can it be argued[, by the Advaitin,] that from the ultimate point of view there is no difference[, but] there is [difference] from the practical (*vyāvahārika*) point of view; for, there is no proof that [the “silver”, etc.] is different from both what is existent and what is nonexistent.

Has the philosopher who argues that “[the ‘silver’ cannot be nonexistent, because] what is nonexistent cannot be cognised” [already] had an experience of [what does not exist]? If [he] has *not* [had an experience of what does not exist], then [he cannot] deny the experience of [what does not exist]; if [he] *has had* [an experience of what does not exist] then the same applies. The “silverness” [superimposed] on the mother-of-pearl is *not* different from both what exists and what does not exist, because [we have] the intuition “[I] experienced only a *nonexistent* thing” [when the error is detected].

Nor can it be argued that since [the “silver-”] is experienced, [it must] lack nonexistence; for error is nothing other than the experience of what is nonexistent as existent and[, vice versa,] what is existent as nonexistent.<sup>9</sup>

Madhva’s words here sketch an explanation of perceptual error which would help form the basis of Jayatīrtha’s more developed theory in the *Nyāyasudhā*. According to Madhva, an error is simply a cognition where we experience something as having the wrong ontological status: we take something that is nonexistent to be existent, or, vice versa, something that is existent to be nonexistent. In the mother-of-pearl/silver illusion, we mistakenly take the “silver”, which is really nonexistent, to exist, for instance. On the other hand, Buddhist philosophers take the self (*ātman*), which (from the point of view of Brahmanical philosophers at least) truly exists, to be nonexistent.

In this passage Madhva further gives a sort of “master argument” against indeterminacy, which Vyāsatīrtha would repeat frequently in the *Nyāyāmṛta*. From Madhva’s point of view, the Advaitin philosopher is caught in a dilemma when he claims that “If the silver were nonexistent, it could not be experienced”. Either he has already had an experience of what is nonexistent, or he has not. If he has *not*, how can he make the judgment at all? Indian philosophers tended to assume that in order to speak about something, we need to have already had some cognition of that thing; how could we make meaningful statements about something we have never experienced? So this alternative is untenable. On the other hand, it is clearly self-contradictory for someone who already had an awareness of what does not exist to claim that we cannot experience it at all. So the Advaitin is caught in a dilemma; in

<sup>9</sup> *na ca paramārthato bhedābhāvaḥ, vyāvahārikaḥ so 'stīti vācyam; sadasadvailakṣanye pramāṇābhāvāt. asataḥ khyātyayogād iti vadato 'sataḥ khyātir abhūt, na vā? yadi nābhūt, na tatkhyaṭīnī-rākaraṇam; yady abhūt, tathāpi. na śukte rajatatvaṃ sadasadvailakṣaṇam, asad eva pratyabhād ity anubhavāt. na ca pratītatvād asattvābhāvaḥ, asataḥ sattvapratītiḥ, sato 'sattvapratītir ity anyathā-pratīter eva bhrāntitvāt.* (*Viṣṇutattvanirṇaya*, SMG5: 21–22.) Mesquita (2000a: 119–120) adduces a number of passages from the works of Madhva and Vimuktātman which shed light on this passage.

either case he cannot argue that we cannot experience nonexistent things. For these reasons, Madhva believes that the argument for indeterminacy from *arthāpatti* is a non-starter.

A problem with Madhva's argument, as Jayatīrtha and Vyāsātīrtha realised, is that, if it is successful, it only seems to prove that we can have *certain types* of cognitions of nonexistent entities. If Mādhva philosophers are to undermine the Advaitins' argument for indeterminacy, it is not enough for them to show that we can have *some sort* of cognition of nonexistent things; they need to prove that we can have the sort of vivid, perception-like cognition that we do when we misperceive a snake as a rope, or mother-of-pearl as silver. Citsukha seems to have pointed this out in his *Tattvapradīpikā*.

Citsukha notes that perceptual illusions are subjectively indistinguishable from veridical perceptions when they occur. They are both phenomenologically indistinguishable (they look/"feel" like veridical perceptions) and they are epistemically indistinguishable (they dupe us into believing that they are of presently existing entities). It is precisely these characteristics that distinguish perceptual errors like the mother-of-pearl/silver illusion from other cognitions that seem to involve nonexistent things. When I have a cognition of "silver" in the mother-of-pearl/silver illusion, I am moved to action precisely because that cognition seems like a veridical perception. In the *Tattvapradīpikā*, Citsukha argues that if we assume that perceptual illusions lack an objective basis in some existent object, we cannot fully explain their perceptual character. As Citsukha's commentator, Pratyagrūpa (fl. 1400), interprets this passage, Citsukha is implicitly conceding that we might be able to have a minimal, "verbal" cognition of nonexistent things, which explains why we are able to speak about them. However, we simply cannot have a vivid, perception-like cognition of something that does not exist.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Citsukha argues: *vibhramālabanam tu kim asat? sad eva vā? kiṃ vobhayātmakam? utobhaya-vilakṣaṇam iti vivecanīyam. na tāvad asat, asato 'parokṣāvabhāsānarhatvāt; tadāditsayā pravṛtṭyanupapatteḥ ca. kva cid asadvīṣe 'pi pratibhāsapravṛtṭi kiṃ na syātām iti cet, na; viśeṣādhikaraṇatve tucchatvānupapatteḥ, tasya niḥsvabhāvāt.* (TP: 70). "However, it must be deliberated as follows—is the basis (*ālambana*) of illusion nonexistent, existent, or does it consist of both of these, or is it something *different* from both of these? In the first place, it cannot be nonexistent, since we cannot have a direct (*aparokṣa*) experience of something that is nonexistent. Moreover, the activity prompted by the desire to obtain [the 'silver'] would not be possible [if it does not exist]. *Objection*: [Although generally we cannot have a perception-like experience of nonexistent things, such as hare's horns, for instance,] why can it not be that *particular* nonexistent things can be both experienced *and* become the object of action? *Reply*: This is impossible, since if something is the locus of individuality, it cannot be a mere nothing, since [nonexistent things] have no essence." Pratyagrūpa glosses: *aparokṣeṭi śābdapratītyāvṛtṭyai. nanu yady api śaśaviśānādaḥ pravṛtṭipratīti na dṛṣṭe, tathāpy asadvīṣe rū-*

So to really succeed in undermining the Advaitin's argument, Vyāsatīrtha must explain how we can have vivid, perception-like awarenesses even when there is seemingly no object to stimulate them. The idea that we can have such perception-like cognitions of things that do not exist might seem to offend common sense, but why is this so?<sup>11</sup> In his *Tattvodyotaṭikā*, Jayatīrtha outlines the main line of objection to this position, and also gives a response to it which would heavily influence Vyāsatīrtha's account in the *Nyāyāmṛta*:

By this reasoning, the following objection is refuted: "Since a direct cognition arises from the sense-faculties, and the sense-faculties can only bring about a cognition if they are connected with some object, and since there can be no connection with something that does not exist, there cannot be an immediate cognition that has for its object something that does not exist". For, I, Jayatīrtha, accept that a sense-faculty which is connected to a piece of mother-of-pearl, being under the influence of some fault, generates a cognition of the mother-of-pearl as being silver.<sup>12</sup>

The "direct"/"immediate" (*aparokṣa*) character of perceptual illusions led Indian philosophers to assume that they must have similar causal antecedents to valid perceptions. According to the Mādhvas and the other realist schools in India, perceptual cognitions are produced by the "connection" (*sannikarṣa*) of one of the sense faculties (*indriya*) with an external object (*artha*). The senses clearly cannot come into contact with something that does not exist, since something that does not exist would lack the causal efficacy to affect them in any way. Hence, the argument runs, we cannot have direct cognitions of a nonexistent entity.

In the *Nyāyāmṛta*, Vyāsatīrtha largely agrees with the account that Jayatīrtha gives in this passage of the *Tattvodyotaṭikā*. When critiquing the doctrine of indeterminacy in the *Nyāyāmṛta*, he argues as follows:

Therefore, since [the Advaitin's position] of *Anirvacanīyakhyāti* is untenable, [our] misidentification (*anyathā-khyāti*) theory is the only tenable option. [According to this theory,] a flawed sense-faculty, being influenced by a recollected impression of silver, apprehends the "this" portion [of the cognition]—the mother-of-pearl—which is connected with [the flawed sense-faculty], as a completely nonexistent [piece of] silver.

And the perception [that occurs after the illusion has been sublated], "The silver that appeared [to me] is actually *nonexistent*" proves that the "silver" is nonexistent, as do the following in-

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*pyādau kiṃ na syātām? iti śaṅkate—kva cid iti. sataḥ khalv ayaṃ sāmānyaviśeṣabhāvaḥ, na tv asata iti pariharati—neti. (Nayanaprasādini, TP: 70.)*

<sup>11</sup> See for example Matilal (1986: 183–184).

<sup>12</sup> *etenāparokṣajñānasyendriyasamutthatvāt, indriyāṇāṃ cārthasannikṛṣṭānām eva jñānahetutvāt, asatā ca sannikarṣayogān nāsadviṣayāparokṣajñānam iti parāstaṃ; śuktisannikṛṣṭeṇendriyeṇa doṣavaśād rajatatayā tajjñānajananaṅgikārāt. (Tattvodyotaṭikā, TU: 79.)*

ferences: (1) “The object under dispute [i.e. the silver] is nonexistent, because it is not the locus of existence, just like a horn on a man’s [head]”; (2) “Erroneous cognition has what is nonexistent for its object, because it has for its object something that is not the locus of existence, and because it *has* an object while not having merely something existent for its object, just like the indirect (*parokṣa*) cognition that has what is nonexistent for its object”.<sup>13</sup>

In this passage, Vyāsātīrtha gives a succinct explanation of the Mādhva theory of perceptual error. Error is simply a case of mistaken identity; erroneous judgments identify something with something that it is really not. A flawed sense-faculty apprehends the proximate piece of mother-of-pearl, which it is really in contact with, as being identical with a “piece of silver”. This “piece of silver” is a complete fiction, however; there is no individual existing anywhere in the real world that correlates to this part of the cognition.

Under Vyāsātīrtha's theory, the conditions that produce veridical perception are essentially present in the objective situation that gives rise to the illusion. The visual-faculty is connected with an external object. However, that faculty somehow has the power to apprehend the real object as something entirely other than it really is. Vyāsātīrtha argues that the flawed sense-faculty presents the mother-of-pearl as being a piece of silver that simply does not exist. Following Jayātīrtha, he argues that in the mother-of-pearl/silver illusion, the visual-faculty misrepresents the object it is really in connection with because it suffers from some kind of a fault (*doṣa*).

Vyāsātīrtha here anticipates two challenges to his theory. We can understand the first one by invoking Matilal's (1986: 211–212) distinction between “objective” and “imaginative” illusions. In many cases, perceptual illusions are brought about by a simple defect of the senses, or by some aspect of the external environment that is unfavourable to the production of a veridical perception. An example might be the “double-moon illusion”, where a diseased visual-faculty makes someone see two moons in the sky. There are, however, many perceptual illusions that seem to depend on the past experiences (what Matilal refers to as the “collateral data”) of the person who falls victim to the illusion. The mother-of-pearl/silver example itself seems to provide an instance of this type. It would be difficult to explain why someone confuses mother-of-pearl with silver unless they have already had an experience of silver at some other time and place. Matilal refers to this type of illusion as an “imaginative illusion”.

<sup>13</sup> *tasmād anirvācyakhyātyasambhavād udbuddharūpyasaṃskārasacivam duṣṭendriyam svasannikṛṣṭaṃ śūktidamaṃśam atyantāsadrūpyātmanā grhṇātīty anyathākhyātir eva yuktā. rūpyasyāsattve cāsad eva rūpyam abhād iti pratyakṣam; vimatam asat, sattvānādhikaraṇatvāt, nṛśṛṅgavat; a-pramāsadviṣayikā, sattvānādhikaraṇaviṣayakatvāt, sanmātrāviṣayakatve sati saviṣayakatvāc ca, a-sadviṣayakaparokṣajñānavad ity ādyanumānam ca mānam. (NAB, 2:632.)*

The theory that Vyāsātīrtha presents here works well for objective illusions, where it makes sense to attribute the false perception to a fault in the senses. It is easy to explain the “two-moons” illusion by arguing that a defect afflicting the visual-faculty causes it to apprehend the object as being different than how it really is. However, how can Vyāsātīrtha’s theory account for cases of imaginative illusions, where memory clearly plays a role? Vyāsātīrtha believes that he is able to account for imaginative illusions such as the mother-of-pearl/silver confusion because the flawed visual-faculty in question is influenced by the past experience of silver through the operation of memory. The visual-faculty in the illusion is somehow “assisted” by a latent mental impression of a previously experienced piece of silver that is being recollected in the current context. What is key to Vyāsātīrtha’s theory of illusion is that the *particular piece* of silver that features in the false judgment itself simply does not exist. The “silver” portion of our cognition is clearly based on a real piece of silver that we have seen elsewhere, but this should not lead us to conclude that it necessarily has that *particular piece* of silver for its object. The particular “silver” that appears in our judgment is no more a part of reality than the proverbial hare’s horn.

Consider, for instance, the case of a dream where I believe I am seeing a cow grazing in a field. The dream-cow is clearly based ultimately on an individual in the real world, perhaps a cow I saw on a farm once (a “prototype”). But, unless I happen to be dreaming of a particular cow that I have already seen (“Bessie”, the farmer’s favourite), then this aspect of my dream does not correlate to any specific piece of reality. After all, in the mother-of-pearl/silver illusion, there is nothing in the erroneous judgment “This thing in front of me is silver” to suggest that I have in mind some particular piece of silver that exists elsewhere in the real world. My past experiences are clearly partly responsible for the dream-cow and the illusory silver, but there is no reason to correlate either of them with any particular part of the real world, in the same way that I do when I speak or think about “Anna, my girlfriend”. The “silver”, just like my dream-cow, is pure fiction, though that fiction is inspired by an individual that exists as part of the real world.

In this passage of the *Nyāyāmṛta*, Vyāsātīrtha also deals with the charge that the theory he has just presented is essentially the same as the theory of the nihilist philosopher who accepts that an object of a perceptual illusion is a mere nonentity:

Nor can it be argued that, [if you, the Mādhva, accept that the object of erroneous cognitions is nonexistent you are subscribing to] the “appearance of the nonexistent” [theory of perceptual error]. For, even though we[, the Mādhvas,] accept that the silver is nonexistent, since [we accept] that the “this” portion [of the erroneous cognition, i.e. “This is silver”] is existent, unlike the standpoint of the outcasts [i.e. the nihilists], we do not accept that *everything* that appears in the cognition “This is silver” is nonexistent. Otherwise, it would follow that [both the Advaitins and the Naiyāyikas accept] the view of the outcasts [i.e. the nihilists]. For, the Advaitins

also accept that we can have both a cognition of something different from what is existent, and an indirect cognition of what is nonexistent; and since, from the Naiyāyika's point of view, the *nonexistent* identity of/connection between the silver and the shell can enter into experience.<sup>14</sup>

Advaitin philosophers, both medieval and modern, have made the case that the Mādhva theory is indistinguishable from that of the Buddhist nihilists,<sup>15</sup> a charge which is all the more problematic for the Mādhvas, since they repeatedly denounced the Advaitins as “Buddhists-in-disguise”! However, Vyāsatīrtha argues that this criticism is misplaced. In this passage, Vyāsatīrtha stresses that it is only the “silver” portion of the erroneous cognition that is nonexistent according to his theory; he clearly accepts that the thing that the “this” part of the cognition refers to (i.e. the mother-of-pearl) is very much a part of reality. The nihilist, by contrast, is taken to assert that *all* the components of the illusion are nonexistent. Vyāsatīrtha obviously does not accept this, so, from his point of view, their positions are not the same.

One could still argue, however, that by accepting that we can have cognitions of nonexistent entities, Vyāsatīrtha has at least opened the back door to nihilist philosophy. By accepting that certain cognitions can take place even in the absence of an object, we run the risk of permitting the possibility that *all* our cognitions occur like this, and India's classical realist philosophers were very keen to keep this particular door shut. Vyāsatīrtha has a *tu quoque* response to this charge. The alternative accounts of perceptual illusion offered by Advaitin and Nyāya philosophers are in exactly the same boat, he argues.

As Vyāsatīrtha points out, the Nyāya *anyathākhyāti* theory still seems to entail that we can somehow experience nonexistent things. As I mentioned above, according to one version of the Nyāya theory, the erroneous cognition is made up of three components: the universal “silverness”, the perceptual demonstrative “this”, and the relator that connects the two. While the Naiyāyikas were able to trace the

<sup>14</sup> *na caivam asatkhyātyāpattiḥ, manmate rūpyasyāsattve 'pīdamamśasya sattvena bāhyamata ivedaṃ rūpyam iti jñāne bhātasya sarvasyāpy asattvābhāvāt. anyathādvaitimate 'pi sadanyapratīter asataś ca paroḥsapratīteḥ, tārīkamate śūktī rūpyaṃ cety ubhayatādātmyasya vā saṃsargasya vāsata eva pratīter bāhyamatāpattiḥ.* (NAB, 2:632.)

<sup>15</sup> The Advaitin scholar Anantakrishna Sastri (NAK: 44), for instance, argues that the Mādhva view was influenced by the *asatkhyāti* theory of perceptual illusions: “The Advaitins have nowhere accepted the position that the absolutely non-existent can be directly apprehended as existent. So they have not subscribed to the theory of error technically known as ‘*asat-khyāti*’. ... On the other hand, it is the Mādhvas who adopt the *asat-khyāti* view in the case of error; since in the illusion, shell-silver, they acknowledge the non-existent silver to manifest itself as existent. So it is the view of the Mādhvas and not that of the Advaitins that is at least partially coloured by the view of the Buddhists. Manifestation of the non-existent object as existent constitutes the Mādhva theory of error. Call it by any name you please, you cannot deny the Buddhist influence on this point. So in conclusion, Brahmananda successfully turns the table against the Mādhvas”.

first two components of the cognition back to some objectively existing entity, they were forced to concede that the third—the connection between the individual/the universal—lacks an object-correlate. The *relationship* between silverness and the piece of shell lacks existence in any space-time setting.

Likewise, Advaitin philosophers accept that we can have some sort of experience of nonexistent things. Citsukha, for instance, accepts that we can at least have a “verbal”/non-perceptual cognition of nonexistent things, which explains why we can think and talk about them.<sup>16</sup> So *tu quoque*: if simply accepting that certain components of perceptual illusions fail to correlate to any piece of reality is sufficient grounds to condemn a theory as “nihilism in disguise”, then the theories of the Naiyāyikas and the Advaitins are equally open to this charge.

#### 6.4 Nonexistence and the charge of contradiction in the *Nyāyāmṛta*

According to Vyāsatīrtha, the Advaitins’ argument in favour of indeterminacy is flawed because we can explain perceptual illusions simply by assuming that their objects do not exist. We can have a vivid, perception-like cognition of “silver” because the sense-faculties, aided by the “collateral data” supplied by memory, have the power to generate a cognition of something that does not exist as part of the real world. The silver is thus not indeterminate in the way the Advaitins claim, and it cannot function as the empirical basis for Ānandabodha’s inferences to prove that the world is indeterminate. In the *Prathamamithyātva-bhaṅga*, Vyāsatīrtha expresses this as the charge that the example (*dṛṣṭānta*) has the quality of “lacking the probandum” (*sādhyaivaikalya*).<sup>17</sup>

Another objection against indeterminacy which Vyāsatīrtha explores in the *Nyāyāmṛta* is that, properly analysed, indeterminacy is simply a contradiction. He presents this charge in the *Prathamamithyātva-bhaṅga*,<sup>18</sup> and analyses it in more detail when discussing indeterminacy and perceptual error at a later point in the *Nyāyāmṛta*. Vyāsatīrtha was not the first philosopher to accuse the Advaitins of contradiction. Madhva,<sup>19</sup> Jayatīrtha,<sup>20</sup> and Viṣṇudāsa all argued that indetermi-

<sup>16</sup> See above, p. 157, for a discussion of Citsukha’s view.

<sup>17</sup> See below, Chapter 9, pp. 274–275, for a translation of this part of the chapter.

<sup>18</sup> See below, Chapter 9, pp. 240–243, for a translation of this section of the *Prathamamithyātva-bhaṅga*.

<sup>19</sup> Madhva raises the charge in his *Anuvyākhyāna*. See *Anuvyākhyāna*, SMG1: 127; verse 3,2.24.

<sup>20</sup> Jayatīrtha raises the charge of contradiction at several points in his works; see for instance VĀ: 8–9.

nacy actually amounts to a contradiction. The charge of contradiction goes back much further in Indian philosophy than the Mādhva tradition, however. Similar arguments are found in the work of the tenth-century philosopher Udayana, for instance. Udayana's criticisms were answered by Citsukha in his *Tattvapradīpikā*. The Mādhva/Advaitin debate on the subject was partly shaped by these earlier discussions. Much of Vyāsatīrtha's explanation of the charge in the *Nyāyāmṛta* reflects the arguments made by Udayana in his *Nyāyakusumāñjali*, and Madhusūdana's response to Vyāsatīrtha often reflects Citsukha's replies to Udayana.<sup>21</sup>

In his *Tātparyapariśuddhi* and *Nyāyakusumāñjali*, Udayana argued that as the terms are used in normal discourse, being and non-being (*bhāva* and *abhāva*) each invariably accompany the absence of the other. If something lacks being, it must have non-being; vice versa, if something lacks non-being, it must have being. The *denial* of either being or non-being therefore entails the *affirmation* of the other. In the *Nyāyakusumāñjali*, Udayana effectively gave a formulation of the law of excluded middle (LEM) as follows:

In the case of [two] mutually contradictory things, there is no third course; nor can there be unity among contradictory things, since merely stating [either one of them] will cancel [the other].<sup>22</sup>

According to Udayana's auto-commentary on this part of the *Nyāyakusumāñjali*,<sup>23</sup> the negation (*niṣedha*) of either being or non-being is *identical with* the postulation (*vidhi*) of the other of the pair. Therefore, to prove that something has the absence of being or non-being is effectively to prove that it possesses the other. To claim, as the Advaitin does, that something lacks both being and non-being is thus really to prove that that thing possesses both of them, which is nothing more than a contradiction.

<sup>21</sup> It is possible that Vyāsatīrtha studied the *Kusumāñjali* directly on this subject, or that he encountered Udayana's arguments indirectly through the works of Citsukha, who reproduces many of them in his *Tattvapradīpikā* when discussing contradiction. Cf. TP: 49, for instance.

<sup>22</sup> *parasparavirodhe hi na prakārantarasthitiḥ / naikatāpi viruddhānām uktimātravirodhataḥ* // (NKM: 193; verse 3.8.) For some discussion of this passage, see Matilal (1977: 97).

<sup>23</sup> Udayana glosses the verse of the *Nyāyakusumāñjali* as follows: *na hi bhāvābhāvābhyām anyāḥ prakāraḥ sambhāvanyāḥ, parasparavidhiniṣedharūpatvāt. na bhāva iti hi niṣedhamātreṇaivābhāvavidhiḥ. tatas taṃ vihāya, kathaṃ svavacanenaiva punaḥ suhṛdayo niṣedhet, nābhāva iti? evaṃ nābhāva iti hi niṣedha eva bhāvavidhiḥ. tatas taṃ vihāya, svavācivānunnmattaḥ kathaṃ punar niṣedhet, na bhāva iti?* (NKM: 193). "For, there is no state other than being (*bhāva*) or non-being (*abhāva*), since the postulation of one is identical with the negation of the other. For, simply by negating being by saying: 'There is not being', one postulates non-being. So, how could a sincere person cancel [that statement] by saying, 'There is *not* non-being'? Likewise, through the negation, 'There is not non-being', there is the postulation of being. So, how could a sane person overlook that and cancel it by saying, 'There is not being'?"



When responding to Udayana in the *Tattvapradīpikā*, Citsukha clearly indicates that he is not willing to accept that indeterminacy amounts to a contradiction. Just after defining indeterminacy, Citsukha responds to Udayana's arguments as follows:

Nor is it reasonable to argue [as Udayana does] that the conjunction of the negations of existence and nonexistence—properties which stand in mutual opposition to one another—is impossible because the negation of one of [them, either existence or nonexistence,] is invariably accompanied by the affirmation of the other. For, [I] do not accept that the conjunction of the negations [of existence and nonexistence] is truly real (*tātvika*). [My] purpose in stating that [the world] is different [from what exists/does not exist] is merely to show that [the world] cannot be determined as being [existent or nonexistent, which are] the counter-correlates of this or that [of the differences mentioned]. For, something [such as the world], which is, by its very essence beyond determination, cannot have a real (*vāstava*) property (*rūpa*), because, if it did, it would follow that that thing *itself* is ultimately real [and we clearly cannot accept this as Advaitins who are committed to the illusoriness of the world].

Nor is the negation of either one [of existence/nonexistence] invariably accompanied by the affirmation of the other [as Udayana has claimed], because [this] invariable concomitance is not established so far as the proponent of indeterminacy is concerned.<sup>24</sup>

Citsukha gives two distinct responses to Udayana's charge of contradiction in this passage. The first response is that, as an Advaitin, he does not accept that indeterminacy—the combination of the absences of existence and nonexistence—is a property which is really present in the world. If this were so, reasons Citsukha, as the substrate of that property, the world *itself* would have to be real, and that would contradict the Advaitins' monistic stance that *brahman* alone exists. So the purpose of arguing that the world is indeterminate cannot be to ascribe a real property to the world. In this case, what would be the point in arguing for indeterminacy? Citsukha here seems to say that the purpose of claiming that the world is indeterminate is

24 *na ca parasparaviruddhayoḥ sadasattvayor niṣedhasamuccayo 'nupapannaḥ, anyataraniṣedhasyānyataravidhināntariyakatvād iti yuktam; niṣedhasamuccayasya tāttvikatvānaṅgikārāt; tattatpratiyogidurnirūpatāmātraprakāṣanāya tadvilakṣaṇatvābhilāpaḥ. na hi svarūpato durnirūpasya kiṃ cid api rūpaṃ vāstavaṃ sambhavati, tathā sati tasyāpi tāttvikatvaprasaṅgāt. na caikataraṇiṣedho 'nyataravidhināntariyakāḥ, anīrvacaniyavādinam prati vyāptyasiddheḥ.* (TP: 79.) Citsukha's commentator Pratyagrūpa glosses this passage as follows: *yat tv atrāpi tenoktaṃ tad anūdyā nirākaroti—na ca paraspareti. samuccayānupapattau hetuḥ—anyataraniṣedhasyeti. na ca yuktam ity uktam tatra hetum āha—niṣedhasamuccayasyeti. anupapanna iti ko 'rthah? yadi pramāṇayukyā-ghātaṃ na sahata iti siddham evedam asmākam advaitavādinām iti bhāvaḥ. kas tarhi sadasadvilakṣaṇaśabdārthah? tatrāha—tattatpratiyogīti. pratiyogī sattvādīḥ. kim uttarakātarateyam āśrīyate vidhā? na, aparathāsambhavād ity āha—na hi svarūpato iti. svarūpeṇa sadasattvādibhir durnirūpasya prapañcasya yo 'yam sadasadvilakṣaṇyam dharmāḥ, tasya katham sadāditvena nirūpaṇasambhavaḥ; tathātve vā tadāśrayasyāpi tathātvaprasaṅgād ity arthaḥ. kiṃ cāṅgikṛtya vyāptim idaṃ uktam; saiva nāstīty āha—na caikatareti. (Nayanaprasādinī, TP: 79.)*

simply to show the futility of the various attempts made by philosophers to ascribe it some definite ontological status. In other words, he is saying that indeterminacy is not a definite claim/theory about the way the world *is*, but simply an attempt to show that all efforts to assign the world a definite ontological status fail.

Citsukha sketches another line of response to Udayana in this passage. Udayana effectively argued that being/non-being (Citsukha uses the words existence/nonexistence, *sattva/asattva*) are “jointly exhaustive” properties: something that lacks one of the pair invariably possesses the other. However, Citsukha points out that from the point of view of someone who is persuaded of the doctrine of indeterminacy, these generalisations do not hold. An adequate analysis of perceptual error should show us that some things simply resist determination as “existent” or “nonexistent”, and thus disabuse us of any notion that these are jointly exhaustive properties. In making his argument that indeterminacy is simply a disguised contradiction, Udayana is actually assuming the very thing that the proponent of indeterminacy has given a reasoned rejection of.<sup>25</sup>

The *Nyāyāmṛta* and its literature reflect these earlier debates between the Naiyāyikas and the Advaitins. In the *Nyāyāmṛta*, Vyāsātīrtha makes a very similar argument to Udayana. He claims that his definitions of “existence” and “nonexistence” render them jointly exhaustive qualities, and, as such, one and the same thing cannot be said to lack them both without contradiction. Vyāsātīrtha’s arguments are based on the definitions of existence/nonexistence he gave in the *Sattvanirukti* chapter of the *Nyāyāmṛta*. His arguments in the *Nyāyāmṛta* stirred the Advaitins to new thought on this issue, and Madhusūdana gave an original response to this old objection in the *Advaitasiddhi*. Madhusūdana’s argument trades on an implicit awareness of the distinction between what might be called, in the terms of Aristotelian logic, “contrary” and “contradictory” pairs of qualities. He argues that the concept of indeterminacy does not lead to contradiction because, properly defined, existence and nonexistence are mutually exclusive but not jointly exhaustive properties. The Mādhyas’ claim that indeterminacy is contradictory is simply the result of their misunderstanding the true nature of existence and nonexistence. In re-

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25 Śrīharṣa takes a similar stance in the *Khaṇḍanakhaṇḍanakhāḍya*. Phyllis Granoff observes in her study of the text: “The assertion that all but knowledge is ‘*sadasadvilakṣaṇatva*’ is not to be understood as an avowal of a third truth value. *Anirvacanīyatva* is only the result of the opponent’s contentions. ... What is known and contradicted cannot be said to exist, and yet what does not exist cannot be a cause. The latter half of this contention has in fact been refuted in the discussion on the existent as a cause. It is thus in part a concession to the *sadvādin*. The statements on p. 31 (Chow) that one cannot say the *pramāṇas*, etc. do not exist and then enter into debate and speak as if they do, is not to be confused as Śrīharṣa’s own assertion that the world neither exists nor does not exist. The contradiction rests in *saying* both that *x* is and is not; there is nothing amiss if one does not say that it is not, although that is in reality the truth”. (Granoff, 1978: 138.)

sponse, Vyāsātīrtha's Mādhva commentators Rāmācārya and Ānanda Bhaṭṭāraka argued that Madhusūdana's definitions are incompatible both with demonstrable facts of human knowledge and hallowed Advaita philosophical positions.

## 6.5 The charge of contradiction in the *Nyāyāmṛta*

In the *Nyāyāmṛta*, Vyāsātīrtha frequently uses the definition of indeterminacy given by Citsukha as “being the locus of neither existence nor nonexistence” (*sadasattvā-nadhikaraṇatva*). In the *Prathamamithyātvabhāṅga*, he offers three explanations of this definition, and argues that they all lead to different faults. All of Vyāsātīrtha's analyses of indeterminacy claim that the world of our senses, and the perceptual illusions that prefigure it, have neither the property of being “existent” nor “non-existent”.

What law, if any, does this claim violate? Before going on to analyse the debate between Vyāsātīrtha and Madhusūdana, it might help to introduce some terms from Western logic in order to clarify the charge. In his study of contradiction in Indian thought, Fritz Staal (1962) argued that by asserting that the same thing is neither existent nor nonexistent, the Advaitin is guilty of breaking the law of non-contradiction (LNC). More immediately, what the Advaitins seem to be guilty of is violating the law of excluded middle (LEM).

Whereas modern logicians tend to think of contradiction as a relationship that holds between statements or propositions, the Indian philosophers in the current debate thought about it as a relationship between properties, which can be present in, or absent from, locations. Staying true to this approach, we can say that according to the LNC, a property and its absence are mutually exclusive: they cannot be simultaneously present in one and the same location. As opposed to the LNC, the LEM expresses the fact that a property and its absence are collectively/jointly exhaustive. According to the LEM, any location must have either the presence or absence of some property at a particular time: for all  $x$ ,  $x$  must either have some property or its absence.

Properties can be mutually exclusive without being jointly exhaustive. In Western logic, this has been expressed as a distinction between “contrary” and “contradictory” qualities. Contrary properties are mutually exclusive: it is contradictory to assert that a pair of contrary properties are both located in the same location at the same time. To take an example that Madhusūdana himself uses, we can say that cowness and horseness are contrary properties: it would be contradictory to say that something is simultaneously both a horse *and* a cow. If we take “ $L(a, b)$ ” to represent the relationship “ $a$  is located in  $b$ ”, then we can say that it is *impossible* to assert of a pair of contrary properties,  $P$  and  $Q$ , that:

$$L(P, x) \wedge L(Q, x)$$

where  $x$  is some location or other. However, contrary properties are *not* exhaustive in this way: it is not the case that every location must have either one or the other of them. In other words, we *can* assert of a pair of contrary properties that:

$$L(\neg P, x) \wedge L(\neg Q, x)$$

This holds in the case of cowness and horseness. A camel, for instance, is neither a horse nor a cow, so both cowness and horseness are absent from a camel. “Fully contradictory” properties, on the other hand, are both mutually exclusive *and* collectively exhaustive: they cannot be located in the same location at the same time, and every location must have either one or the other of the pair.

Madhusūdana's argument in the *Advaitasiddhi* effectively trades on the difference between these two relationships that can obtain between properties. He observes that the Advaitin is guilty of contradiction only if existence and nonexistence are fully contradictory properties. If we accept Vyāsatīrtha's definitions of existence and nonexistence, then they are undoubtedly fully contradictory properties, and to assert their absences from the same location at the same time leads to a contradiction. However, Madhusūdana rejects Vyāsatīrtha's definitions of existence and nonexistence and argues that he has better ones. Madhusūdana argues that, like cowness and horseness, existence and nonexistence, properly defined, are contrary properties but not contradictory ones. Claiming that they are absent from the same location at the same time is no more problematic than declaring that a camel is neither a horse nor a cow!

## 6.6 Madhusūdana's solution to the problem of contradiction

Before examining Madhusūdana's analysis of the charge of contradiction in the *Advaitasiddhi*, it will help to clarify Vyāsatīrtha's own understanding of the relationship between existence and nonexistence. Vyāsatīrtha and his commentators used the concepts of essential identity (*tādātmya*) and pervasion (*vyāpti*) to formulate the relationship between the two properties. Vyāsatīrtha does not delve into the question of the logical relationship of existence and nonexistence in the *Prathamamithyātvabhāṅga*, where he simply claims that indeterminacy is contradictory. However, he gives a clear explanation of it in a later section of the *Nyāyāmṛta* where he critiques indeterminacy:

If, however, what is meant [by “indeterminacy”] is the state of lacking [existence and nonexistence] as *I* accept them, then since [*I*] accept that, out of both parsimony and necessity, nonexis-

tence is nothing more than the absence of existence [and, vice versa, existence is nothing more than the absence of nonexistence], then, according to the maxim “Two negations strongly affirm the matter in question”, the negation of one or other [of existence or nonexistence] is identical with the affirmation of the other; hence [your position entails] a contradiction, just like saying, “[My] mother is a barren woman!”<sup>26</sup>

Elsewhere, Vyāsatīrtha expresses this relationship while setting out an inference he believes undermines the doctrine of indeterminacy:

Existence and nonexistence are not the counterpositives of constant absences that share a common locus with one another, since [existence and nonexistence] are *each identical with* the constant absence of the other; just like potness and the absence of potness.<sup>27</sup>

Vyāsatīrtha’s claims about the relationship between existence and nonexistence are based on his definitions of those properties in the *Sattvanirukti*. In that chapter Vyāsatīrtha argues that “existence” and “nonexistence” can be defined in terms of spatio-temporal instantiation. To be nonexistent is to be absent from all locations at all times. To exist, on the other hand, is to be present in at least one location at at least one point in time. These are clearly contradictory qualities: something must either be absent from all locations at all times or present in at least one location at at least one point in time, and nothing can be both. In the passages translated above, Vyāsatīrtha clarifies that he believes that existence and nonexistence are each identical with the absence of the other. Existence is identical with the absence of nonexistence and, vice versa, nonexistence is identical with the absence of existence.

So Vyāsatīrtha’s argument against indeterminacy runs as follows. The Advaitin wants to assert that the same thing has both the constant absence of existence and the constant absence of nonexistence. However, nonexistence is essentially identical with the constant absence of existence. Similarly, existence is essentially identical with the constant absence of nonexistence. The Advaitin wants to claim that existence and nonexistence are absent from the same location, but, since the postulation of existence or nonexistence is interchangeable with the negation of the other, what the Advaitin is really claiming is that the same thing has *both* existence *and* nonexistence. The Advaitin might as well claim that he “has a barren mother”!

<sup>26</sup> *madabhimatayo rāhityavivakṣāyām tu mayā lāghavād āvaśyakatvāc* <sup>1</sup>*ca sattvābhāva evāsattvam*<sup>1</sup> *iti svikārāt, dvau nañau prakṛtam arthaṃ sātīśayaṃ gamayata iti nyāyenaikataraniṣedhasyāyataravidhīrūpatvāt, mātā vandhyeti vad vyāghātaḥ.* (NAB, 2:568.) Variant readings found in editions: (1.) The edition gives the alternative reading: *cāsattvābhāva eva sattvam*. See Ingalls (1951: 67–68) for a discussion of the different terminology Navya-Naiyāyikas use to express identity.

<sup>27</sup> *sattvāsattve samānādhikaraṇātyantābhāvapratiyoginī na bhavataḥ, parasparātyantābhāvāt; ghaṭatvāghaṭatvat.* (NAB, 2:591.)

Vyāsatīrtha's Mādhva and Advaitin commentators debated this charge extensively in the *Nyāyāmṛta* literature. Madhusūdana gave an original response to Vyāsatīrtha's arguments while commenting on the *Prathamamithyātvabhāṅga*. In this section of the *Advaitasiddhi*, he probes deeper into the charge of contradiction as Vyāsatīrtha presents it in the *Nyāyāmṛta*. Vyāsatīrtha assumed that indeterminacy amounts to a contradiction because existence and nonexistence are each identical with the absence of the other. Madhusūdana, however, analyses the problem further and anticipates that there might be three reasons (R) why a contradiction could result from the claim that something lacks both existence and nonexistence:

- R<sup>1</sup>: existence and nonexistence are each *essentially identical* with the absence of the other (*sattvāsattvayoḥ parasparaviraharūpatayā*)
- R<sup>2</sup>: existence and nonexistence each *pervade* the absence of the other (*sattvāsattvayoḥ parasparavirahavyāpakatayā*)
- R<sup>3</sup>: existence and nonexistence are each *pervaded by* the absence of the other (*sattvāsattvayoḥ parasparavirahavyāpyatayā*)

R<sup>1</sup> is just the explanation that Vyāsatīrtha has given for the relationship between existence and nonexistence. R<sup>2</sup> and R<sup>3</sup>, however, rely on the concept of pervasion (*vyāpti*) rather than essential identity to express this relationship.

R<sup>3</sup>, Madhusūdana argues, is a non-starter. It simply does not entail that existence and nonexistence are collectively exhaustive properties. It shows that the two properties are mutually exclusive, but not that they are jointly exhaustive. In R<sup>3</sup> there are two pervasion relationships: (1) the absence of existence pervades nonexistence, and (2) the absence of nonexistence pervades existence. In other words, wherever there is nonexistence, there is the absence of existence, and wherever there is existence, there is the absence of nonexistence. This relationship holds, Madhusūdana points out, between horseness and cowness. Something cannot be a horse and a cow at the same time: hence we can say that the absence of cowness pervades horseness, and vice versa. However, this does *not* entail that the pair are collectively exhaustive. The absence of horseness and the absence of cowness can clearly belong to, say, a camel, which is neither a cow nor a horse. While it certainly follows that horseness and cowness are mutually incompatible it does not follow from this that they are jointly exhaustive properties.

It may help to use modern logic to clarify this. Translated into PPL, the pervasion "A pervades B" could be written using the formula:

$$(\forall x)(Bx \rightarrow Ax)$$

Hence we can write R<sup>3</sup> as:

$$1. (\forall x)(Hx \rightarrow \neg Cx) \wedge (\forall x)(Cx \rightarrow \neg Hx)$$

It is not incompatible with (1) to assert that:

$$\neg Ca \wedge \neg Ha.$$

Hence  $R^3$  poses no problem for indeterminacy.

$R^1$  and  $R^2$  are less straightforward, however. Like  $R^3$ ,  $R^2$  blames a pair of pervasion relationships for the contradiction that apparently ensues from indeterminacy. According to  $R^2$ , however, existence and nonexistence each pervade the absence of the other: Everything that has the absence of existence is nonexistent, and everything that lacks nonexistence is existent. Unlike  $R^3$ ,  $R^2$  successfully shows that existence and nonexistence are jointly exhaustive qualities, because it shows that whatever has the absence of one must possess the other. Hence  $R^2$  poses a serious problem for the Advaitins' argument.

Having analysed the charge in this way, Madhusūdana argues that neither  $R^1$  nor  $R^2$  really pose a problem for the Advaitins' doctrine of indeterminacy. According to Madhusūdana, neither of these relationships really pertain between existence and nonexistence, because existence and nonexistence should not be defined as Vyāsatīrtha defines them. Madhusūdana, like Citsukha, defines "existence" as non-sublatibility. Existence, he argues, is nothing more than omni-temporal non-sublatibility (*trikālābādhyatva*). To exist, in other words, is simply to lack the capacity to become an object of the type of stultifying judgment that tells us that what we once took to be true is false. Madhusūdana defines nonexistence in his commentary on Vyāsatīrtha's *Prathamamithyātvabhāṅga* as follows:

Not being the locus of the property of being experienced as existent in some substrate (*kva cid apy upādhai*<sup>28</sup> *sattvena pratīyamānatvānadhikaraṇatvam*).

There might be problems with this formulation of the definition. As Madhusūdana's commentator Viṭṭhaleśopādhyāya points out, if the present-passive participle *pratīyamānatva* were taken literally as having the sense of the present, it would follow that, at the time when the thing in question is not cognised, it would not be

<sup>28</sup> See above, Chapter 4, p. 93, fn. 26, for this use of the term *upādhi* in the second definition of illusoriness that Vyāsatīrtha considers in the *Nyāyāmṛta*. It is clear that all the participants in the debate understand it in this context in the sense of "location" or "substrate" (*adhikaraṇa*, *adhiṣṭhāna*, etc.). Viṭṭhaleśopādhyāya, in his commentary on Brahmānanda's *Laghucandrikā*, derives the term as follows: *upa samīpa ādhīyate 'sminn ity upādhir iti*. (Viṭṭhaleśopādhyāyī, ASMu: 94). For further discussion of this use of the term, see Pellegrini (2011: 443).

indeterminable! Elsewhere in the *Advaitasiddhi*,<sup>29</sup> Madhusūdana gives a slightly different, and perhaps clearer, definition of nonexistence:

*kva cid apy upādhau sattvena prattīyanarhatvam*

In other words, something is nonexistent if it lacks the *potential* to become the object of a cognition that asserts that it exists in some location. Given these definitions of existence and nonexistence, Madhusūdana concludes that indeterminacy really means:

Not being cognised as though existent in some substrate, while being different from what is permanently non-sublatable (*trikālābādhyavilakṣaṇatve sati kva cid apy upādhau sattvena prattīyanarhatvam*).

As Madhusūdana points out,<sup>30</sup> while existence and nonexistence might be contrary qualities according to these definitions, they are not fully contradictory ones. Defined as such, existence is clearly not identical with the constant absence of nonexistence, and vice versa. So Vyāsātīrtha's explanation of the charge of contradiction is invalidated. Similarly, existence/nonexistence cannot be said to each pervade the other's absence. The indeterminate "silver" superimposed on mother-of-pearl lacks both existence and nonexistence as Madhusūdana has defined them. It lacks omni-temporal non-sublatability, since it is liable to be sublated by a later veridical awareness. It also lacks nonexistence, since we can have a cognition of it as though it were existent. So, from Madhusūdana's point of view, the "silver" itself gives us a well-established case of something that lacks both of these qualities, and which therefore breaks the pervasion relationships expressed by R<sup>2</sup>.

Madhusūdana analyses how the example of the silver superimposed on mother-of-pearl shows that existence/nonexistence cannot pervade each other's absences. Using  $P(x, y)$  to mean "x pervades y", R<sup>2</sup> expresses the following pervasion relationships (where *e* refers to "existence" and *n* to "nonexistence"):

$$1. P(e, \neg n)$$

$$2. P(n, \neg e)$$

<sup>29</sup> See for instance Madhusūdana's treatment of the second definition of illusoriness (*Advaitasiddhi*, NAB, 2:72).

<sup>30</sup> In his defence of indeterminacy in the *Advaitasiddhi*, for instance, Madhusūdana says: *sattvāsattvayor na parasparaviraharūpatvam, kiṃ tu parasparavirahavyāpyatāmātram*. (*Advaitasiddhi*, NAB, 2:572). "Existence and nonexistence are not each identical with the other's absence; rather, they are merely each *pervaded* by the other's absence."



Madhusūdana picks on (2) to show why the argument fails. In (2), nonexistence is the pervading-property (*vyāpaka*) and the absence of existence is the pervaded-property (*vyāpya*). The pervasion itself could be expressed as: “Whatever has the absence of existence has nonexistence”. If we accept Madhusūdana’s definitions of existence/nonexistence, then the silver becomes the site of a deviation (*vyabhicāra*) between these two properties. A deviation occurs when the (putative) pervaded-property (*vyāpya*) is present in a location from which the (putative) pervading-property (*vyāpaka*) is absent. In the case at hand, the deviation would occur if the absence of existence is present in a location from which nonexistence is absent. The silver certainly possesses the pervaded-property/*vyāpya*: it is liable to sublation, and so it has the absence of existence defined as “non-sublatability”. However, it also lacks the pervading-property/*vyāpaka*: we do indeed have a cognition of the “silver” as though it exists, and as such the silver *lacks* nonexistence. So the pervasion “Whatever has the absence of nonexistence, has existence” is broken, because the “silver” has both the “absence of existence” and the “absence of nonexistence”.<sup>31</sup>

31 The entire passage where Madhusūdana makes this argument reads: *na ca vyāhatiḥ. sā hi sattvā-sattvayoḥ parasparaviraharūpatayā vā? parasparavirahavyāpakatayā vā? parasparavirahavyāpyatayā vā? nānyaḥ, tadanāṅgikārāt. tathā hi—atra trikālābādhyatvarūpasattvavyatireko nāsattvam, kiṃ tu kva cid apy upādhou sattvena pratiyamānatvānadhikaraṇatvam; tadvyatirekaś ca sādhyatvena vivakṣitaḥ. tathā ca trikālābādhyavilakṣaṇatve sati kva cid apy upādhou sattvena pratiyamānatvarūpaṃ sādhyam paryavasitam. evaṃ ca sati na śūktirūpye sādhyavaikālyam api, bādhyatvarūpāsattvavyatirekasya sādhyāpraveśāt. nāpi vyāghātaḥ, parasparaviraharūpatvābhāvāt. ata eva na dvitīyo 'pi, sattvābhāvavati śūktirūpye vivakṣitasattvavyatirekasya vidyamānatvena vyabhicārāt. nāpi tṛtīyaḥ, tasya vyāghātāprayojakatvāt. gotvāśvatvayoḥ parasparavirahavyāpyatve 'pi tadabhāvayor uṣṭrādāv ekatra sahopalambhāt. (Advaitasiddhi, NAB, 1:54). “Nor does [accepting that ‘illusoriness’ is indeterminacy lead to] contradiction. For, would there be [contradiction] because: Reason (R)<sup>1</sup>: existence and nonexistence are each essentially identical with the other’s absence? R<sup>2</sup>: Existence and nonexistence each pervade the absence of the other? R<sup>3</sup>: Existence and nonexistence are each pervaded by the other’s absence? R<sup>1</sup> is not tenable, because [we] do not accept that [existence and nonexistence are each identical with the absence of the other]. To explain—here, nonexistence is not the absence of existence in the form of omni-temporal non-sublatability; rather, it is the quality of not being the locus of the state of being judged to be existent in some location or other, and [we] mean to define the absence of *that* as the probandum. Hence the probandum resolves into ‘being cognised as existent in some location while being different from what is not sublatable in all three times’. This being so, the [example, the] silver superimposed on shell, does not lack the probandum, because the absence of nonexistence in the form of sublatability is not inserted into the probandum; nor is there is no contradiction, since [existence and nonexistence so defined] are not each identical with the other’s absence. For this very same reason, R<sup>2</sup> is not tenable. For, since the absence of nonexistence in the way we have defined it is found in the silver superimposed upon shell, which is devoid of existence, it follows that there is a deviation [between existence and nonexistence]. Nor is R<sup>3</sup> tenable, because it does not lead to a contradiction. For, even though cow-ness and horseness are each pervaded by the absence of the other, their respective absences are*

## 6.7 What is nonexistence? Some arguments from the *Nyāyāmṛta*

Madhusūdana's solution to the problem of contradiction is to argue that existence and nonexistence are mutually exclusive, but not jointly exhaustive, properties. Existence consists in nothing more than omni-temporal non-sublativity (*traikālikābādhyatvam*). Nonexistence, on the other hand, consists in the fact that something cannot be cognised as though it existed in any substrate. Vyāsātīrtha's Mādhva followers critiqued these arguments carefully in their commentaries on the *Nyāyāmṛta*. Rāmācārya and Ānanda Bhaṭṭāraka did not try to challenge the underlying logic of Madhusūdana's definitions. Rather, they tried to argue that Madhusūdana's definition of nonexistence itself is faulty.

The responses of these early Mādhva commentators to Madhusūdana's arguments are translated in Chapter 9 of this book. However, their case against Madhusūdana is largely based on arguments that Vyāsātīrtha himself had already made in the *Nyāyāmṛta*. Vyāsātīrtha was already aware of the definition of nonexistence that Madhusūdana defends in the *Advaitasiddhi* when he wrote the *Nyāyāmṛta*. He critiqued the definition in an early section of the text, which is known in modern editions as the "Refutation of the Second Definition of Illusoriness" (*Dvītiyamithyātvabhaṅga*). For the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss the arguments Vyāsātīrtha made against this definition of nonexistence in this section of the *Nyāyāmṛta*.

Vyāsātīrtha attributes the second definition of illusoriness to Prakāśātman in the *Nyāyāmṛta*. I have already discussed this definition several times above,<sup>32</sup> but I will present it again for clarity. According to Prakāśātman's definition, to say that something is "illusory" is to say that that thing:

is the counterpositive of an omni-temporal absence in what was taken to be [its own] substrate (*pratipannopādhanau traikālikaniṣedhapratīyogītvam*).

The problem that draws Vyāsātīrtha into Madhusūdana's definition of nonexistence is how this definition marks a distinction between "illusory" entities and "nonexistent" ones. According to Prakāśātman's definition, something is "illusory" (*mithyā*) if it is permanently absent from the very thing that was falsely taken to be its substrate. The counterpositive of this absence is the illusory entity itself. For instance, the "silver" is permanently absent from the location where we seem to see it; that is, the mother-of-pearl itself. The main purpose of a defining characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*)

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observed to be present in a single location (e.g. a camel)." See below, Chapter 9, pp. 240–243, for a full explanation of this passage.

32 See above, Chapter 4, p. 93, for a discussion of this definition of illusoriness.

is to differentiate the subject of the definition (*lakṣya*) from all other entities, so this definition of illusoriness should differentiate illusory entities from both existent entities and nonexistent entities. However, Vyāsatīrtha argues that, upon analysis, Prakāśātman's definition of illusoriness really fails to distinguish illusory entities from nonexistent ones. He begins his argument as follows:

Moreover [it is impossible to hold that the “silver” and so on are by nature the counterpositives of the omni-temporal absence] because it would follow that [they] are simply nonexistent. For, since [you] accept that the cloth and so on do not exist in any other locus [than their own, i.e. the threads etc.], in your view saying of them that they “are the counterpositive of an omni-temporal absence in what was taken to be [their own] locus” amounts to nothing other than saying that they are the counterpositives of an omni-temporal negation *everywhere*. For, otherwise, it would follow that [the cloth and so on] exist elsewhere [than in the location in which they are cognised to exist]. And you [that is, Citsukha,] yourself have said [in the *Tattvapradīpikā*]: “For it is impossible that they should exist anywhere else”. So how can it *not* but follow that [the silver superimposed on mother-of-pearl etc., to which the definition is supposed to apply,] are nonexistent? For, [nonexistent entities such as] the hare's horn and so on have no other “nonexistence” but this one.<sup>33</sup>

In this passage, Vyāsatīrtha alludes to Citsukha's definition of illusoriness. As I have discussed above in Chapter 4, Citsukha's definition is essentially the same as Prakāśātman's. Like Prakāśātman, Citsukha says that to say that something is “illusory” is to say that that thing is permanently absent from the very thing that was taken to be its substrate. Vyāsatīrtha points out in this passage that Citsukha himself admitted that this definition amounts to the claim that an indeterminate thing is absent from *all* locations in reality.<sup>34</sup> Where else could something exist but in its own substrate? So to claim that something is permanently absent from *its*

<sup>33</sup> *atyantāsattvāpātāt ca. pratīpannopādāu traikālikanīśedhapratīyogitvam api hy anyatrāsa-  
ttvena sammatasya paṭādeḥ sarvatra traikālikanīśedhapratīyogitvaparyantam iti tvaṇmatam, anya-  
thānyatra tatsattvāpātāt. na hi teṣāṃ anyatra sattā sambhavinīti tvaḍukteś ca. tathā ca katham nā-  
tyantāsattvāpattih? na hi śaśaśṛṅgādīnāṃ apīto 'nyad asattvam asti. (Nyāyāmṛta, NAB, 1:67.)*

<sup>34</sup> The passage from the *Tattvapradīpikā* referred to here reads: *atrocyate—na tāval lakṣaṇāsam-  
bhavaḥ, yataḥ—sarveṣāṃ api bhāvānāṃ āśrayatvena sammate / pratīyogitvam atyantābhāvaṃ  
prati mṛśātmatā // tathā hi—<sup>1</sup>paṭādinām<sup>1</sup> bhāvānāṃ svāśrayatvenābhimatāḥ tantvādayo ye, tanni-  
ṣṭhātyantābhāvapratīyogitva teṣāṃ mithyātvam. na hi teṣāṃ anyatra sattā sambhavinī ... nāpi  
mānāsattvam, anumānasadbhāvāt. tathā hi—amśinaḥ svāmśagatyantābhāvasya pratīyoginaḥ / am-  
śitvād itarāmśiva dig evaiṣa guṇādiṣu // vimataḥ paṭa etattantuniṣṭhātyantābhāvapratīyogī, avayavi-  
tvāt; paṭāntaravat. evam etadguṇakarmajātyādayo 'pi tattanniṣṭhātyantābhāvapratīyoginaḥ, tattad-  
rūpatvād; itaratattadrūpavad ity evam ādiprayogaḥ sarvatraivohaniyaḥ. (TP: 39–41.)* “[In response to the objector, who claims that ‘illusoriness’ has neither definition nor evidence,] it is said: In the first place, there is not the absence of a definition [of ‘illusoriness’], because: ‘The illusoriness (*mṛśātmatā*) of all entities consists in their being the counterpositive of a constant absence in the very thing that is taken to be [their own] locus’. To explain: positive entities such as cloth and so on are illusory

own substrate is to claim that that thing is the counterpositive of a constant absence *everywhere*. This being so, what exactly is it that differentiates things which are “illusory” from things that are “nonexistent”? After all, this seems to apply equally to hares’ horns and sky-flowers: they too are absent from every possible location in reality. The Advaitin is obliged to show that there is some characteristic that distinguishes illusory entities from nonexistent ones, and that this is somehow implied in the definitions of Prakāśātman and Citsukha.

What could it be that distinguishes illusory entities from nonexistent ones in this case? As a Mādhva, of course, Vyāsatīrtha rejects the idea that there is a separate “illusory” state of being. From his point of view, there is no meaningful distinction to be drawn between the words “illusory”/“nonexistent”; ultimately, they mean one and the same thing. However, he realises that there are many ways the Advaitin might try to draw this distinction, and he devotes a large part of his critique of Prakāśātman’s definition of illusoriness to proving that none of them actually work. This draws him into a discussion of the very definition of “nonexistence” that Madhusūdana defends in his refutation of the charge of contradiction.

In the “Refutation of the Second Definition of Illusoriness”, Vyāsatīrtha anticipates that the Advaitin might try to define nonexistence in three different ways:

- D<sup>1</sup>: “being uncognisable”/“being undenotable” (*nirupākhyatvam*)
- D<sup>2</sup>: “not being experienced immediately” (*aparokṣato ’pratīyamānatvam*)
- D<sup>3</sup>: “Not being cognised as though it exists in some substrate or other” (*kva cid apy upādhou sattvenāpratīyamānatvam*).

D<sup>3</sup> on this list is the same as the definition of nonexistence that Madhusūdana defends in the *Advaitasiddhi*. In the *Nyāyāmṛta*, Vyāsatīrtha cycles through these definitions in turn, attempting to show that they are all untenable. He presses his argument thus:

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precisely because they are the counterpositives of a constant absence that is located in the very location that is considered to be their own locus, [in the case of cloth, for instance, its] threads. For, they cannot possibly exist anywhere else. ... Nor is there a lack of proof [for illusoriness], because there is an inference [that establishes that all things are illusory]. To explain: ‘Wholes (*aṁśin*) are the counterpositive of a constant absence located in their own parts, because [they are] wholes; just like another whole’. The very same [approach] is taken in the case of [properties such as] tropes[, motions, universals,] and so on [to prove that they are illusory]. The subject of the dispute, i.e. the cloth, is the counterpositive of a constant absence located in these threads, since [it] has parts; just like another piece of cloth’. In the same manner: ‘These tropes, motions, universals, etc., are the counterpositive of a constant absence located in their respective [inherence-causes], because they are a property (*rūpa*) of the thing in question; just like a property of some other thing’. This line of reasoning can be employed in all possible locations [to show that the entire world of appearance is illusory].” Emendations: (1.) *conj.*; the edition reads *ghaṭādīnām* here.

Nor can the nonexistence which pertains to [the hare's horn and so on] consist in (D<sup>1</sup>) “being ineffable/uncognisable” (*nirupākhyatva*).<sup>35</sup> For, [the hare's horn and other nonexistent things] are referred to by the term “ineffable” (*nirupākhyatva*) itself! Moreover [the nonexistence pertaining to the hare's horn and so on cannot consist in “being ineffable/uncognisable”] because if there cannot be an experience of what is nonexistent, then the cognition of the state of being different from what does not exist, the refutation of the [possibility of] the experience of what does not exist, and the usage of the word “nonexistent”[, all of which are done by Advaitin philosophers in their defence of indeterminacy,] would be impossible.

Nor can nonexistence consist in (D<sup>2</sup>) “not being the object of *immediate* experience”, because [that property] also belongs to [existent] entities that are permanently beyond the senses [e.g. the ether], and so the definition would apply to something which it should not.<sup>36</sup>

Vyāsātīrtha first considers D<sup>1</sup>, which is an attempt to define nonexistence based on linguistic and/or cognitive eligibility. According to this definition, the difference between illusory and nonexistent entities consists in the fact that nonexistent

<sup>35</sup> According to Śrīnivāsatīrtha, Vyāsātīrtha interprets the term *nirupākhyatva* as meaning both “ineffable” and “uncognisable”. See below, fn. 36, for Śrīnivāsatīrtha's interpretation of this part of the text.

<sup>36</sup> *na ca nirupākhyatvam eva teṣām asattvam, nirupākhyapadenaiva khyāyamānatvāt. asato 'prati-tāv asadvailakṣaṇyajñānasyāsatpratītinirāsasya, asatpadaprayogasya cāyogac ca. nāpy aparokṣato 'pratiyamānatvam asattvam, nityātindriye 'pi sattvāt. (Nyāyāmṛta, NAB, 1:67.)* Śrīnivāsatīrtha's full analysis of this passage reads: *nanu sarvatra svarūpeṇa traikālikaniṣedhapratiyogitvaṃ nātyantā-sattvam, śaśaśṛṅgādāv asattvasyāitadanyasyaiva sattvād ity ata āha—na hīti. śaśaśṛṅgādīnām ito 'nyad asattvam astity āśaṅkya niṣedhati—na cety ādinā. teṣām, śaśaśṛṅgādīnām. nirupākhyatvaṃ nāmopākhyāyata aneneti vyutpattiyā padaśaktyaviśayatvaṃ vā, pratītyaviśayatvaṃ vā. nānya ity āha—nirupākhyapadenaiveti. tathā ca nirupākhyapadaśaktiviśayatayā tatpadenaiva vyavahriya-mānatvād ity arthaḥ. tathā cāsattvena sampratipannasyāpy asattvaṃ na syād iti bhāvaḥ. dvitīye doṣam āha—asata iti. asadvailakṣaṇyeti. abhāvajñāne pratiyogijñānasya kāraṇtvād iti bhāvaḥ. (Nyāyāmṛtaprakāśa, NAB, 1:90.)* “Objection: Nonexistence does not consist in ‘being, by essence, the counterpositive of an omni-temporal absence in all locations’. For, a sort of nonexistence that is quite different from the aforementioned is present in the hare's horn and so on. Thus does [Vyāsa-tīrtha] say: ‘For it is not’ (*na hī*). Objection: There is, in fact, a type of nonexistence, different from this, which belongs to the hare's horn and so on. [Vyāsātīrtha] refutes [this objection] with the words beginning: ‘And it is not’ (*na ca*). The expression ‘of those’ means ‘of the hare's horn and so on’. The term *nirupākhyatvam* means either (1) not being the object of the denotive power of words (according to the derivation ‘it is described [*upākhyāyate*] by this’), or (2) not being an object of experience. In order to refute the first analysis of the term, [Vyāsātīrtha] says: ‘By the word ‘ineffable’ itself’ (*nirupākhyapadenaiva*). What [Vyāsātīrtha] means is that, since [what is nonexistent] is the object of the denotive power of the word ‘ineffable’, it is referred to by that very word [‘ineffable’] itself. He shows the flaw with the second [understanding of the term *nirupākhyatva* as meaning ‘uncog-nisable’]: ‘Of what is nonexistent’ (*asataḥ*). ‘The state of being different from what is nonexistent’ (*asadvailakṣaṇya*). For, the cognition of the counterpositive is a cause of the cognition of absence. This is the idea [behind Vyāsātīrtha's words].”

things are *nirupākhyā*, whereas illusory things are not. Vyāsatīrtha's commentator Śrīnivāsatīrtha suggests that the term *nirupākhyā* yields a double sense. The first is linguistic, and it denies that something can become the object of the denotive power of words (*padaśakti*). In this sense, *nirupākhyā* might be translated as "ineffable". The second sense is cognitive: *nirupākhyā* under this understanding denies the capacity of an entity to become an object of experience, and could thus be translated as "uncognisable". According to Śrīnivāsatīrtha, Vyāsatīrtha's next two objections respond to these different senses of the term *nirupākhyā* separately.

Vyāsatīrtha's case against D<sup>1</sup> largely follows the pattern of the arguments Maḍhva made against indeterminacy in the *Viṣṇutattvanirṇaya*. The assertion that nonexistent things like hares' horns cannot become the object of language seems to be self-contradictory. Someone who claims, "Nothing may be asserted of something-or-other", seems herself to be making a claim about that thing. Moreover, we clearly ascribe numerous other properties to nonexistent things in our everyday discourse; we seem to be able to meaningfully say of hares' horns that they "do not exist", that they are "not blue", and so on. If by asserting that they are *nirupākhyā* the Advaitin means to claim that nonexistent things are somehow beyond the reach of language, the argument seems to be both self-contradictory and inconsistent with the facts of our experience.

Vyāsatīrtha next assumes a cognitive interpretation of the term *nirupākhyā*. Under this explanation, nonexistent things are distinguished from illusory ones because they cannot become the object of mental states of awareness, whereas illusory ones *can*. Vyāsatīrtha again draws on Maḍhva's arguments against indeterminacy. When arguing in favour of indeterminacy, Advaitin philosophers claim that indeterminate things have the quality of "being different from what is nonexistent" (*asadvailakṣaṇya*). Yet how can the Advaitins refer to the quality of being "different from what is nonexistent" unless they have already had a cognition of what is nonexistent? The fact that they are able to use the words "different from what is *nonexistent*" intelligently demonstrates that they must have already somehow cognised what is nonexistent.<sup>37</sup> The underlying problem is that the Advaitins themselves make meaningful statements about nonexistent things in arguing for their own position, so it seems the Advaitins' philosophical arguments themselves show that we can cognise nonexistent things.

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37 *prekṣāvatkṛtāśabdaprayogasya śabdārthajñānapūrvakatvāt, asatpadaprayogārtham asajjñānasyāvaśyakatvād ity arthaḥ.* (*Nyāyāmṛtataraṅginī*, NAB, 1:78). "Since the use of a word by a considerate person must be preceded by the knowledge of the meaning of [that] word, a cognition of what does not exist is necessary in order to employ the word 'nonexistent'. This is what [Vyāsatīrtha] means."

Vyāsatīrtha's response here suffers from the same limitations as Madhva's arguments against indeterminacy, however. Even if Vyāsatīrtha's arguments establish that conscious states can be about nonexistent objects, it is still open to the Advaitins to argue that even if we can have some sort of a cognition of nonexistent things, we cannot have direct, perceptual-like cognitions of them. Vyāsatīrtha therefore proposes a second definition ( $D^2$ ) of nonexistence that takes this objection into account. According to this definition, nonexistence is the quality of "not being experienced directly" (*aparokṣato 'pratīyamānatvam*). However, Vyāsatīrtha argues that this definition applies inappropriately to things that cannot be regarded as nonexistent. Vyāsatīrtha uses the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of the sound-conducting ether as an example to show that this definition fails. Both Mādhva and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers accepted the ether into their ontology as a distinct substance. The Mādhyas accept that the ether is directly perceptible. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers, on the other hand, deny that we can ever directly perceive the ether; we can only know that it exists on the basis of inference. According to them, we need to postulate the existence of the ether as a substance because sound-tropes must have some substance that acts as their inherence-cause. So the ether is "eternally beyond the senses", according to Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers, yet it should still be regarded as a part of reality. Consequently,  $D^2$  pertains where it should not (it is "overly pervasive" [*ativyāpta*]), and as such it is not a plausible definition of nonexistence.

## 6.8 Vyāsatīrtha's critique of Madhusūdana's definition of nonexistence

Vyāsatīrtha finally turns to the definition that Madhusūdana himself defends in the *Advaitasiddhi*. Again, the definition ( $D^3$ ) is: "Not being cognised as existent in any substrate whatsoever" (*kva cid apy upādhau sattvenāpratīyamānatvam*). In the *Dvītiyamithyātvaḥṅga*, Vyāsatīrtha gives a lengthy critique of this definition. His arguments were used by Rāmācārya and Ānanda Bhaṭṭāraka when they responded to Madhusūdana's arguments. He makes the following case against the definition:

Nor can nonexistence consist in "not being liable to be cognised as existent in any substrate whatsoever", because, in the nihilistic philosophy (*śūnyavāda*) too, the property of being different from nonexistence so-defined is present both in the world and in the "silver" [superimposed on] the mother-of-pearl [and hence you have not really differentiated your position from the nihilist's point of view, as you clearly intended to do when formulating this argument for indeterminacy].

Moreover, [D<sup>3</sup> fails] because you yourself must refer *some other* “nonexistence” that is the reason for the stated absence of [the capacity to be] experienced when you argue that “If it were nonexistent, it could not be experienced”.

Moreover, [D<sup>3</sup> fails] because, given that the nonexistence that is nothing more than the absence of experience which is [according to you, the Advaitin,] absent [from the world], then the “existence” that is present in *brahman* must be nothing more than [*brahman's*] being cognised as existent[; for, existence and nonexistence are each identical with the absence of the other].

Moreover, [D<sup>3</sup> fails] because if someone is not sure that hares' horns do not exist, then the statement “There is a hare's horn” will produce a cognition in that person in just the same way as the statement “There is a cow's horn” will. [It might be objected that the hare's horn itself is indeterminate, but that is untenable;] because, in your view, too, even if the existence (*astitva*) that is superimposed [on the hare's horn] is indeterminate, the *locus* [i.e. the hare's horn itself] is simply nonexistent. And this will be discussed in [my] refutation of indeterminacy [later in the *Nyāyāmṛta*].<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, [D<sup>3</sup> fails because] because according to *śruti* itself<sup>39</sup> (i.e. the passage “Now, on this point some do say ‘In the beginning this world was simply what is nonexistent’”) there is the cognition of what does not exist as existent.<sup>40</sup>

Vyāsātīrtha's first two arguments in this passage both bear on the Advaitins' argument for indeterminacy from circumstantial implication. Recall that, according to this argument, if the mother-of-pearl did not exist, it could not be sublated; and if

<sup>38</sup> See NAB, 2:600–601 for this argument.

<sup>39</sup> Vyāsātīrtha's point is that this passage expresses the view of some people that reality originated *ex nihilo*, before going on to dismiss this view and reassert the theory that reality originates from something existent. This implies, of course, that those who hold the alternative view falsely judge something that is really existent to be nonexistent. The full passage reads: *sad eva somyedam agra āśid ekam evādvitīyam. tad dhaika āhur asad evedam agra āśid, ekam evādvitīyam. tasmād asataḥ saj jāyata. kutas tu khalu somyaivaṃ syād iti hovāca. katham asataḥ saj jāyeta. sat tv eva somyedam agra āśid ekam evādvitīyam.* (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.2.1; Olivelle, 1998: 246). Olivelle (1998: 247) translates: “In the beginning, son, this world was simply what is existent—one only, without a second. Now, on this point some do say: ‘In the beginning this world was simply what is nonexistent—one only, without a second. And from what is nonexistent was born what is existent.’ ‘But how can that possibly be?’ he continued. ‘How can what is existent be born from what is nonexistent? On the contrary, son, in the beginning this world was simply what is existent—one only, without a second’.”

<sup>40</sup> *nāpi kva cid apy upādḥau sattvenāpratiṣṭhānam asattvam, jagati śūktirūpyādaḥ caivaṃ vi-dhāsadavilakṣaṇasya śūnyavāde 'pi sattvāt; tvayāpy asac cet, na pratiyeta vadatoktāpratiṣṭhānam prati prajayakasyaivaivāsattvasya vaktavyatvāc ca; brahmaṇy aṅgikṛtāṃ yat pratipannopādḥau traikālikāṇiśedhāpratiyogitvātmakābhādhayavarūpaṃ sattvam, tadviruddhasyaivaivāsattvarūpatvāc ca. anyathāpratiṣṭhānupādḥikāsattvabhāve brahmaṇy api sattvena pratīti eva sattvaṃ syāt. yena pumsā śaśaṅgābhāvo na niścitāḥ, tasya goṣṭhāgam astīti vākyād iva śaśaṅgāgam astīti vākyād api jñānot-pattē ca. tvanmate 'pi hi tatradhyastasyāstītyānirvācyatve 'py adhiṣṭhānam asad eva; vaksyate caitadanirvācyatvabhāge. tad dhaika āhur asad evedam agra āśid iti śrutyāpy asataḥ sattvena pratīteś ca.* (NAB, 1:67).



it were nonexistent it could not be cognised. The second part of the argument is implicitly intended to refute the nihilist philosopher who denies the reality of the world altogether. In doing so, it should articulate a meaningful distinction between the Advaitin's and nihilist's positions about the metaphysical status of the world.

The first problem cited by Vyāsātīrtha is that if the Advaitin goes on to accept  $D^3$  as the definition of nonexistence, then the argument from circumstantial implication does not really demonstrate any difference between the Advaitin and the nihilist on this point. Nihilist philosophers already accept that the world has the absence of nonexistence defined as “*not* being experienced as existent in any substrate”. For, they accept that we *do* experience the world as being existent, because, like the Advaitins, they accept that it has practical/transactional existence. What the nihilist really accepts is that the world does not exist in the sense that it *lacks an essential nature* (*niḥsvarūpatva*). So if they intend to refute the nihilist's position, and to show that their position is truly different from it, the Advaitins must prove that the world has the absence of nonexistence defined as *niḥsvarūpatva*.<sup>41</sup>

In this passage, Vyāsātīrtha claims that there is a further reason that  $D^3$  is incompatible with the argument from *arthāpatti*. He again focuses on the second part of the argument, which states: “If the ‘silver’ were nonexistent, then [it] could not be experienced” (*asac cet, na pratiyeta*). This part of the argument could be understood as a case of “hypothetical reasoning” (*tarka*). A *tarka* is structured as:

$$p \rightarrow q$$

where *p* is the hypothesis and *q* is its consequent. This relationship holds since *q* pervades *p*; that is, *q* is found wherever *p* is found. A *tarka* in this context is essentially

41 Śrinivāsaśrīrtha explains: *śūnyavādinā jagato 'sattvam aṅgīkṛtam iti tadvailakṣaṇyaṃ tvayā sādhanīyam. tena ca niḥsvarūpatvam evāsattvam aṅgīkṛtam iti tadvailakṣaṇyaṃ eva tvayā sādhanīyam, na tu kva cid apy upādhanau sattvenāpratiyamānatvam asattvam ity aṅgīkṛtya tadvailakṣaṇyaṃ; tathātve siddhasāadhanatā syāt, tenāpi sāmvyrtasattvāṅgīkāreṇaitādṛśāsadvailakṣaṇyaṃ aṅgīkāraḍ iti bhāvaḥ.* (*Nyāyāmṛtaprakāśa*, NAB, 1:90–91.) “The nihilist accepts that the world is nonexistent, hence you[, the Advaitin,] must establish that [the world] is different from [nonexistence *as it is defined by them*]. And [the nihilist] accepts that ‘nonexistence’ is simply the quality of ‘lacking essence’ (*niḥsvarūpatva*), hence you[, the Advaitin,] must establish that [the world] is different from *that* [that is, from ‘nonexistence’ defined as ‘the quality of lacking an essence’]; [you] cannot simply accept that ‘nonexistence’ is the state of ‘not being cognised as existent in some substrate or other’ and then [establish] that [the world] lacks that [quality]. If that were the case then you would merely be establishing something that is already accepted [by the nihilist]. For, since [the nihilist] too accepts that [the ‘silver’] has practical (*sāmvyṛta*) existence, they already accept that [it] has the property of being different from what is nonexistent, where what is nonexistent is [‘something that cannot be experienced as existent in some substrate or other’].”

a *reductio ad absurdum*, since *q* is an untenable consequence. A *tarka* thus serves to rule out *p*.

In the *tarka* under discussion ("If the 'silver' were nonexistent, it could not be experienced"), the hypothesis is that the "silver" in this episode of perceptual error is altogether nonexistent. The consequent is that the silver cannot be experienced. However, Vyāsātīrtha argues that in a *tarka* the consequent must be something different from the hypothesis. In other words, *q* must contain something that is not already mentioned or implied in *p*. For example, suppose I make the argument "If this were a cheetah, then it would be fast". The subject of this *tarka* is the cheetah, and the consequent clearly states something that is not included in the concept of "being a cheetah". In the *tarka* at hand, however, given the Advaitin's formal definition of nonexistence, the hypothesis must be that the silver is "not subject to the property of being experienced as existent in some substrate" (*kva cid apy upādhausattvenāpratiyamānatvam*). The consequent of the *tarka* is, however, that the silver "would/could not be experienced". In that case, the alleged consequent surely amounts to nothing more than the hypothesis itself!

Vyāsātīrtha further argues that D<sup>3</sup> suffers from the flaw of "under-pervasion" (*avyāpti*). This means that it fails to apply to at least certain nonexistent things. Let us suppose that there is a young child who is entirely unacquainted with the species hare. The child would not realise that hares never have horns. Accordingly, if someone played a trick on the child and told him that hares sometimes have horns, then the child would cognise "the hare's horn" as being existent. The child would take the "hare's horn" to be existent in just the same way that they would take a cow's horn to exist upon being told that "cows have horns". According to Śrīnivāsātīrtha, what normally stops us from having a cognition of nonexistent entities is that we are aware of the nonexistence of the object in question. In the child's case, however, this impediment is absent, and there is no reason why the cognition should not arise.<sup>42</sup> Vyāsātīrtha strengthens his case by a practical observation. When a person who

42 Śrīnivāsātīrtha comments: *sattvenāpratiyamānatvarūpāsattvalakṣaṇasya śaśaśṅge 'vyāptir ity āha—yeneṭi. jñānotpatteḥ, sattvaparakārajñānotpatteḥ. tathā ca sattvenāpratiyamānatvam nāstīti bhāvaḥ. nanu śaśaśṅgam astīti vākyaṇ na śaśaśṅgastitvaparakāraṇ jñānam utpadyate, śaśaśṅgaṃ nāstīti ayogyatāniścayasya tatra pratibandhakatvād ity ata āha yena pumṣeti.* (*Nyāyāmṛtaprakāśa*, NAB, 1:91.) "Realising that the definition of nonexistence as 'not being liable to be experienced as existent [in some substrate or other]' fails to apply to the hare's horn, [Vyāsātīrtha] says: 'By which' (*yena*). By the words, 'The arising of a cognition', [Vyāsātīrtha] means: 'The arising of a cognition that has existence as its predication content'. The idea is that, this being the case, [the hare's horn] is not subject to the quality of 'not being liable to be experienced as real [in some substrate or other]'. *Objection*: The statement, 'There is a hare's horn' will not give rise to a cognition that has as its predication content the existence of the hare's horn, since it will be blocked by the ascertainment of the impossibility of such a statement in the form, 'There is no hare's horn'. With

lacks the knowledge to dismiss a false statement hears one, we often observe that they act upon it. For example, the child who was not aware that hares do not have horns might try to find the nonexistent hare's horn out in the world.<sup>43</sup>

Vyāsātīrtha anticipates that the Advaitin could argue that the hare's horn, in that case, is *indeterminate*, and not nonexistent. Vyāsātīrtha concedes that the Advaitin could consistently argue that the *existence* which is falsely superimposed on the hare's horn when the child believes that the hare's horn exists could itself be indeterminate. However, he observes that the Advaitins themselves are committed to the idea that there is a fixed domain of things that we term “nonexistent”, which can be distinguished from illusory ones. If we start accepting that things we usually label “nonexistent” are in fact “illusory”, then what exactly is it that we are distinguishing illusory things from? If the Advaitin takes up this line of argument, he risks

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this in mind [Vyāsātīrtha] says: ‘By the person [who is not aware that the hare's horn does not exist]’ (*yena pumsā*).’

43 Rāmācārya goes into more detail about the linguistic questions surrounding the argument. How is it that a false statement can give rise to a cognition on the part of one who hears it? Rāmācārya's answer is that even though false statements lack the crucial syntactic feature of “consistency” (*yogyatā*), they nevertheless create the *illusion* of such a quality in the unwitting and produce a cognition of their referent: *na hy atra jabagaḍadaś ity ādinirarthakeṣv iva padārthadhīr eva vā, kuṇḍam ajājinam ity ādyapārthakeṣv ivānvayadhīr vā nāsti. viparītabodhakeṣu yogyatābhāve 'pi yogyatābhramenākāṅkṣājñānena ca vākyaṛthajñānotpatter anubhavāt; anyathā pravṛttyāder ayo-gāt. tathā ca sattvenāpratīyamānatvaṃ śaśaśṛṅgādāv asiddham ity arthaḥ. nanu śaśaśṛṅgam astīti vākyaḥbhasāt śaśe 'nirvacanīyaśṛṅgaviṣayako bhrama utpadyate, na tv asadviṣayakaḥ sa ity āha tva-nmate 'pīti. anirvācyavādināḥ tava mate 'pi tatrādhyastasyāstītyanirvācyatve 'pi śaśaśṛṅgam asad iti vākya iva śaśaśṛṅgam astīti vākye 'pi śaśaśṛṅgaśabdenāsata eva pratīter ity arthaḥ. (Nyāyāmṛ-tataraṅginī, NAB, 1:78.)* “For, the [statement, ‘The hare's horn does not exist’] fails to generate neither (1) a cognition of something, as in the case of meaningless [strings of sounds] such as *jabagaḍadaś*, nor (2) a cognition of syntactical connection (*anvaya*) as in senseless sentences such as ‘.. basin, goat's skin ...’ and so on. For, in the case of [statements] that represent something contrary to the way it really is, even though there is no consistency (*yogyatā*), [we] see that, through the *illusion* of consistency and the knowledge of expectancy (*ākāṅkṣā*), there is a knowledge of the meaning (*artha*) of the sentence. Otherwise, it would be impossible that [the person who believes the false statement] would act [upon it], for instance. And so [nonexistence defined as] ‘not being liable to be experienced as real [in any substrate whatsoever]’ is *not* established in the case of the hare's horn and so on. This is what [Vyāsātīrtha] means. *Objection*: The pseudo-statement ‘There is a hare's horn’ gives rise to a false cognition that has for its object an *indeterminate* horn present in [a *real*] hare; [the false cognition in question] does *not* have something nonexistent for its object. With this in mind, [Vyāsātīrtha] says, ‘In your view too’ (*tvanmate 'pi*). For you[, the Advaitin,] subscribe to the doctrine of indeterminacy; hence in your view, too, even if the existence (*astīti*) that is superimposed [on the hare's horn] is indeterminate, the word ‘hare's horn’ gives rise to a cognition of *what is nonexistent* [when it is used] in the sentence ‘The hare's horn exists’, just as it does [when it is used] in the statement ‘The hare's horn is nonexistent.’”

collapsing the distinction between these two domains, but this is a distinction that Advaitin philosophers must accept.

For all of these reasons, Vyāsātīrtha argues that we cannot accept that nonexistence is “not being cognised as though existent in some location or other”. This is ultimately the definition of nonexistence that Madhusūdāna will accept in the *Advaitasiddhi* when defending indeterminacy against the charge of contradiction. In arguing against this definition of nonexistence, Vyāsātīrtha thus laid the basis for his Mādhva commentators’ response to Madhusūdāna in their work on the *Prathamamithyātvabhāṅga*. Many of the relevant passages are found in the translation of this portion of the *Nyāyāmṛta* given in Chapter 9.

## 6.9 Conclusion

This chapter and the previous one have sketched some of the main points of Vyāsātīrtha’s arguments against Ānandabodha’s inferences to prove that the world is an illusion. This chapter has focused more closely on Vyāsātīrtha’s critique of indeterminacy. According to Vyāsātīrtha, indeterminacy fails because the main argument Advaitin philosophers used to defend it has an inadmissible premise. Advaitin philosophers argue that we cannot conclude that the “silver” we mistake mother-of-pearl for is nonexistent, because we cannot experience nonexistent things. Vyāsātīrtha, following Jayatīrtha, argues that we can have perception-like experiences of things that do not exist. In the mother-of-pearl/silver illusion, for instance, a flawed sense-faculty which is really in connection with the mother-of-pearl misrepresents its object as being “silver”. It is true that the false perception of “silver” is assisted by a mental impression of a piece of silver we have experienced at some other time and place, but this remotely existing piece of silver is not the object of the illusion, as some Naiyāyikas suggest. Rather, the “silver” that appears in our cognition is simply nonexistent.

Moreover, Vyāsātīrtha follows Madhva, Jayatīrtha, and Viṣṇudāsācārya in arguing that indeterminacy is a disguised contradiction. Vyāsātīrtha holds that existence and nonexistence are fully contradictory properties because each is identical with the absence of the other. Proving of a thing that it has the absence of both existence and nonexistence is just the same as proving that it both exists and does not exist. In response, Madhusūdāna rejected Vyāsātīrtha’s definitions of existence and nonexistence. Existence and nonexistence, he argued, are mutually exclusive, but not jointly exhaustive, properties. Proving that the world has the absence of both is no more contradictory than claiming that a camel is neither a cow nor a horse. Vyāsātīrtha was already aware of this definition in the *Nyāyāmṛta*, and he had sought to refute it. To say that nonexistent things cannot be cognised as though they were existent does

not allow us to draw a meaningful distinction between “existent”/“illusory” entities. Under certain conditions we take “hares’ horns” to be existent things, so there is no real distinction between the “silver” we mistake mother-of-pearl for or the flower that grows in the sky. Both are simply nonexistent, and the words “illusory” (*mithyā*) and “nonexistent” (*asat*) mean one and the same thing.

The next chapter of this volume gives the background of the numerous technical inferential flaws that Vyāsātīrtha cites in the *Prathamamithyātvabhaṅga* against the doctrine of indeterminacy. His text draws strongly on the arguments made by Gaṅgeśa in the chapter of the *Tattvacintāmaṇi* dealing with the universal-negative inference (the *Kevalavyatirekivāda*).