

**Nyāya Conception of
Nirvikalpaka-Pratyakṣa: A Critical
Study**

*A dissertation submitted to the University of Hyderabad in Partial
Fulfilment of the Requirement for the Award of the Degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

IN
PHILOSOPHY

SUBMITTED BY

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CERTIFICATE



This is to certify that the dissertation titled “**Nyāya Conception of Nirvikalpa-Pratyakṣa: A Critical Study**” submitted by **Medi Chaitanya**, bearing the Reg No. 19HPHL01, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Philosophy, is a bona fide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance.

This dissertation has not been submitted previously in part or full to this University or any other Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

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DECLARATION

I, Medi Chaitanya, hereby declare that this dissertation titled “**Nyāya Conception of Nirvikalpa-Pratyakṣa: A Critical Study**” carried out by me under the supervision of Prof. C. A. Tomy, Department of Philosophy, University of Hyderabad, is an authentic piece of research work and I declare that to the best of my knowledge that no part of this dissertation was earlier submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or any other similar title of recognition to any university or institute.

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cakewalk. However, Shinod's idea – *writing a page every day* – that kept my sanity intact. To that idea and many more chai imbued fun sessions at the students' canteen, I'm grateful to him. Throughout the second wave of the pandemic, I was a lone bird in the department's scholars' room. But Lenka sir's penchant for taking a snack in the canteen at 6 pm allowed me to be in his company for some time. Though Lenka sir usually drools over the Odia-style snacks, I couldn't stomach aloo's pervasiveness in every damn thing they make. During one of those days, we talked about how he approached the conclusion chapter of his M.Phil. on "Grice's theory of meaning", and that paved way to write the conclusion of my work in a palatable way. To snacks and the walks that came with it, I thank Lenka, sir. (It is high time the canteen guys seriously thought about non-Odiya people too.)

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To A ...

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The title of this dissertation alludes to the recent debate that has taken place among the contemporary scholars, Arindam Chakrabarti (2000, 2001, 2004), Stephen Phillips (2001, 2004), Amit Chaturvedi (2020), Maitra (2017), and Monima Chada (2001, 2006) about the status of *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* (non-conceptual perception) in Nyāya philosophy. Some have argued against the existence of *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa*. In contrast, others claim that the *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* has an epistemic role in the Navya-Nyāya (new or the later Nyāya school) theory of perception and presents arguments to support their claims. From their discussion, it appears that some of them were using the Western philosophical categories to make sense of a classical Indian philosophical problem, and that their take on the Nyāya notion of *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* is informed by their understanding of the Kantian scholarship about the debate on conceptualism and non-conceptualism. I wonder whether the reading of Western categories into the Nyāya theory of perception can be justified.¹ Moreover, though there has been an

¹I am not saying that one should not use a Western conceptual framework in understanding the Indian philosophical problems. For that matter, the talk about direct-realism and indirect realism as such cannot be found in the Indian philosophical texts. But we barrow those particular concepts to explain more or less the same formulation of metaphysical positions in the Indian systems. But when I express my concern about using the Western conceptual framework, I only meant that one should render the entire system consistently if one uses a Western framework. One cannot cherry-pick some details while neglecting its undesired implications on the overall system. When some people have

increase in the works on the philosophy of perception, there is little consensus about the nature of non-conceptual states of awareness and their relation with conceptual perception. By continuing the ongoing discussion about the nature of perception and its mechanism, this dissertation aims to give a detailed account of perception, especially *nirvikalpa*² perception, in simple terms. The distinction between *nirvikalpa* and *savikalpa* perception (conceptual perception) are accepted among other schools (Buddhists, some Vedāntins, and Grammarians). But, it was only among the recent scholars of Nyāya philosophy that there is no agreement about the nature of *nirvikalpa* perception and its place in the system. Hence the dissertation primarily focuses on the Nyāya conception of *nirvikalpa* perception. To give some context to the debate, I will first talk about perception in general and focus on how different schools have understood the nature of perception.

Pratyakṣa (perception) is defined in two ways in Nyāya philosophy. First, as a reliable source of knowledge, in terms of how perceptual cognition is caused; second, in terms of the nature of the cognition or knowledge produced. The definition in the root text of the tradition (*Nyāya-Sūtra* of Gautama)³, *perception is a cognition which is produced from the contact of the sense-organs with their respective objects*, is an example for the former. In contrast, Navya-Nyāya definition- *perception is an instance of immediate or the direct knowledge (sākṣāt kāriva)*- falls into the second category.

used the Kantian framework to make sense of the debate concerning the *nirvikalpa* perception, they have emphasised some details and did not paid full attention to the consequences of applying it to the overall system. I believe that they are not sensitive to the finer details that separate the Kantian framework from that of Nyāya philosophy. For example, the distinction between the higher-order and lower-order faculties, which play an important role in understanding the nature of cognition in Kant, is not found in the Nyāya philosophy. These specific details will make a difference in understanding a particular system comprehensively.

²Throughout the dissertation, *nirvikalpaka* and *nirvikalpa* are used as synonymous words. The same is true with the terms *savikalpaka* and *savikalpa*.

³Gaṅgānātha Jhā, ed. *The Nyāya Sūtras of Gautama with The Bhāṣya of Vātsyāyana And The Vārtika of Uddyotakara*. Vol. I. Motilal Banarsidass, 1912-1919.

In general, Naiyāyikas divides perception into two types/stages, namely, *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* and *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa*. *Nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* is “the knowledge of an object, devoid of association of name, generic property and others, which does not involve any qualification and is without a qualifier”⁴. In contrast, *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa* is the cognition of an object as qualified by certain attributes. There was a long-standing debate about their exact nature and validity of *nirvikalpaka* perception in Indian philosophical systems. There are two extreme views available in the literature. One claims that all perceptions are *savikalpa* (Grammarians), and the other holds *nirvikalpa pratyakṣa* as the only valid knowledge (Buddhists and some Vedāntins). On the other hand, Nyāya philosophy takes a middle ground by accepting both *nirvikalpa* and *savikalpa* perceptions as valid sources of knowledge.

The notion of non-conceptual perception explicitly appeared in the works of the Buddhist philosopher Dignāga.⁵ He characterised perception as devoid of any conceptualisation (*kalpanāpoḍha*), meaning that the perception of an object does not involve the attribution of any property, class, etc. For him, all our perception is non-conceptual in nature, and the act of infiltrating our bare experience with concepts or categories results in the robbing of the true nature of reality grasped in the experience. This way of characterising perception as fully non-conceptual goes against the spirit of the *Nyāya-Sūtra* definition of *pratyakṣa*. *Nyāya-Sūtra* (1.1.4) defines perception as “a cognition which is produced from the contact of a sense-organ with an object, and which is non-linguistic, non-erroneous, and *determinate* in nature”⁶ [emphasis added] (*indriyārthasannikarṣotpan-najñānām avyapadeśyam avyabhicāri vyavasāyāt-*

⁴V. P. Bhatta, ed. *The Pratyakṣa Khaṇḍa Of The Tattvacintāmaṇi (With Introduction, Sanskrit Text, Translation and Explanation)*. Vol. II. Eastern Book Linkers, 2012.

⁵Ernst Steinkellner, ed. *Pramāṇasamuccaya of Dignāga, Dignāga's Pramāṇasamuccaya, Chapter 1. A hypothetical reconstruction with the help of the two Tibetan translations on the basis of the hitherto known Sanskrit fragments and the linguistic materials gained from Jinendrabuddhi's Tikā*. Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2005. URL: https://www.oeaw.ac.at/fileadmin/Institute/IKGA/PDF/digitaes/dignaga_PS_1.pdf.

⁶Jhā, *The Nyāya Sūtras of Gautama with The Bhāṣya of Vātsyāyana And The Vārṭika of Uddyotakara*.

makam pratyakṣam). The resultant perceptual cognition (*jñāñā*) must satisfy the following three conditions:

1. it should be devoid of error,
2. it is qualified or determined by concepts or categories, and lastly,
3. it should be non-verbalizable.

In this study, I will only be taking up one characteristic of perceptual cognition, namely that it is non-linguistic/non-verbalizable (*avyapadeśyam*), and will not be focussing on the other two features, namely that it is non-erroneous (*avyabhicāri*), and that it is determinate (*vyavasāyātmakam*). The reasons for this omission is as follows: for Naiyāyikas, perception has to be non-erroneous and it is true for *nirvikalpa* perception as well. And similarly *nirvikalpa* perception cannot be determine and hence *vyavasāyātmakam* is not applicable to *nirvikalpa* perception at all.

Avyapadeśyam can be interpreted primarily in two ways in the present context. It either means that perception does not include a word as its cause or object, or perceptual cognition cannot be expressed in language. If we conceive *avyapadeśyam* in the first sense, it means that word (*śabda*) does not produce the perception. By including *avyapadeśyam* as one of the features of perceptual cognition, Naiyāyikas acknowledge the possibility of perceptual states that can be concept-laden but non-linguistic. This position can be seen as going against Bhartṛhari's view of cognition. For Bhartṛhari, the word (*śabda*) is the source of all the knowledge, and every perceptual state is necessarily mediated through language. Hence within his system, there is no possibility of having a perceptual state which is concept-laden or linguistic. On the other hand, if *avyapadeśyam* is understood as the inability to express the perceptual cognition in language, then there is no involvement of concepts or categories. In *savikalpaka* perception, conceptualization takes place when concepts or categories are applied to

cognition. Verbalisation of cognition requires concepts or categories. Since concepts are present in *savikalpa* perception, therefore verbalisation of cognition is possible only in the case of *savikalpa* perception.

Much of the initial discussion in the *Sūtra* commentaries have grappled with the question of interpreting the concept or word *avyapadeśyam*, giving rise to the debate around the relationship between language and cognition in general, and language and non-conceptual cognition in particular.⁷ Vātsyāyana, the first commentator on the *Nyāya-sūtra*, has interpreted the feature *avyapadeśyam* to refute the grammarian's thesis. He argues that the grammarian's view of perception, *a cognition that is necessarily mediated by language*, is unjustified. He argues that our ability to verbalize what is being perceived need not necessarily mean that cognition is mediated through language. He believes that perceptual cognition takes place independent of whether one knows the name of the object that is being given to the senses. In other words, he argues that language does not play any operative role in the process of cognition. However, it comes handy only when one wants to communicate to others.

Jayanta Bhaṭṭa's *Nyāyamañjarī*⁸ has a detailed account of different interpretations of the word *avyapadeśyam*. He has enlisted different interpretations given by his predecessor and has developed his own account of the same. He argues that Vātsyāyana's interpretation of the *avyapadeśyam* has focussed on differentiating valid perceptual cognition from the cognition which is produced or mediated through language. According to Bhaṭṭa, another interpretation, which was attributed to teachers (*ācāryāḥ*), focusses on excluding the cognitions which arises from two sources (*ubhayaja-jñāna*), from both sense-object contact as well as verbal testimony. He thinks that the feature, *avyapadeśyam*, must apply to both cognition, *nirvikalpa*, and *savikalpa* perceptions.

⁷For a more detailed historical account, please see Chaturvedi(2018, 36-75). Chakraborty(2010) also gave a broader account of *nirvikalpa* perception in different philosophical systems.

⁸Janaki Vallabha Bhattacharya, ed. *Jayanta Bhaṭṭa's Nyāyamañjarī [The Compendium of Indian Speculative Logic]*. Vol. 1. Motilal Banarsidass, 1978.

According to him, *nirvikalpa* and *savikalpa* perceptions differ with respect to the causal conditions. He says “*savikalpaka* cognitions are preceded by a *nirvikalpaka* perception that triggers the memory of a relevant name, whereas a *nirvikalpaka* perception arises at the first moment of sense-object contact.”⁹ It is argued that the distinction between *nirvikalpa* and *savikalpa* perception was first explicitly figured in Vācaspati Miśra’s *Tātparyatikā*¹⁰, a commentary on the *Nyāya-sūtra*. He goes against Jayanta Bhaṭṭa’s interpretation and argues that the qualifiers *avyapadeśyam* and *vyavasāyāt-makam* are used in the definition to differentiate between two types of perception *nirvikalpa* and *savikalpa*. He argues that a *nirvikalpa* perception presents its objects in a pre-predicative, non-propositional manner.

Though Vācaspati has initiated the ongoing debate on *nirvikalpa* perception, it was Gaṅgeśa who tried to give systematic proofs for non-conceptual perception. In his *Pratyakṣa-Khaṇḍa* of his work, *Tattva-Cintāmaṇi*¹¹, Gaṅgeśa developed a general causal rule, *that all qualificative awareness-states are caused by a prior awareness of a qualifier*, as proof for the existence of *nirvikalpa* perception. However, one of the contemporary objections against *nirvikalpa-pratyakṣa* is that it has got only explanatory role, that *nirvikalpa* perception provides the qualifier required for subsequent cognition i.e., to the *savikalpa* perception. Apart from its explanatory role, there is no phenomenological evidence to establish its existence in the perceptual process. On the other hand, others claim that the *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* has an epistemic role in the Navya-Nyāya theory of perception because it identifies elements in the descriptions of objects. The argument is that we cannot identify an object unless we already possess

⁹Amit Chaturvedi. “Concepts, Attention, And The Contents of Conscious Visua Experience”. PhD thesis. The University Of Hawai’i At Manoa, May 2018, p. 66.

¹⁰Anantalal Thakur, ed. *Nyāyavārtika-Tātparyatikā of Vācaspati Miśra*. Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1996.

¹¹Bhatta, *The Pratyakṣa Khaṇḍa Of The Tattvacintāmaṇi (With Introduction, Sanskrit Text, Translation and Explanation)*.

some information about it. In other words, it means that we cannot descriptively identify A as F unless we are acquainted with F-hood.

The recent debate over the status of *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* has given impetus to rethink about the central issues in Nyāya theory of perception. Some scholars have provided the reasons to eliminate the non-conceptual perception entirely from Nyāya philosophy and suggested to view all perception as conceptual, that is to say, we perceive things as qualified. For Chakrabarti, this concept of *nirvikalpa* perception comes dangerously close to awareness without any object directedness, and it goes against the Nyāya spirit of direct realism. While for others, there is nothing wrong with *nirvikalpa* perception and they have provided reasons for its place in the Nyāya philosophy.

Given the above opposing standpoints, my aim is modest in the dissertation. I will not be dealing with everything that is alluded to in the introduction. Instead, I will focus on the three problems that are seminal to the debate concerning the Nyāya conception of *nirvikalpa* perception. Once these issues are explained clearly, I believe that there is a possibility of settling the dispute concerning the nature of *nirvikalpa* perception in the Nyāya philosophy. Those three specific issues are, the question of the nature and the existence of *nirvikalpa* perception, the epistemic access to *nirvikalpa* perception, and finally, the relation between Nyāya realism and non-conceptual perception.

First, I will try to provide an analysis of the nature of the *nirvikalpa* perception and explain its nature. I will outline Gaṅgeśa's proof for *nirvikalpa* perception and will try to understand his general causal rule. At the same time, two of the prominent counterexamples, which claimed to undercut the Gaṅgeśa's causal rule, will be discussed. I will enlist the possible responses to these counterexamples from a Nyāya point of view. All these things will be discussed in the first chapter.

The next chapter shall primarily discuss epistemic access to *nirvikalpa* perception. The main agenda of the second chapter is this: how is one aware of *nirvikalpa* perception? It will talk about how first-order cognition is revealed to the knowing subject. It shall examine and analyze a particular claim that it is through inference that one comes to know *nirvikalpa* perception. I will attempt to show that the above view is unfounded and informed by their (mis)reading of *nirvikalpa* perception. Lastly, I will propose the possibility of knowing *nirvikalpa* perception through *anuvyavasāya* (cognition of cognition).

In the last chapter, I will make an effort to justify the place of *nirvikalpa* perception in the Nyāya system without jeopardizing its commitment to direct realism. This chapter outlines a broad picture of metaphysical realism and will talk about perceptual realism. I will sketch out Nyāya's conception of direct realism and defend its criterion of reality from the onslaught of possible counter-arguments. I will try to support the view that *nirvikalpa* perception presents the world as it is and also explain the phenomenon of illusory cognitions.

Chapter 2

Gaṅgeśa's Proof for the Existence of *Nirvikalpa-Pratyakṣa*

This chapter aims to present the arguments put forward by the Nyāya philosophers, Gaṅgeśa in particular, for the existence of *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa*. The first section focuses on the general introduction of perceptual experience in Nyāya philosophy and talks about perception as a reliable source of knowledge. It portrays the process of perceptual cognition and lists out the different kinds of perception that are accepted in the Nyāya system. Once the preliminary remarks about the perception are laid out, the second section discusses the *nirvikalpa* perception. This section presents Gaṅgeśa's definition of *nirvikalpa* perception. It goes on to discuss at length Gaṅgeśa's proof for the existence of *nirvikalpa* perception. Once the Gaṅgeśa's arguments are laid out, it will carefully examine and engage with them. In the last section, two of the prominent counterexamples, which are claimed to undercut the Gaṅgeśa's causal rule will be discussed along with the possible responses to these counterexamples from a Nyāya point of view.

2.1 Perceptual Experience in Nyāya Philosophy

Nyāya Philosophy defines *pratyakṣa pramāṇa* (perception as a source of valid knowledge) as a reliable mechanism that produces awareness episodes that are always true. These awareness episodes are also called *pramā*, cognition episodes, whose truth value is always guaranteed. In an ordinary perception, the sense organ comes into contact with the respective object, producing an awareness episode. Some contemporary Nyāya scholars have interpreted the Nyāya notion of the perceptual process using Kant's account of cognition.¹ Their interpretation runs as follows: when the sense organs are in contact with the external objects, one is furnished with innumerable discrete fleeting sense impressions. But one would not make sense of these mere sensations if they are not appropriately characterized. Hence, there should be a synthesizing or unifying principle to make sense of the incoming sensations, and this job of synthesizing is done by *manas* or mind. Until and unless one categorizes the incoming sensory impressions into a particular system of things, one would not make sense of what she has perceived in the very first place. In that way, *manas* (mind) works as a synthesizing principle.

Apart from making the initial torrents of sensory impressions into a coherent experience, mind also functions as an attentional marker.² The mind acts as a marker in the sense that the mind works as an organ governing our selective attention. In everyday life, we come across many phenomena. However, we are only aware of those things experienced or come under the focus of the experience. If one were to perceive any object, the mind must be attentive to it. We do not perceive things when we do not pay attention even though there is a sense-object contact with the external objects. For example, if someone were passing by a moving car and be pricked by sharp grass,

¹Monima Chadha. "Perceptual Cognition: A Nyāya-Kantian Approach". In: *Philosophy East and West* 51.2 (Apr. 2001), pp. 197–209.

²Jonardon Ganeri. *Attention, Not Self*. 1st. Oxford University Press, 2017.

one would not make any fuss about the pricking as her attention is turned towards the speeding car, but not on the prickly grass. Since the mind does not attend to the prickly grass despite having the sense-object contact, we are not aware of it. So attention plays the crucial role of focussing, and in that way, *manas* also plays an important role in the whole perceptual process.

In general, Naiyāyikas divides *pratyakṣa* into two stages, namely, *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* (non-conceptual perception) and *savikalpaka-pratyakṣa* (concept-laden perception). *Nirvikalpa pratyakṣa* is the knowledge of an object not characterized in any way, whereas *savikalpa-pratyakṣa* is the cognition of an object as qualified by certain attributes. *Savikalpa* cognition is the cognition of an object as characterized by some qualities, and it is at this stage where the determination of an object as belonging to a particular universal, class, etc., is recognised. *Savikalpa* cognition is also known as qualificative cognition, whereas *nirvikalpa* cognition is known as non-qualificative cognition. At the *savikalpa* stage, the incoming data of experience is compared and contrasted with that of past experiences and memory to classify it under some category. For example, when we perceive an object *A* with a qualifying feature *F*, then to recognise *A* as *F*, we need to have an acquaintance with the attribute *F* itself. Without knowing this qualifier feature beforehand, we would not be making any sense of *A*. Past experiences and memory help us to recognise this particular feature to perceive the object *A* as *F*.

Much perception is informed by memory but not all. An experience of something *A* as an *F* for the very first time requires the indeterminate perception of the qualifier *F*. Being a direct or naive realist, Naiyāyikas claims that at one point in time, perception must come into the picture of how we acquire knowledge of the external world directly. One must perceive these qualifying features directly and that through perception. With that in mind, Gaṅgeśa claims that when someone perceives an object

or thing for the very first time, then she can rely neither on the past experience nor on the memory to recognise that particular object as qualified by a certain attribute. For example, when one has never seen a tree in her life, then she cannot depend on her previous experience of seeing the tree for identifying the currently perceived object as a tree, nor could depend on the memory of a previously seen tree for recognising the presented object as a tree. In both cases, we do not identify the tree as qualified by treehood since we were never acquainted with the qualifier treehood. Therefore, the prior acquaintance with the treehood requires seeing the present object as a tree, which must come from perception itself. This prior cognition of the qualifier is not a determinate perception, and it should be unqualified in nature. This prior cognition of qualifiers is provided by the *nirvikalpa* perceptual cognition. This cognition arises immediately after the sense organ comes in contact with the object and immediately prior to the qualificative cognition. Hence, it is argued that Naiyāyikas postulate *nirvikalpa* perception because not all prior knowledge of qualifiers comes from either memory or previous experience.³ Before we embark on Gaṅgeśa's proof for the existence of *nirvikalpa* perception, let us first look at his definition of it and problems with some rendering of this particular definition.

³This way of interpretation makes the distinction between *nirvikalpa* and *savikalpa* is redundant. It is only a matter of being accustomed to things. If you are accustomed to something, then that will be considered as *savikalpa* perception. If not, then that will be called *nirvikalpa* perception. Let us suppose that I am seeing the tree for the first time. With the first time perception, I have now acquainted myself with the tree and treehood because it comes from the sensory experience. When I see the tree next time, my memory should help me in recognizing the tree. Here mind only works as an aid in the identification of the already perceived object. According to this interpretation, even if I do not have the object, I should recognize the object. For the first time, if I could see both the tree and treehood, then by the same logic, I should recognize it the second time. Then what is the need for *savikalpa* perception? What is the role of *savikalpa* in the perceptual process?

2.2 Gaṅgeśa's Definition of *Nirvikalpa-Pratyakṣa*

Gaṅgeśa has given a working definition of *nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* in the *Pratyakṣa-Khaṇḍa* of his work, *Tattva-Cintāmaṇi*. While outlining the kinds of perceptions, he defines *nirvikalpa pratyakṣa* as follows:

That such a perceptual knowledge or perception is two-fold as indeterminate and determinate. Between them, the perceptual knowledge, which is devoid of association of name, generic property, and others, and which does not involve any qualification and is without a qualifier, is indeterminate knowledge.⁴ (*tac ca pratyakṣam dvi-vidham nirvikalpakaṁ savikalpakaṁ ca iti, tatra nāma-jātyādi-yojanā-rahitaṁ vaisiṣṭyān-avagāhi niṣprakāraṁ nirvikalpakaṁ*)

The perception of a particular object does not involve any attribution of names or properties to it. We can minimally say that we are aware of “something” or “some being” at this stage. This way of understanding the perceptual awareness is similar to that of Dignāga's notion of perception “as being essentially devoid of conceptualization (*kalpanāpodha*), which is to say that the perception of a particular object does not involve any attribution of names or properties to it”⁵ (*nāma-jātyādi-yojanā*). However, there is a fundamental difference between Nyāya conception of non-conceptual perception and Buddhist's notion of perceptual awareness, and this difference is grounded in their metaphysical commitments. For Buddhists, only particulars (*svalakṣaṇas*) are real entities, and universals are constructions of the mind. To them, to perceive the reality is to perceive the particulars, which is possible only through the *pratyakṣa*

⁴Bhatta, *The Pratyakṣa Khaṇḍa Of The Tattvacintāmaṇi (With Introduction, Sanskrit Text, Translation and Explanation)*, p. 755.

⁵Steinkellner, *Pramāṇasamuccaya of Dignāga, Dignāga's Pramāṇasamuccaya, Chapter 1. A hypothetical reconstruction with the help of the two Tibetan translations on the basis of the hitherto known Sanskrit fragments and the linguistic materials gained from Jinendrabuddhi's Tikā*.

pramāṇa. However, Naiyāyikas consider both particulars and universals as real entities, and universals reside in particulars itself. We perceive particular as well as universal at the same time. So, *nirvikalpa* perception cannot be mere cognition of a particular as such. If universal is not presented at *nirvikalpa* perception, then its knowledge in the subsequent awareness becomes inexplicable.⁶ By stressing too much on this apparent similarity between Buddhist perception and Nyāya *nirvikalpa* perception, one may not do justice to the nature of Nyāya's notion of *nirvikalpa* perceptual states. The given definition also suggests that at this stage of perception, we are neither aware of its quality nor are we able to distinguish it from others objects.

We can make sense of *nirvikalpa* perception more clearly by comparing and contrasting it with *savikalpa* perception. Matilal has rightly pointed out that *savikalpaka* perceptions are instances of "seeing-as"⁷. In seeing something as a tree, a concept-laden perception state presents the property of treehood as being a predicate (*prakāra*) of the tree; the tree as being what is predicated or qualified (*viśesya*) by treehood; and the metaphysical relation of inherence as being what connects or relates the treehood to the tree. While the same object and its properties may be presented in both the perceptual states, the latter, that is, a *savikalpaka pratyakṣa*, takes the extra step of seeing the object, its properties, and the relation which binds them together as having distinct roles within a structured predicative complex. In this state, the experience can be put into words, meaning the experience can be verbalised. But it is not the case with the *nirvikalpa* perception. It does not lend itself to any verbal expression. A *nirvikalpa* cognition appears differently than a *savikalpa* cognition because it does not involve the verbal identification of its content. Now that we have seen Gaṅgeśa's

⁶S. C. Chatterjee. *The Nyāya Theory of Knowledge : A Critical Study Of Some Problems Of Logic And Metaphysics*. University of Calcutta, 1939, pp. 195-196.

⁷Bimal Krishna Matilal. *Perception - An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*. Clarendon Press. Oxford, 1986, pp. 180-223.

definition of *nirvikalpa* perception let us look at his proof for the existence of the *nirvikalpa* perception in the next section.

2.3 The Proof

Gaṅgeśa's main argument for the existence of *nirvikalpa pratyakṣa* is based upon a causal rule that all qualificative awareness states are produced by a prior⁸ awareness of a qualifier. It means that the awareness of the qualifier always precedes the qualificative knowledge.

The priority that Gaṅgeśa is talking about here is not temporal but a logical priority. It means that unless one has the awareness of the qualifier, one simply cannot have an awareness of a qualificative cognition. Suppose one were to ask: what happens when someone perceives both qualificand and qualifier simultaneously? Does this mean both the qualificand and qualifier contribute to the subsequent concept-laden awareness states? Take the example of a perceptual awareness, "There is a man holding an apple". In this case, the awareness is doubly qualified; firstly, the man is qualified as holding an apple, and secondly, the apple is qualified by the property apple-hood. One could argue that the prior awareness of the qualifier is unnecessary because both the qualifier and the qualificand, the apple and the man, are perceived simultaneously because both things are in contact with the visual sense faculty at the same time. Hence the resultant cognition, "There is a man holding an apple", could have arisen solely with the help of the initial awareness of the qualifier. But Naiyāyika would argue that though both the qualifier and the qualificand are presented and perceived simultaneously, it is the cognition of the qualifier that determines the nature of the subsequent qualificative awareness state. They argue that temporal

⁸Here they are only talking about logical priority.

priority does not affect the way the objects are structured in the *savikalpa* awareness states.

As previously mentioned, Gaṅgeśa's argument rests upon the general causal⁹ rule that every qualificative cognition (*viśiṣṭajñāna*) is produced in part by a prior cognition of the qualifier (*viśeṣajñāna*).¹⁰ This rule is related to Naiyāyikas' understanding of qualificative cognition that we cannot identify an object unless we already possess some information about it. In other words, we cannot descriptively identify *A* as *F* unless we are acquainted with *F*-hood.

To prove his point, Gaṅgeśa also gave examples which includes inference (*anumāna*), recognition (*pratyabhijñā*), verbal testimony (*śabda*), and analogical reasoning (*upamāna*). He argues that in each case of these ways of knowing, a prior cognition of the qualifier appearing as predication content is required and thus is identified as a causal factor. Perception is not an exception to this rule. Phillips says,

In each case, a prior cognition of the qualifier (F) appearing as predication content (*prakara*) is required and thus is identified as a causal factor, a condition that, although insufficient in itself to bring about a later determinate cognition with F as content, has to be in place for the determinate cognition to occur. As Gaṅgeśa says, “for without familiarity with a probandum and so on, inference and so on would be impossible”.¹¹

Take the example of inferential cognition “mountain has fire”. In this case, prior awareness of smoke pervaded by fire is one of the causes of inferential cognition. In verbal testimony, the prior cognition or understanding of the words used by the trustworthy speaker is responsible for the testimonial knowledge. Similarly, in analogical

⁹Here the word ‘cause’ is used loosely, meaning every necessary condition is rendered as a cause.

¹⁰Bhatta, *The Pratyakṣa Khaṇḍa Of The Tattvacintāmaṇi (With Introduction, Sanskrit Text, Translation and Explanation)*.

¹¹Stephen H. Phillips. “There’s Nothing Wrong with Raw Perception: A Response to Chakrabarti’s Attack on Nyāya’s ”Nirvikalpaka Pratyakṣa””. In: *Philosophy East and West* 51.1 (Jan. 2001), pp. 104–113, p. 105.

comprehension, the prior understandings of the meanings of the words are responsible for the resultant analogical knowledge.

Gaṅgeśa gave a stronger argument to show that the prior awareness of a qualifier must be a non-conceptual in nature. He states that if all qualificative awareness-states were to be produced by a prior awareness-state of a qualifier, which is itself a qualificative state in nature, then an infinite regress would follow. Let me explain this using the example that we have discussed above. When we perceive a tree as a tree for the first time, this must be preceded by an awareness of the qualifier treehood. Suppose this prior awareness of treehood is cognized as qualified by some other property, then this qualificative awareness of treehood requires another cause. Moreover, if this later awareness state is again a qualificative state, then we need another awareness of qualified states and so on *ad infinitum*. It means that before arriving at a single qualificative perceptual knowledge, one needs to go through this series of infinite steps of awareness-states. To avoid this vicious regress, Gaṅgeśa claims that when someone perceives a tree as a tree for the first time, one must have a direct perceptual experience with the qualifier treehood itself.

Śaśadhara, a pre-Gaṅgeśa Naiyāyika, gave another inference as being conclusive proof of non-conceptual perception. The argument runs as follows: After a night stay at the farm, upon waking, one might have a perceptual awareness of the form, “There is a cow” (“*gauḥ*”). Since this perception is a qualificative awareness, it must have been produced by a prior awareness of the cognition of the qualifier, cowhood. This property of being cowhood predicatively qualifies the cow in the subsequent concept-laden awareness, of the cow as being a cow. This perception could not have been preceded by another concept-laden perception because it was supposed that this awareness is the first perceptual awareness upon waking. If it were not, it would have

been the second perceptual awareness, and the problem of concept-laden perception would have been pushed further.¹²

But what if someone were to argue that the content of the concept-laden awareness, i.e., the property of cowhood, is supplied by a memory trace (*saṃskāra*) left by a previous qualificative awareness of a cow? In that case, perception is informed by memory. However, in order for the memory to supply the contents to the concept-laden perception, first, it needs to be triggered by something else. Otherwise, the memory trace would remain dormant and will not be able to transfer its content to a later awareness. But the activating awareness cannot be concept-laden awareness. If the activating trigger itself is a concept-laden awareness, then that activating awareness itself becomes the first concept-laden awareness upon waking. Moreover, this awareness needs to be produced by yet another prior awareness of a qualifier and goes on. So, it is concluded that a non-conceptual awareness activates that memory trigger to cause the initial concept-laden awareness after waking. Hence, a non-conceptual awareness must be accepted as the one of causal condition of the concept-laden perception.

Nyāya-Sūtra invokes the idea of activating memory trace while explaining the newborn infants' apparent purposive activity in recognising the mother's breast as a nourishment resource.¹³ When a newborn infant sees her mother's breast for the first time, she will evidently stop crying and recognise it as a food source. The explanation for this apparent conscious act is that the infant remembers this object as fulfilling her desire for nourishment, and she intentionally reaches out to feed. Naiyāyikas claim that this particular act of remembrance is caused by certain karmic forces, particularly *jīvana-adṛṣṭa*, which are responsible for autonomic functions that are involved in the preservation of biological entities. However, it is not feasible to invoke the

¹²Amit Chaturvedi. "There is Something Wrong with Raw Perception, After All—Vyāsātīrtha's Refutation of Nirvikalpaka-Pratyakṣa". In: *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 48 (2020), pp. 255–314, p. 263.

¹³Jhā, *The Nyāya Sūtras of Gautama with The Bhāṣya of Vātsyāyana And The Vārtika of Uddyotakara*.

same idea of activating memory traces in the case of the first-time perception of cows. This is because the perception of cows for the first time does not essentially serve any biological function.¹⁴ A different explanation for invoking the memories in the case of a newborn infant is that she cannot perceive the breast as having the property of fulfilling her desire for nourishment. However, to invoke the memory traces in the case of the first-time perception of a cow would imply that we cannot directly perceive the cowhood itself, and in a way, it also means that we cannot have the qualificative cognition of the cow itself. If it is the case that activated memory traces were enough to cause the cognition of the cow despite the cow having direct contact with the senses, then it should follow that we will simply remember the things instead of directly perceiving the objects. If that is the case, then perception becomes a redundant cognitive mechanism altogether.

The emphasis given by the Gaṅgeśa on the awareness of a qualifier in non-conceptual perception has led some people to take it as if he is speaking for the exclusive role of the qualifier. Consequently, they have said that it is not only the qualifier that is required but also the qualificand. They argue that one could think of an instance where it is necessary to perceive the qualificand, i.e., the object in which the qualifier resides, for the subsequent qualificative awareness. For example, one could argue that before someone were to have a qualificative awareness like “mountain has a fire”, one needs to have the prior awareness of the mountain (qualificand), where the fire (qualifier) resides. Without having this prior awareness of this qualificand, one would not reach the final inferential cognition. The same is true of the cases of perceptual cognition. This is evident from the cases of perceptual error and doubt. In both the cases, there is a misattribution of properties to the perceived object/qualificand, which does not

¹⁴N.S. Ramanuja Tatacharya Stephen. H. Phillips. *Epistemology of Perception : Gaṅgeśa's Tattva-Cintāmaṇi, Jewel of Reflection on The Truth (About Epistemology): The Perception Chapter (Pratyakṣa-Khaṇḍa), Transliterated Text, Translation, And Philosophical Commentary*. Treasury of the Indic Sciences. New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2004, p. 863.

actually possess the properties at the time of the cognition. In the case of error, we erroneously attribute to rope the property of snakehood. Whereas in the case of doubt, we are not certain whether to classify a distant object either as a post or a person. From these examples, Chaturvedi argues “one could derive a general causal rule that states of qualificative awareness are produced by a prior awareness of a qualificand (*viśeṣyajñāna*).”¹⁵ He says even though this rule does not contradict Gaṅgeśa’s causal rule directly (i.e., *the awareness of the qualifier precedes qualificative awareness*), it will challenge the role that Gaṅgeśa has given to the cognition of the qualifier.

To make his case, Chaturvedi ask us to suppose that Naiyāyikas accept the claim that even qualificand appears in the non-conceptual awareness of the qualifier. Then both qualificand and qualifier are necessary for generating the subsequent qualificative perception. Then Gaṅgeśa’s main claim about the exclusive role that awareness of qualifier generating the subsequent concept-laden awareness would be challenged.

But the central question would be, has Gaṅgeśa given an exclusive role to the prior awareness of a qualifier? From Gaṅgeśa’s account, it is not clear whether he has given an exclusive role to the awareness of qualifiers in the non-conceptual perception. There is no evidence to suggest that he has given an exclusive role to it. The fact that Gaṅgeśa has emphasized the awareness of qualifiers in the non-conceptual perception does not mean that he has given an exclusive role to it. He believed that prior awareness of qualifier and qualificand is necessary for the subsequent awareness state. At the same time, can we distinguish between a qualifier and a qualificand at the non-conceptual awareness state? If we can distinguish them, then we are no more at the *nirvikalpa* state. What really happens at this state is this: there is an awareness of both the qualifier and the qualificand. This awareness has got the causal function of generating the subsequent conceptual awareness state. It is not an exclusive quali-

¹⁵Chaturvedi, “There is Something Wrong with Raw Perception, After All—Vyāsatīrtha’s Refutation of Nirvikalpaka-Pratyakṣa”, p. 270.

fier, not an exclusive qualificand that generates the later conceptual awareness state. Rather it is both qualifier and qualificand which produces it.

When Gaṅgeśa emphasizes the prior awareness of qualifiers in the non-conceptual state, he wants to assert that we perceive universals at this state itself. If we are going to perceive the universals, then whatever we are perceived should have all the properties. In that case, we have perceived other properties associated with it as well. This way of understanding the perceptual experience comes from their metaphysical position, i.e., particular and universal cannot be separable. One perceives both the qualificand with a qualifier at the same time. Therefore both the qualificand and the qualifier have this causal role.

Though Gaṅgeśa has come up with a general causal rule to explain the causal chain for the production of qualificative cognition, some counterexamples are said to undercut his position. The two prominent examples are the cognition of absence and memory (*smṛti*). The following two sections deal with these two counterexamples in detail and attempt to respond from a Naiyāyika point of view.

2.4 Cognition of Absence as a Counter Example

Let us understand Nyāya's notion of cognition of absence with an example. The canonical example of the perception of absence in Nyāya philosophy is that of seeing the floor of not having pot on it (*ghaṭābhāvaavad bhūtaḥ*). Here, the floor is perceived as qualified by the absence of pot. Hence what we actually perceive in this case of perception of absence is not the cognition of absence itself (bare absence), but rather the quality of the floor of not having pot on it. In other words, we only perceive the absence of pot on the floor, but not the absence. We do not perceive the absence because absence is causally inefficacious, and Nyāya's account of perception is causal in nature. Since the floor is being qualified by the absence of a particular entity,

this instance of cognition is considered to be a qualificative cognition. The floor is determined by the absence of the pot. Hence the cognition of absence is a concept-laden perception.

As pointed in the last section, Gaṅgeśa claims that the cognition of qualifier precedes every qualificative cognition, and he also claims that this causal principle applies to all sorts of qualificative cognitions as such.¹⁶ Going by the same logic, one would believe that since cognition of absence is a qualificative perception, it must be preceded by the cognition of the qualifier, i.e., the cognition of the absence itself. However, as we have seen earlier, it is not so. Clearly, Naiyāyika thinks that it is not the absence that we perceive in this cognition but an entity that is qualified by an absence of something. We do not perceive absence at all, and the perception of absence in the earlier stage does not give rise to the later qualificative perception. It means that the qualificative cognition (“floor lacks pot”) would arise without the help of the prior cognition of the qualifier. The case of absence-cognition is going against the Gaṅgeśa’s causal rule. How would Gaṅgeśa respond to such a charge?

To make his causal proof intact, Gaṅgeśa has resorted to a principle that explains the absence-cognition problem. He claims that there is indeed a prior awareness of qualifying pot-absence.¹⁷ He says, “First there occurs the cognition, ‘The pot is not on the floor,’ where the floor is the qualifier, the pot-absence the qualificandum. And a (prior) cognition of a qualificandum (pot-absence) is not a causal factor (for a cognition of an entity as qualified).”¹⁸ In the first stage of the cognition of absence, Gaṅgeśa claims that it is the floor that is a qualifier and the pot-absence a qualificand. So at

¹⁶Here ‘precedes’ (preceding) used in the sense of a necessary condition. It means unless and until there is a cognition of qualifier, there will not be any qualificative awareness. It is a logical priority but not a temporal priority.

¹⁷Nevertheless, that awareness presents the pot-absence as qualified by the floor, i.e., like in this form of judgment that there is no pot on the floor (“*bhūtaḥ ghaṭābhāvaḥ*”).

¹⁸Stephen. H. Phillips, *Epistemology of Perception : Gaṅgeśa’s Tattva-Cintāmaṇi, Jewel of Reflection on The Truth (About Epistemology): The Perception Chapter (Pratyakṣa-Khaṇḍa)*, Transliterated Text, Translation, And Philosophical Commentary, p. 867.

this early stage, we do perceive pot-absence, but not as a qualifier. Here pot-absence is being qualified by the floor. Gaṅgeśa claims, “the negation is as a matter of fact related to the floor by qualificierness. But this does not mean that the negation is to be cognized as a qualifier”¹⁹. He argued that pot-absence is grasped as a qualificand through the presentation of the floor as its qualifier. Even though the pot-absence is perceived as a qualificand in the earlier stage, it goes on to serve as a qualifier in the later concept-laden awareness.²⁰

It is argued that Gaṅgeśa thinks it is not necessary to specify the qualifier in the prior awareness in order for it to be a qualifier in the subsequent qualificative cognition. This means that the pot-absence does not have to be specified as a qualifier in the earlier cognition in order for it to be the qualifier in the subsequent concept-laden awareness (“the floor lacks the pot”): it is enough for the perception of the qualifier to be part of the prior non-conceptual cognition. According to Gaṅgeśa, the prior cognition of the pot-absence as qualified by a floor is preceded by the non-conceptual cognition of the floor. He claims that the pot-absence cognition in the early stage as a qualificand is transformed into a qualifier in the subsequent concept-laden awareness.

This strategy of Gaṅgeśa is consistent with the Naiyāyikas conception of *nirvikalpa* perception. Nowhere in their theory of non-conceptual perception, it is mentioned that

¹⁹Sibajiban Bhattacharyya. *Gaṅgeśa’s Theory of Indeterminate Perception- Part Two- Containing The Text Of Nirvikalpavāda With An English Translation And Explanatory Notes*. Indian Council Of Philosophical Research, 1993. ISBN: 81-85636-02-8.

²⁰One can argue that the first cognition, “the pot is not on the floor,” is a qualificative cognition. If so then the final cognition of pot-absence, a qualificative cognition, is preceded by another qualificative cognition. This seems odd. However, it has been argued that for most of the Naiyāyikas, the qualificative perception is always judgemental or propositional in its nature. Then all the qualificative perceptions are propositional, and non-qualificative awareness is just the perception of qualities. In the case of pot-absence, even though the first cognition is expressed in terms of qualificative cognition, it is not strictly a qualificative cognition. This is because the content of the first cognition cannot be described in a proposition. Hence it is a non-conceptual awareness, not a qualificative awareness. It means that we might identify an object in the initial stage but fail to distinguish one object from the other. However, according to the definition of *nirvikalpa* perception, one cannot even use name or class to the perceived object. Gaṅgeśa’s example of the first cognition, “the pot is not on the floor”, is going against the very definition of *nirvikalpa* perception because in the example, the pot-absence is classified as having the attribute of a floor.

a previously cognized qualifier needs to be presented or specified as a qualifier in order to qualify an object in the later concept-laden awareness state. This means that in the cognition of the absence of pot, one does not have to specify pot-absence to appear as a qualifier in the prior cognition to be presented as qualifying the floor subsequently. In a way, Gaṅgeśa is arguing that it is enough that the qualifying pot-absence was just part of the prior awareness' content. That is why he claims that pot-absence is presented as qualificand in the prior awareness of non-conceptual perception. The principle, *the pot-absence which is perceived as a qualificand in the initial cognition goes onto figure as a qualifier in the subsequent cognition*, is criticised in the contemporary discussions.

Chaturvedi says this new principle, i.e., *awareness of floor qualified by pot-absence is preceded by the prior awareness of pot-absence-as-qualificand*, namely “there is no pot on the floor”, is an *ad hoc* principle.²¹ He presents his objection as follows: This is an *ad-hoc* principle because this particular case (the cognition of absence) cannot be explained using his older principle; hence, he introduces this new principle into his system to account for this anomaly so that his theory can be saved. There is no proper justification as to why this principle is accepted in the first place. This new principle would have been a justified move only if a rule of this kind, namely, *the awareness of the qualificand precedes all qualificative awareness*, is established. However, that is not the case. Since the cognition of pot-absence stands as counterexamples to his earlier general causal rule, i.e., *the awareness of the qualifier precedes all qualificative awareness*, Gaṅgeśa seems to conceive of this *ad hoc* principle.

Chaturvedi thinks that the new principle is an *ad hoc* principle because he misinterprets Gaṅgeśa as giving an exclusive role to the prior awareness of qualifier. However, that is not the case. If Gaṅgeśa had given an exclusive role to the awareness of the

²¹Chaturvedi, “There is Something Wrong with Raw Perception, After All—Vyāsatīrtha’s Refutation of Nirvikalpaka-Pratyakṣa”, p. 279.

qualifier, this new principle would have become an *ad hoc* principle. But as we have seen in the last section, Gaṅgeśa seems to think that both qualifier and qualificand are present in the initial non-conceptual perception. Both of them have a causal role in generating the subsequent conceptual awareness state. The fact that he emphasized the prior awareness of the qualifier in the non-conceptual state does not give a justified reason to assert that he has given an exclusive role to the awareness of the qualifier. If that is the case, then the new principle does not seem to be an *ad hoc* principle.

As pointed out before, Gaṅgeśa believes that the pot-absence configured as qualificand in the early stage will be transformed into a qualifier in the subsequent concept-laden awareness. According to this particular interpretation, for him, one entity can become both qualifier and qualificand. He says that pot-absence is cognised as qualificand in the initial stage, whereas it is cognized as a qualifier in the subsequent qualificative cognition. So it means that the same thing can be qualifier as well as qualificand. According to him, the qualificand and qualifier is relative, relative to the linguistic context. A qualifier can be qualified by something else, and hence becomes a qualificand in another cognition. So from an epistemic point of view, there is no absolute distinction between qualifier and qualificand.²²

Though Gaṅgeśa has given two apparently dissimilar judgments in the case of cognition of pot-absence, there is no real difference between them. This can be illustrated by considering both the judgments that Gaṅgeśa has given in explaining the cognition of pot-absence. He says, first, there is a cognition of pot-absence in the form of quali-

²²But metaphysically, there is a difference between a subject and a predicate. It is argued that there is a difference between substances (*dravya*), which usually figure as a subject in a judgement, and qualities (*guṇa*) and actions (*karman*), which figures as predicates in the Nyāya system. They say that qualities, actions, and universals (*sāmānya*) inhere in substances but not the other way around. (Mohanty, 2000) In other words, there is a hierarchy between a substance and predicates. It means a subject or a substance cannot be a predicate and vice-versa. But what is to be constituted as a substance and what is to be constituted as a predicate is decided at the level of *savikalpa* perception. The concepts do this job of categorization. Both *nirvikalpa* and *savikalpa* are epistemic levels. *Nirvikalpa* perception catches the metaphysical level, but at *savikalpa* perception, one can make mistakes. This state might not map onto the metaphysical level resulting in the occurrence of an erroneous cognition.

ficand (*There is no pot on the floor*), and in the later stage, the pot-absence becomes qualifier in the final qualificative cognition (*The floor lacks the pot*). So these are the two cognitions:

1. There is no pot on the floor. (*bhūtale ghaṭo na asti*)
2. The floor lacks the pot (*ghaṭābhāvavad bhūtaḥ*)

In the first case, it is said that the floor (*bhūtale*) is the qualifier (predicate), and the pot-absence (*ghaṭo na asti*) is the qualificand (subject). In contrast, in the second case, the pot-absence (*ghaṭābhāvavad*) is the qualifier (predicate), and the floor (*bhūtaḥ*) is the qualificand (subject). Both follow the subject-object form of a statement. But is there a fundamental difference between the two? There is a difference between the two statements from a grammatical or syntactic point of view. In one of the statements, pot-absence is a predicate, while it is a subject in the other. The same is true for the floor as well. But is there any difference between the two from a logical point of view? If you are looking from the point of modern symbolic logic, then there is no fundamental difference between the two statements. But if we are looking from the point of view of the Sanskrit linguistic structure, i.e., the grammatical structure, the qualificand, and the qualifier can be exchanged. One can symbolize the first sentence, “There is no pot on the floor,” as following: $(\exists x)(F_x \wedge (\forall y) (P_y \rightarrow \neg O_{yx}))$. The second sentence, “The floor lacks the pot,” also has the same symbolic form. Hence we can argue that from a logical point of view, both the sentence are the same. It means semantically there is no difference between the two. But from the way they are used in the language, one becomes a subject, and the other becomes a predicate. That, in a way, shows that the difference arises only at the stage of *savikalpa* perception. In *savikalpa* perception, one distinguishes between a subject and a predicate because the concepts categorize the perceived entity into a subject and the other into an object.

Hence there is not much difference between the judgments given by Gaṅgeśa while explaining the cognition of pot-absence.

Chaturvedi argues that it is not evident how the cognition of pot-absence as a qualificand in the prior awareness states epistemically changes to a qualifier in the second awareness.²³ It is claimed that Gaṅgeśa does not give a satisfactory explanation in this regard.²⁴ However, both Philips and Tatacharya interpret Gaṅgeśa as saying that there occurs a small step of inferential reasoning, which will eventually result in the awareness that the floor is qualified by the absence from the prior awareness of absence as qualified by the floor. They rendered the particular section as follows: “Later there occurs (as an immediate inference) the cognition that has the floor as the qualificandum exhibiting the absence of the pot.”²⁵ However, Bhatta’s translation does not mention anything about the inference part. It merely reads: “Then, finally the qualificative knowledge of the absence such as ‘The ground is possessor of the absence of the pot’ which has the ground as the actual substratum and the absence of the pot as the qualifier, is produced.”²⁶ There is a problem with how Philips and Tatacharya have rendered this particular section. They have argued that an inferential process helps to bring a perceptual awareness into the picture. But if it is possible for awareness of qualifier to be perceptual, then why bring inferential reasoning into

²³As noted in the preceding section, we do not distinguish between qualifier and qualificand at the non-conceptual awareness state. Hence we do not have a clear-cut distinction between the awareness of qualifier and the awareness of qualificand at the *nirvikalpa* stage. But asking *how the cognition of pot-absence as a qualificand in the prior awareness states epistemically changes to a qualifier in the second awareness* assumes that this distinction between these two awarenesses is possible at the *nirvikalpa* state.

²⁴Chaturvedi, “There is Something Wrong with Raw Perception, After All—Vyāsātīrtha’s Refutation of Nirvikalpaka-Pratyakṣa”.

²⁵Stephen. H. Phillips, *Epistemology of Perception : Gaṅgeśa’s Tattva-Cintāmaṇi, Jewel of Reflection on The Truth (About Epistemology): The Perception Chapter (Pratyakṣa-Khaṇḍa), Translated Text, Translation, And Philosophical Commentary*.

²⁶Bhatta, *The Pratyakṣa Khaṇḍa Of The Tattvacintāmaṇi (With Introduction, Sanskrit Text, Translation and Explanation)*.

the perceptual picture at all?. In their translation and commentary, Phillips and Tatacharya write,

Admittedly, there occur absential cognitions to be analyzed as having the floor not as qualifier but as qualificandum, with an absence of a pot as the qualifier. But these are not perceptual. They are the results of *one-step inferences* from perceptual cognitions, such as from a perception where the qualifier is the floor and the qualificandum the absence of a pot²⁷ [emphasis added].

This way of reading Gaṅgeśa is not compatible with Nyāya's theory of perception, and it has no grounding in Gaṅgeśa text either. Gaṅgeśa thinks that we can perceive the absence-cognition through perception, and this must be evident from the context of his discussion in the section *Nirvikalpavāda* from his book *Tattva Chintamani*.

Nyāya thinkers maintain that it is possible to generate the knowledge of pot-absence (or absence of something) through perception. Uddyotakara, an early Naiyāyika, has conceived six different types of sense-object contacts in the perceptual process. He has explained how different modes of sense-object contacts will generate perceptual awareness like the awareness of universals, particulars, inherence relation, etc. Uddotakara holds that we can perceive the absence through a particular sense-object contact called *saṃyukta-viśeṣaṇatā*, and Gaṅgeśa thinks the awareness of absence is generated through the specific relation of *indriya-sambaddha-viśeṣaṇatā*.²⁸ In the latter type of contact, "the sense organs are in contact with its object in so far as the object is a qualification(qualifier) of another term connected with the sense".²⁹ Take the case

²⁷Stephen. H. Phillips, *Epistemology of Perception : Gaṅgeśa's Tattva-Cintāmaṇi, Jewel of Reflection on The Truth (About Epistemology): The Perception Chapter (Pratyakṣa-Khaṇḍa)*, Transliterated Text, Translation, And Philosophical Commentary, p. 637.

²⁸Bhatta, *The Pratyakṣa Khaṇḍa Of The Tattvacintāmaṇi (With Introduction, Sanskrit Text, Translation and Explanation)*.

²⁹Chatterjee, *The Nyāya Theory of Knowledge : A Critical Study Of Some Problems Of Logic And Metaphysics*, p. 142.

of pot-absence on the floor. In this case, the eyes are in contact with non-existence as a qualifier (*viśeṣanātā*) (here pot-absence) of the place which is in conjunction (*saṃyukta*) (here the floor) with the eyes. Hence, in this type of sense-object contact, the sense faculty is directly connected with the floor and indirectly connected with the pot-absence through the absence being the qualifier of the floor. From this, it must be evident that Gaṅgeśa thinks the awareness-states of pot-absence is generated through perception, not through the inferential process. Moreover, the “one-step” inference that both Phillips and Tatacharya discussed is nothing but an instance of immediate inference, but an immediate inference of this kind does not seem to be part of Indian philosophy at all.

However, there is an interesting debate that has happened between Buddhists and Nyāya philosophers about the role of *anumāna* (inference) in perception. Buddhists have argued that perceptual awareness involves inference in some cases. They explain their position using the example of a visual perception of a tree. For example, whenever someone is visually aware of a tree that is present before her, “she only perceives the ‘front’ part of the tree which is present to her, and she infers the tree (and we do not see it directly) from our (visual) grasping of its front part or piece, for only the front part is visible to our eyes.”³⁰. Naiyāyikas countered these claims and replied that we do really perceive it when we visually perceive a tree. There is no inference involved in the process of visual perception at all. They argue that there cannot be such an awareness of only the front part of the tree because the whole tree is present in the front part itself. Given their ontological commitments, they argue that the whole tree is contained in every part of the tree by the relation of inherence (*samavāya*) and they argue that the whole (tree) is a distinct entity over and above the summation of all the parts, and the whole is present in every part of the tree. By coming into contact with

³⁰Matilal, *Perception - An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*, pp. 255-292.

a part, we are automatically aware of the whole tree.³¹ However, Buddhists argue that inference plays a role in perceiving an entity in the cases of mediate perception. In the end, this debate about the role of inference in perception reverts to the ontological commitments of each school. Naiyāyikas, as direct-realist, believes that objects are out there in reality and are directly given to us in the perception, whereas Buddhists seem to think that only ‘quality atoms’ are real and the whole is inferred from the perception of the different quality atoms. According to Buddhists, the gross color expanse, which one sees and calls a table, is only a subtle color-atom conglomeration. Interestingly, in this particular debate, neither Buddhists nor Naiyāyikas proposes that an inferential process generates a perceptual state of awareness at all. No Nyāya philosopher would claim that inference would produce a perceptual awareness state. Hence rendering Gaṅgeśa’s text in this manner is unjustified.

How would Naiyāyikas respond to the objection that the cognition of absence stands as a counter-example to their theory of *nirvikalpa* perception?³² They would say that what is required for the cognition of absence is nothing but a negation. What happens in negation is that we will negate some quality that is existing in a thing. It means negation must be preceded by some positive entity. When we say a pot is absent on the floor, what is being negated by this utterance is this assertive sentence: “there is a pot on the floor”. That is all the absence is. This account does not go against Nyāya’s realist position. The cognition of absence is always a relative cognition. All

³¹According to Naiyāyikas, we can perceive the universals. Therefore we perceive the universal treehood or treeness. The moment we perceive the treehood, then we do not have to talk about ‘front treeness’ or ‘back treeness.’ This is because any part of the tree would have to be qualified by the universal treehood. The particular that we perceive is always associated with the universals.

³²Chatruvedi (2020, 281) thinks that this case of exception (the cognition of absence) in which the contents of the qualificative state of awareness is not cognised in the prior awareness state would prove fatal to Gaṅgeśa’s causal rule. However, this conclusion is not justified because this conclusion is arisen due to his (mis)reading of Gaṅgeśa’s causal rule. Chatruvedi reads Gaṅgeśa as giving an exclusive role to the cognition of the qualifier. Consequently, by providing some apparent counter-examples, he has argued that it is not only the qualifier that is required but also the qualificand. However, this proves to be a misreading of Gaṅgeśa’s causal rule.

the other things we can perceive absolutely. But absence is something that we perceive relative to the context.

2.5 Memory as Another Counterexample

There is a similarity between perception and memory. If perception is conceived as the awareness of the nature of one's surroundings, then memory can be viewed as the awareness of one's past. It is held that to remember something is to be indirectly aware of the past events. So in this type of cognition, the memory-image acts as a direct internal object functioning as an intermediary object between the remembering mind and the past. It is also argued that this memory image somehow resembles the previous direct object.

Naiyāyikas define memory as “knowledge born of mental impressions alone”³³ (*saṁskāramātrajanyam jñānam smṛtiḥ*.) When someone has an experience of something, it leaves an impression (*saṁskāras*) in the soul. When some triggering elements revive these latent impressions or memory traces, there will be a revival of past experiences and events in the same form and same order in the way they were experienced in the past. In that way, it is some representational cognition of past experiences solely due to the impressions in the soul. Memory is different from recognition (*pratyabhijñā*) because memory is born out of impressions alone, whereas recognition is a product of perception combined with the revival of past experience. To recognise something is to know a thing which was already known to us. In this sense, recognition is a conscious reference to a past and present cognition of the same object. Let us suppose that you meet a person at a research conference and become acquainted with her work during the time. Later you come across the same person at a different time, and you say to

³³Swami Virupakshananda. *Tarka Saṁgraha with the Dīpika of Anṇambhatta and Notes*. eighth. Sri Ramkrishna Math, 2015. ISBN: 81-7120-674-3, p. 69.

yourself, “this is the same person that I had met earlier.” The term “this” refers to the immediate cognition of the object, and the term “that” refers to the past impression relating to the same person. It involves both the revival of the past experience and the cognition of the present, and both of them should be similar. However, memory is solely due to the revival of impressions alone.

Naiyāyikas divide memory into two kinds, namely true (*yathārtha*) and false (*ayathārtha*). A memory is true if it is in agreement with the remembered object. It is false when it arises out of erroneous cognitions and does not accord with the remembered objects. So the truth-value of the memory depends upon the corresponding presentative cognitions.

Vyāsatīrtha, a Dvaita scholar, argues against the Gaṅgeśa’s causal proof by giving memory as a counterexample. Memories (*smṛti*) are also some form of qualificative cognition. Yet, he argues, they are not preceded by cognition of qualifiers at all. He says “memories (*smṛti*) are a form of qualificative awareness, and yet their immediate cause is the activation of a memory trace (*saṃskāra*), which is not itself a state of awareness (*jñāna*).”³⁴ This means that here is the case of a qualificative cognition that is not preceded by the cognition of the qualifier. If this case holds good, then he argues that Gaṅgeśa’s causal proof is invalidated.

Naiyāyikas can respond to this objection in two ways. First, there is a distinction between memory and perception. They are not on par with each other. Though the cognition of memory is a qualificative awareness like that of perceptual awareness, both are different kinds of knowledge or qualificative awareness. Memory is different from perception because in memory, there is no presentation of the object but only remembrance of the perceived object. Memory is always indirect, and it is always

³⁴Chaturvedi, “There is Something Wrong with Raw Perception, After All—Vyāsatīrtha’s Refutation of Nirvikalpaka-Pratyakṣa”, p. 283.

about the past. But perception is about the present. Since they are different kinds of cognitions, the above objection does not seem to hold good.³⁵

Second, Naiyāyikas say, in perception there is a distinction between *nirvikalpa* and *savikalpa* cognitions. But they do not make this kind of distinction in the case of memory. What happens in the case of the cognition of memory? We have got some *savikalpaka* perception (qualificative cognition), and it is being stored in the mind. When we are going to remember it, only the corresponding *savikalpa* cognition is being activated. There is no need for a new application of categories or a further analysis of cognition required. It is already processed information. That is why there is no need for a prior cognition of qualifier. Because in a certain sense, the prior cognition of qualifier is already stored in the memory when we have that *savikalpa* memory.

So far, we have seen Gaṅgeśa's proof for the existence of *nirvikalpa* perception. He believes that *nirvikalpa* perception exists as an epistemic state and has given an argument to prove its existence. Once it is established that the *nirvikalpa* perceptual state exists as an epistemic state, then the pertinent questions would be about its epistemic access, i.e., how one would come to know it. People who oppose the existence of *nirvikalpa* perception treat it as a mere sensory state and argue that it is not an epistemic state. And clearly, if it does not exist as an epistemic state, then we cannot know it. In the light of these opposite views about the awareness of *nirvikalpa* perception, the next chapter primarily discusses the epistemic access to *nirvikalpa* perception.

³⁵Gaṅgeśa said that his causal proof applies to inferential cognition, verbal cognition, and recognition. But nowhere in the text, he mentioned the cognition of memory. In a way, he has restricted his causal proof only to the above cognitive processes.

Chapter 3

Epistemic Access to *Nirvikalpa* Perception

Discussions around the Naiyāyikas' conception of *nirvikalpa* perception must also address the question of its epistemic access. So the central question in this regard would be: how does one get to know *nirvikalpa* perception? This chapter primarily deals with this issue.

The first section elucidates the concept of cognition and cognition of cognition. There was a significant debate in Indian philosophy about the distinction between first-order cognition and higher-order cognition. The first section of the chapter sheds light on the concept of the cognition of cognition or, in other words, how the cognition is revealed to the subject. In Indian philosophy, there are three standard views regarding how cognition is revealed to the subject. This section enlists those three views. In the second section, I will take up Naiyāyikas view on how cognition is revealed to the subject. They argue that cognition does not reveal itself to the subject on its own, and we come to know it through a higher-order cognition called *anuvyavasāya*. *Anuvyavasāya* is broadly understood as an internal perception by which one is reflectively aware of one's own mental cognitions. The last section talks about how one

comes to know about the *nirvikalpa* perception. Some people have argued that it is through inference that we come to know *nirvikalpa* perception. This section examines this particular view and analyzes it. It argues that their view is informed by their (mis)reading of *nirvikalpa* perception. It tries to argue that their view is unfounded and proposes the possibility of knowing *nirvikalpa* perception through *anuvyavasāya*.

3.1 Cognition and Cognition of Cognition

In Indian philosophical discussions, some people usually translate the word ‘*jñāna*’ as knowledge. However, the word *jñāna* is used in Indian philosophy is different from the way the word knowledge is used in Western philosophy. The notion of knowledge in the Western tradition has a specific meaning to it. In most cases, it is used in the sense of a disposition or capacity. When someone says I know something, it mostly means that she has the capacity or disposition to behave in a certain way.¹ For example, when someone says, “I know the Bible,” it only means that she is disposed to remember the contents of the Bible. When someone questions her about things related to the Bible, she can reply to those questions. But this does not mean she is currently in touch with the whole of the Bible or aware of the whole Bible. It does not mean that she is having a particular cognitive episode in which the Bible is the object. Hence it is used in the dispositional sense, not in the episodic cognitive sense.

However, in Indian epistemology, particularly in Nyāya philosophy, *jñāna* has a peculiar meaning, different from that of knowledge in the above sense. For example, when someone says, ‘*ghaṭam aham jñāmi*’ (I am cognizing the pot), it means that I am aware of the pot at this point in time. It refers to a cognitive episode that is occurring in the knowing subject now. Hence, *jñāna* is used in the episodic sense here.

¹Quine (1975) seems to be offering a similar account of knowledge. He says that knowledge generally means verbal disposition, a disposition to respond in a particular manner or behave in a certain way.

And, *jñāna* is used in a neutral way. It means, in the case of Western conception of knowledge, which is most often defined as “true justified belief”, it makes no sense to talk about false knowledge at all. However, if something is *jñāna*, then it does not mean that it is true by its own nature. There can be true *jñāna* as well as false *jñāna*. That is why we find distinctions like *yathārtha jñāna* (according to object) and *ayathārtha jñāna* (not according to object) in the Indian philosophical texts. So the word knowledge strictly does not capture this aspect of *jñāna*. Hence it is better to translate *jñāna* as cognition because, just like *jñāna*, cognition is a neutral term. It is neutral because, just like *jñāna*, there is a possibility of one having true cognition as well as a false cognition. Other terms like *buddhi* (in Buddhist schools) and *upalabdhi* (in Mīmāṃsaka schools) were used in the same neutral sense. They are either true or false depending upon certain conditions. Then what is the equivalent term for knowledge? The word *pramā* can be equated with knowledge. *Pramā* is defined as *yathārtha jñāna*, a *jñāna* which is in accordance with the true nature of the object. It is an awareness episode whose truth value is always guaranteed. So every *jñāna* is not *pramā*, but that *jñāna* is *pramā*, which is in accordance with the object.

Cognition is an awareness episode in which an object, *A*, or a fact, *P*, is apprehended. A true cognition is an awareness episode that always reveals the object. It means that in a true cognitive awareness state, one is aware of an object as it is. However, there are also awareness states in which one is falsely or dubiously aware of the objects. Such cognitions do not reveal the true nature of objects. If one is dubiously aware of an object, one oscillates between two alternatives, whether it is *A* or not-*A*. This particular awareness state is called *saṃśaya* (doubt). For an awareness state to be legitimately called knowledge, it needs more than being just a cognition. The extra factor which makes a cognition as knowledge is nothing but being truly aware of whatever one is aware of at that particular moment.

For example, being truly aware of a pot is called *pramā* or knowledge because there is no doubt about what is being perceived, and at the same time, truth is guaranteed in this particular cognition. This awareness state is usually labeled as the first-order cognitive episode. In Indian philosophy, there is a distinction between a primary cognition (first-order awareness) and cognition of the cognition (higher-order awareness). First-order cognition talks about how one apprehends the object. The first-order cognition also known as non-apperceptive cognition. In contrast, higher-order awareness addresses the question as to how the first-order cognition is revealed to the subject. The higher-order cognition is also known as apperceptive cognition. However, there are opposite theses about how we come to know about higher-order cognition. Matilal has categorized the different views depending upon the responses given to the following conditional statement.

1. “If an awareness a_1 arises, it apprehends not only the thing, a , or the proposition, p , but also a_1 itself by the same token. (P_1)”²
2. “If (an awareness) a_1 arises, it apprehends only the thing, a , or the proposition, p , and we need another event, a_2 , to apprehend a_1 . (P_2)”³

Those who support the first view argue that a cognitive episode that reveals the object also makes itself known by a single stroke. It means when an awareness state arises, it makes itself known at the same moment. There is no need for an additional cognition to make the initial awareness state to be known by the subject. For example, when a sensation of pain arises, it makes itself known instantly to the subject. Prabhākara Mīmāṃsa and Buddhists (especially Dignāga) upholds this view.⁴

²Matilal, *Perception - An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*, p. 142.

³Matilal, *Perception - An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*, p. 142.

⁴However, there is a difference in how they account for this self-revelation of cognition to the subject. Unlike the Mīmāṃsaka school, which accepts the subject as a substantial entity, Buddhists do not accept the existence of the soul as a substance. So when Buddhists say that a subject is automatically aware of the first-order cognitive state, they only mean that awareness is aware of

The second view is accepted by Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and Bhaṭṭa Mīmāṃsa schools. However, there is a slight difference in the way in which they interpret this particular thesis. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika believes that each awareness state is followed by a subsequent awareness state which reveals the first-awareness state to the self. This second awareness state is an inward perceptual cognition, and it is called *anuvyavasāya*, cognition of cognition. This is more like a reflective knowledge. For example, the initial awareness state, “I cognise a pot,” is usually followed by an inward mental perception, “I am aware that I cognised a pot.” The Bhaṭṭa school of Mīmāṃsa views that (first-order) awareness state is imperceptible and it needs some other thing to reveal to the knowing subject. But they argue that it is not through an internal perception that we come to know this first awareness state, but through a different mechanism. Although later we become mentally aware of the first-order awareness state, this higher-order awareness cannot be perceptual. But then how do we come to know the occurrence of first-order awareness state? They explain their view in the following way: An object is apprehended in the initial awareness state. Then this apprehended object has the character of apprehended-ness or *jñātātā*. So by the evidence of this apprehended-ness of the object, a subject infers that an awareness state must have arisen in the past. The property of this being cognized acts as a *hetu* (reason) by means of which we infer a cognition. They argue that when an object is revealed or known through cognition, the property of being cognized (*jñātātā*) is produced in the object. Also, *jñātātā* is a property of every known object. Hence the higher-order awareness is inferential, not perceptual. For example, a subject infers that from the fact that a pot is being cognized to a conclusion that there must have been an initial awareness state in which this particular pot was being apprehended.⁵

itself. For them, each awareness has some inner (mental) awareness/perception as an integral part of the first-order awareness itself.

⁵How do we aware of a perceptual state? As for as Naiyāyikas is concerned, it is not necessary that the perceptual state has to be cognized. So the cognition of cognition may not happen at all. This

But one wonders if someone is aware of a thing or a fact, is she also necessarily aware that she is aware of it? Or is it a mere contingent fact that she comes to know about this first-order awareness through some other factors? This worry can be formulated in the following way.

1. “If an awareness, a_1 , arises, it is necessarily cognized, apprehended, or revealed to the self. (P_3)”⁶
2. “If an awareness, a_1 , arises, it is only contingent that it is also cognized. Most such episodes are cognized or apprehended, but some may arise and go out of existence without being cognized at all. (P_4)”⁷

It is argued that most Indian philosophical schools with different epistemological views usually accept the first alternative. For example, Buddhists, Mīmāṃsakas, and the Vedāntins all unanimously agree on this point. The usual explanation is this: how can a subject go through an awareness episode without herself knowing that she is going to be aware of it? Matilal argues, if at all a subject is unaware of a cognitive state, then it is probably known to her as some sort of unconscious or unperceived awareness state. He argues that this implication sounds counter-intuitive to their overall philosophical positions. P_3 seems to be followed by P_1 , and it is claimed that to some extent, P_2 is compatible with that of P_3 . However, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika accepts the second alternative (P_4), combined with P_2 . It means we may not be aware of cognition and its apprehension at the same time, even though both

is true not only for *savikalpa* perception but also for *nirvikalpa* perception also. But some people (Phillips, Chadha, Shaw) have argued that since there is a contingent relation between *nirvikalpa* perception and its higher-order awareness, we become aware of it through inference. But as we have seen above, the contingent relationship between the first-order awareness and the higher-order awareness is also true in the case of *savikalpa* perception. But we do not claim that it is known through inference. But Naiyāyikas argue that it is known through another mental perceptual cognition called *anuvyavasāya*. Hence their (Phillips and co.) argument is not a valid argument at all.

⁶Matilal, *Perception - An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*, p. 144.

⁷Matilal, *Perception - An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*, p. 144.

of them can be present when we cognize something. In other words, it says that an awareness state may arise in a subject and remain unknown and unrecognized to the subject. So they accept the possibility of conscious perceptions which are unknown to a subject in their epistemological system. For that matter, they claim that every cognitive state is in principle unknown to the subject at the first moment. But it does not mean that they remain unknown to the subject forever. They maintain that each cognitive episode is followed by an internal awareness state, *anuvyavasāya*, which makes the initial awareness reveal to the knowing subject. Until and unless this internal perception takes place, the self-reflective awareness would not arise, thereby rendering the initial cognitive episode unknown to the subject.⁸ But what is the justification for the possibility of a subject not knowing a conscious perceptual state? Naiyāyikas argue that the causal conditions which are responsible for the occurrence of the higher-order awareness might be rendered inert by the overwhelming presence of the opposing forces (*pratibandhakas*), like pain, pleasure, different interests, etc., preventing the occurrence of higher-order awareness.

Arguing against the contingent nature of the higher-order awareness state, the other camp (*svaparakāśas*)⁹ poses a problem in the following way: if the awareness state is indeed not self-cognized, then will not it be losing its essential nature, the nature of illumination (*prakāśakatā*)? They argue that an awareness state that is conscious must reveal the object and itself to the subject. When Naiyāyikas say that

⁸Being conscious is not the same as being known. The cognitive state that has arisen was a conscious state. But somehow, the subject did not pay attention to it. Therefore it is unknown to the subject. But it is not an unconscious state at all. The problem arises when we equate being conscious with being known. We can say that Naiyāyikas makes a distinction between conscious states that are known and conscious states that are not known. The conscious states that are known are nothing but conscious states that are having a second-order awareness. So for Naiyāyikas, knowing and not knowing the conscious states is a relative thing. But Vedāntins does not accept this distinction. For them, every conscious state is known to a subject. In fact, for Vedāntins, knowing and being aware of a mental state are one and the same thing. Whereas for Nyāya, being aware and being conscious is not the same. Matilal (1986, 140-44) uses Vedāntins' vocabulary and lands in trouble while rendering the Naiyāyikas concept of being aware of mental state and having a consciousness of the same state.

⁹*Svaparakāśas* believe that an awareness event reveals itself to the subject, whereas *Paraparakāśas* believe that additional (mental) perception must reveal an awareness event to the knowing subject.

an awareness state depends upon the other internal perception for its illumination, they accept that the initial awareness state is unconscious. However, being unconscious and dependent upon other events for their revelation or illumination is a property of an unconscious, inert object like a pot. If this is the case, then the distinction between what is consciousness and what is unconsciousness disappears.

Responding to the *svaparakāśas*' objection, Naiyāyikas cites two reasons in support of their view. First, Naiyāyikas says that *svaparakāśas* have confused between the nature of the first-order awareness state and the higher-order awareness state. They maintain that the essential nature of an awareness state is illumination or revelation of objects, but not self-illuminating itself to the knowing subject.¹⁰ And the unconscious matter like pot does not have this property of revealing the object; hence one can distinguish between conscious and unconscious things. According to Naiyāyikas, the *svaparakāśas* mistakenly think that each state reveals itself. What actually happens is that the higher-order awareness occurs immediately after the first one in quick succession, such that the *svaparakāśas* falsely infers that cognition automatically reveals itself to the subject.

Second, Naiyāyikas argue that *svaparakāśas* have failed to distinguish between *utāpati* (origin) of the knowledge and *jñāpti* (knowing) of the knowledge. With respect to the origin, both the awarenesses, initial awareness, and the higher-order awareness can be easily distinguishable because the causal conditions for each are very different. At the same time, with respect to the second feature, that is, the knowing aspect, the higher-order awareness must be separated from the first one because the higher-order awareness involves the knowledge of the knowledgehood of the first-awareness state. In contrast, the first one only involves mere awareness of the object as such. Hence

¹⁰To make this point more clear, consider the following question: whether a cognitive state is intentional or whether a cognitive state is self-intentional. For Vedāntins, a cognitive state is both intentional and self-intentional. But for Naiyāyikas, the cognitive state is not self-intentional. It cannot be directed towards itself. It has got only the other direction.

both the awareness can be distinguished based upon these two conditions.¹¹ They maintain that the reason behind these different views on the revelation of cognition is that most of the other philosophers conflate this distinction, distinction between origin and knowing of the knowledge or knowledgehood. This has resulted in treating first-order awareness on par with higher-order awareness despite them being fundamentally different.

Naiyāyikas' view can be summarised as follows: an awareness state, a_1 , arises, apprehending an object or a fact, followed by another internal awareness state, a_2 , which reveals the first-order awareness to the knowing subject. Is there a possibility of infinite regress here? Some people think that Naiyāyikas's account of higher-order awareness leads to an infinite regress. If the initial awareness, a_1 , is revealed by another awareness a_2 , then what is the status of this higher-awareness state? It should be revealed by another awareness state, a_3 , and a_4 , and so on. This leads to an infinite regress. However, Naiyāyikas would easily refute this objection. They argue that a person is sure about a_1 if and only if she is certain about the a_1 , and at the same time, this awareness is not infected with any doubts regarding its falsehood. Therefore, if a_2 reveals the knowledgehood of a_1 , and if the subject does not entertain any doubt about a_2 , then there is no need to look for another awareness a_3 to ascertain the knowledgehood or falsehood of a_2 . The reasoning stops at a_2 itself, and hence there will not be any infinite regress.

¹¹They are two different events because the two mental states have different properties. Naiyāyikas seems to be invoking a principle similar to Leibniz's principle of the indiscernibility of identicals to establish their position. According to this principle, two things are identical only if both of them have the same properties.

3.2 What is *Anuvyavasāya*?

So far, we have discussed the nature of cognition and the difference between cognition and cognition of cognition. We have discussed the three main views regarding the cognition of cognition, that is, how first-order cognition is revealed. Those three views can be formulated as follows. They are,

1. Self-revealing view: A cognition reveals itself
2. Inferential process view: A cognition is to be inferred from the *hetu*, the property of being cognized.
3. Inner perception view: Cognition is to be perceived through inner perceptions, called *anuvyavasāya*.

Naiyāyikas advocates the third view. They argue that cognition is followed by another internal perception, *anuvyavasāya*, which reveals the initial cognition to the subject.

The complex term *anuvyavasāya* can be broken down into two words, *anu*, and *vyavasāya*. The last term, *vyavasāya*, means a cognition that is free from doubt or cognition which is certain. While defining perception, *Nyāya-sūtra* uses *vyavasāyātmakaṃ* as one of the features of the resulting perceptual cognition.¹² This particular feature is usually translated as non-erroneous. The remaining word, *anu*, means subsequent or successive. This word is generally used to refer to something which has occurred subsequently to something else. Hence the word *anuvyavasāya* can be translated as referring to a subsequent cognition that is certain. A subject cannot entertain any doubt about this subsequent cognition.

¹²*Nyāya-sūtra* (1.1.4) defines perception as *indriyārthasannikarṣotpannajñānām avyapadeśyam avyabhicāri vyavasāyātmakaṃ pratyakṣam*. It means "perception is a cognition which is produced from the contact of a sense-organ with an object, and which is non-linguistic, *non-erroneous*, and determinate in nature". So here *vyavasāyātmakaṃ* is rendered as non-erroneous.

But this particular interpretation of the term *anuvyavasāya* is riddled with problems. That is because this interpretation did not specify the nature of earlier cognition at all. It merely said that this cognition occurs after the initial cognition, meaning it can be followed by a memory-cognition or an inferential cognition, or for that matter, it could follow from a verbal cognition of words as such. So the initial interpretation gives rise to various possibilities. However, that is not what Naiyāyikas intended to convey. For them, *anuvyavasāya* is specifically referred to as cognition which is followed by perceptual cognition. And the causal condition for this *anuvyavasāya* should be specified in the interpretation. Therefore, it is argued that the initial awareness or cognition must be accepted as a causal condition or object of the *anuvyavasāya*. Naiyāyikas argue that it is only in perceptual cognition, all these conditions are fulfilled. That is why they think that the higher-order awareness must be perceptual in nature. All these suggest that *anuvyavasāya* can be interpreted in the following way: “*Anuvyavasāya* is nothing but the mental perception of cognition which is its object.”¹³

Naiyāyikas say, *anuvyavasāya* occurs as follows : first, a cognition occurs, which is non-erroneous (*vyavasāya*), for example, cognition of a pot. This initial cognition is followed by a higher-order cognition (*anuvyavasāya*) like “I am aware of a pot.” Here “I” refers to a self which is a substantial subject or qualificand, and “know” (knowing) refers to the act of cognition which is nothing but the quality of the self, and lastly, “pot” refers to the object of the cognition. According to Naiyāyikas, this higher-order awareness reveals the self, which is qualified by the cognition of the pot.

Naiyāyikas holds that one may not be aware of cognition and its apprehension (awareness of the first-order cognition) simultaneously, even though both can be present when one cognizes something. If that is the case, then how do we make

¹³J. L. Shaw. “Cognition Of Cognition Part II: Pandit Visvabandhu Tarkatīrtha Translated from Bengali with Explanatory Notes”. In: *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 24.3 (June 1996), pp. 231–264, p. 167.

sense of the difference between first-order cognition and higher-order cognition? One could respond to this in two ways. Firstly, it is said that the efficient cause of cognition is different from that of the efficient cause of cognition of cognition. For example, the efficient cause of qualitative cognition like “I see a pot” is the object, pot. But the efficient cause of cognition of cognition is the initial cognition. So both of them differ with respect to the efficient cause. The second response could be as follows: cognition and cognition of cognition occur at two different moments, and they occur in a particular sequence. So one could distinguish them based upon these moments.

There has been a debate in the Indian philosophy about the duration of mental states. They grappled with this particular question: how many moments do a mental state like cognition or feeling of pleasure last. Most of them accept that they do not continue to exist for a long time. Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika claims that a mental state lasts only for two moments, and it gets destroyed in the third moment from its time of origination. The two moments of mental state are known as a moment of its origination and the moment of its duration. Another mental event like cognition or feeling originates at the end of the second moment, and the initial mental state gets destroyed by this new mental state.¹⁴ At the same time, Naiyāyikas maintain that only a single mental event can occur at a given moment. This is a consequence of their belief that the *manas* (mind) is atomic, and being atomic, it can only attend to one mental state. The mind can have one modification at a time. It cannot have more than one modification at a given time.¹⁵

For Naiyāyikas, the higher-order cognition unfolds in a particular sequence. Gaṅgeśa says,

¹⁴Shaw, “Cognition Of Cognition Part II: Pandit Visvabandhu Tarkatīrtha Translated from Bengali with Explanatory Notes”, p. 186.

¹⁵Since any mental state is a result of a specific connection between *manas* and self, and *manas* can only attend to a single event at a time, there can occur only a single mental event at a given time. Lasting is different from occurring in more than one moment. It means a single event can last for two moments. But at any given point in time, there cannot be more than one event.

...there would be the following series: first, a non-apperceptive cognition, “A pot”; second, an indeterminate cognition of its cognitionhood; third, an apperception of the original, non-apperceptive cognition as a cognition qualified by its object, “A pot is being cognized”; and fourth and finally, a second apperception with a self as explicitly its object, “I am cognizing a pot.” The qualificandum portion of the objecthood (or “intentionality,” *viṣayatā*) of the first apperception would be the original, non-apperceptive cognition, and the qualificandum portion of the objecthood of the second would be a self, an entity that endures, the locus of the entire cognitive stream.¹⁶

This can be summarised as follows: First, there occurs a non-apperceptive cognition. In the second state, we realise that a cognition has occurred without determining what the object of the cognition is. The third step is an apperceptive cognition in which we come to know the initial non-apperceptive cognition is a cognition whose object is a pot. Finally, in the last apperceptive stage, one come to know it is the self, or “I”, that is having the cognition of the pot. This means that the initial non-apperceptive cognition remains the same throughout the process, but the successive stages of the cognition makes it more explicit and articulate. This process can be understood in this way also: A cognition of an object takes place, and it is slowly revealing to the subject. First, it is revealed in terms of “something” is there, and second, it is being qualified. Finally, the self is being qualified by cognition. We may characterise this kind of cognition as analytical cognition. By an analytical cognition, we mean, a cognition having successive stages in which the initial stage perceives the object in its entirety, and the successive stages reveals to the subject a clear picture of what is being perceived by analysing the initial complex precept. Thus Gaṅgeśa’s

¹⁶Stephen H. Phillips. “Perceiving Particulars Blindly: Remarks on a Nyāya-Buddhist Controversy”. In: *Philosophy East and West* 54.3 (July 2004), pp. 389–403, p. 394.

account shows that *nirvikalpa* perception is itself a complex perception having two components, the initial non-apperceptive cognition and an indeterminate cognition of its cognitionhood.¹⁷

According to the above account there are two awareness states that are standing between the initial stage and the final stage of the cognition. Shaw (1996a, 244) points out that there are objections to this account. A cognition lasts only for two moments, and it gets destroyed at the third moment. Therefore, by the time one reaches the fourth stage of the cognition, the initial cognition would have ceased to exist.

Though it is true that the original awareness state gets destroyed at the third moment from its origination, its object gets carried over to the fourth awareness state by becoming an object of the second-awareness state, i.e., object of the indeterminate state. Thus, Gaṅgeśa says,

an original target cognition, although destroyed, would be a qualifier cognized by a first apperceptive cognition that gives rise to a second and becomes its object complete with its objecthood, carrying along its objecthood, so to say. Thus the fourth cognition, “I am cognizing a pot,” is able to present the objecthood of the first, the original non-apperceptive cognition, “A pot,” by means of a cognitive intermediary.¹⁸

This means that the object of the initial cognition and its cognitionhood are present in the second moment, but they are not perceived distinctively. However, perceiving them distinctively occurs at the third and the fourth stages.

Udayana, a 10th-century Naiyāyika, echoes a similar response. He says,

¹⁷People who oppose the existence of *nirvikalpa* perception treat it as a single sensory state. Most probably they take it as the original non-apperceptive cognition.

¹⁸Phillips, “Perceiving Particulars Blindly: Remarks on a Nyāya-Buddhist Controversy”, p. 394.

...right after the first qualificative¹⁹ cognition, there will be a non-qualificative (indeterminate) cognition of the previous qualificative cognition and cognitionhood. After this non-qualificative (indeterminate) cognition, there will be another qualificative cognition, the object of which will be the same as the object of the previous qualificative cognition. Just after the origination of the second qualificative cognition, the cognitionhood which has been cognized in the previous non-qualificative cognition becomes the qualifier of the second qualificative cognition.²⁰

We can see that both Udayana and Gaṅgeśa have argued that though the initial awareness state ceases to exist at the third moment, it becomes an object in the immediate indeterminate cognition (at t_2). By becoming an object of the indeterminate awareness, the initial cognition and its cognitionhood continue to be the part of the sequence that results in the perception of the cognitionhood. Hence there is no difficulty in having cognition of the cognition qualified by cognitionhood.

The object of the initial cognition is a complex object having multiple features which are being revealed in the successive stages of the cognition through a process of analysis. After the initial cognition, the cognition of the cognitionhood of the initial cognition takes place, but this cognition does not reveal what the object of the initial cognition is i.e., it does not reveal its characteristics. In the third stage, the properties of the object are revealed and we are able to recognise what the object is, and this is a qualificative cognition. Then in the last step, the apperception “I” also attached to it, thereby one comes to know that I have perceived the object. First, an initial cognition occurs, and at the second moment, one realizes its cognitionhood through

¹⁹ According to Shaw’s translation, Udayana seems to say that the initial cognition is a qualificative cognition. However, Gaṅgeśa does not say that the initial cognition must be a qualificative cognition.

²⁰ J. L. Shaw. “Cognition Of Cognition Part I: Pandit Visvabandhu Tarkatīrtha Translated from Bengali with Explanatory Notes”. In: *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 24.2 (Apr. 1996), pp. 165–207, p. 244.

indeterminate perception. Then at the third moment, I am aware that it is a pot. By the time one reaches this third stage, the initial cognition is gone, and the *nirvikalpa* cognition has stopped being a *nirvikalpa* cognition. Then at the fourth moment, I am aware that “I” am cognizing the pot. At this stage, it is completely a new cognition altogether.

3.3 How do we Come to Know *Nirvikalpaka-Pratyakṣa*?

With regard to the *nirvikalpa* perception, as far as its status is concerned, some people say *nirvikalpa* perception does not exist as an epistemic state. And clearly, if it does not exist as an epistemic state, then we cannot know it. At the same time, other people argue that it does exist as an epistemic state, but we come to know it through inference. Chakrabarti (2001) seems to be upholding the former alternative, whereas people like Phillips and Shaw seem to be following the second alternative.

While arguing against the notion of *nirvikalpa*-perception, Chakrabarti says that one fails to assign an intentional role to the content of the *nirvikalpa* perception. He says,

There are only three kinds of intentional roles that our awarenesses assign to their objects: the role of a qualifier (roughly, the predicate), the role of that which is qualified (the subject), and the role of the connecting relation or tie. The allegedly non-predicative raw perception, while claiming to be an awareness, cannot assign any one of these roles to its objects.²¹

But it is not clear what he means by assigning an intentional role here?²² Generally intentionality is understood as directedness towards something else. For example,

²¹Arindam Chakrabarti. “Reply to Stephen Phillips”. In: *Philosophy East and West* 51.1 (Jan. 2001), pp. 114–115, p. 115.

²²Chakrabarti’s account has modeled upon the linguistic statements. And according to him, every awareness state is propositional, and this seems to be a questionable claim.

when someone says belief or perception has an intentionality, it means as a mental state, both of them stands for or refers to objects outside of those very mental acts. They have a directedness towards a non-mental object. That is all there is to it. But Chakrabarti, at least on his part, does not clarify what it means for an awareness state to be assigned an intentional role. On top of it, he goes on to say that this concept of *nirvikalpa* perception comes dangerously close to an awareness without any object directedness.²³ If that is the case, he believes that, this notion of *nirvikalpa* perception goes against the Nyāya spirit of what is an awareness episode as such.

According to Naiyāyikas, he says, “all informative awareness (*anubhava*), in order to count as awareness, must have intentional directedness toward some object or object complex. By virtue of being known about or believed, those objects, in turn, acquire a titular property of ‘objecthood’ (*viśayatā*).”²⁴ He thinks that *nirvikalpa* perception does not have any object as such. This means it is not directed towards any object. Since there is no object that corresponds to this awareness, we do not have any access to know its nature. In addition, he argues that since there is no object referring to this state of awareness, *nirvikalpa* perception is not a proper awareness, i.e., it is not an epistemic state: Hence, there is no place for *nirvikalpa* perception in the Nyāya system. I think his conclusion is unfounded. Because there is a difference between identifying or determining an object vis-à-vis having an object. It is not the case that *nirvikalpa* perception does not have any object-directedness. The object as a whole is given in the *nirvikalpa* perception. This state of awareness is directed towards this homogeneous object. However, it is only the case that we do not know the nature of the given object at this state. That is why there is no determination of the object.

²³Arindam Chakrabarti. “Against Immaculate Perception : Seven Reasons for Eliminating Nirvikalpaka Perception from Nyāya”. In: *Philosophy East and West* 50.1 (Jan. 2000), pp. 1–8.

²⁴Chakrabarti, “Against Immaculate Perception : Seven Reasons for Eliminating Nirvikalpaka Perception from Nyāya”, p. 7.

But failing to determine or specify what is given in our perception does not mean that it is not directed towards any object or it does not refer to an object.

Stephen Phillips, in his rejoinder, agrees with Chakrabarti's claim of *nirvikalpa* perception of not having any direct apperceptive evidence. However, he says that even if it does not have apperceptive evidence, one need not necessarily accept Chakrabarti's claim that Naiyāyikas should do away with the *nirvikalpa* perception altogether. Instead, he says, *nirvikalpa* perception is a theoretical posit, an entity that is posited for some explanatory purposes. It is posited in the Nyāya system in order to maintain causal uniformity in the perceptual process.

Phillips says,

There is no direct, apperceptive evidence for *nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa*; rather, it is posited by force of the following inference as the first step of a two-step argument. The perceptual cognition, 'A cow' (for example), is generated by a cognition of the qualifier, since it is a cognition of an entity as qualified (by that qualifier appearing), like an inference. The second step takes a person's first perception of an individual (Bessie, let us say) as a cow (i.e., as having some such property) as the perceptual cognition figuring as the inference's subject (or *pakṣa*) such that the cognizer's memory not informed by previous cow experience could not possibly provide the qualifier, cowhood. The qualifier has to be available, and the best candidate seems to be its perception in the raw, a qualifier (cowhood).²⁵

So according to Phillips, *nirvikalpa* perception is a hypothetical entity, a posit, which explains how the qualifier required for the determinate perception has originated. In particular, it gives an account for the availability of qualifier in the *savikalpa* perception. It is argued that the qualifier is perceived through *nirvikalpa* perception in the

²⁵Phillips, "There's Nothing Wrong with Raw Perception: A Response to Chakrabarti's Attack on Nyāya's "Nirvikalpaka Pratyakṣa"", p. 105.

initial stage and went onto qualify the object in the subsequent step, i.e., *savikalpa* perception.²⁶

Phillips argues that it is through inference that we come to know the *nirvikalpa* perception. It is assumed that *nirvikalpa* perception cannot be known through internal sense-organ (*manas*). According to him, *nirvikalpa* perception is part of the sub-luminal perceptions. Luminal perception means whatever we are aware of. If a perception belongs to the sub-luminal category, then it means it is not available for introspection. That is why *nirvikalpa* perception cannot be introspected. Though he claims that through inference that we come to know it, he did not give any formal structure of the inferential process that takes place during the process of knowing a *nirvikalpa* perception. And, his explanation seems like an instance of *arthāpatti*, a presumption. But this claim that we come to know *nirvikalpa* through inference would not be acceptable to Naiyāyikas, because within the Nyāya system, they will not accept *arthāpatti* as a valid *pramāṇa*.

We have seen how Udayana and Gaṅgeśa claim that in the sequence of the events leading up to the occurrence of *anuvyavasāya*, there occurs an indeterminate cognition of the initial cognition and its cognitionhood at the second moment (t_2). If *nirvikalpa* perception is just a posit and has only there to explain the availability of qualifier, how do we explain its place in the sequence of moments in *anuvyavasāya*? Naiyāyikas argue that both universal and particular is given to the subject in perception itself. If cognition takes place successfully, then there should be a synthesis of these two different entities into a uniform experience. If *nirvikalpa* perception is just a posit, then how and where does this synthesis takes place? So it is highly improbable that *nirvikalpa* perception is just a hypothetical entity posited only for some explanatory purpose in the Nyāya system. It is not the case that every Naiyāyika thinks that *nirvikalpa*

²⁶The basic assumption in his account is that all these predicates could only be known through perception. And an inference of the kind, 'since the predicate is available, it must have originated in the initial perception' follows the perception

perception is a theoretical entity. While writing about the *nirvikalpa* perception, Bronkhorst²⁷ argues that Pātañjali's Yogaśāstra has given arguments to prove the existence of *nirvikalpa* perception as a mental state. Pātañjali argues that there are meditational states without conceptual constructs, and this is in a way similar to Nyāya's conception of *nirvikalpa* perception, which happens to be devoid of concepts. Bronkhorst refers to Bhāsarvajña, a 10th-century Naiyāyika, who seems to maintain the same position about the possibility of a *nirvikalpa* perception as a mental state devoid of conceptual apparatus.²⁸ If that is the case, then this particular notion of an inferred *nirvikalpa* perception is open to criticism.²⁹

3.3.1 Is it Possible to Know *Nirvikalpa* Perception Through *Anuvyavasāya*?

But the question remains the same: is it possible to know *nirvikalpa* through *anuvyavasāya*? As we have seen earlier, some people say it does not exist, so there is no question of knowing it at all. Others argue that it is just a posit, and we perceive it through inference. Shaw argues that only qualificative cognitions can have *anuvyavasāya*. Since *nirvikalpa* cognition is not a qualificative cognition, we cannot know it through *anuvyavasāya*.³⁰ However, these three views are not consistent with the overall Nyāya position. I have argued how in *nirvikalpa* perception, an object is perceived in its entirety, and by analyzing the initial complex perception, there emerges

²⁷Johannes Bronkhorst. "A Note on "Nirvikalpaka" and "Savikalpaka" Perception". In: *Philosophy East and West* 61.2 (Apr. 2011), pp. 373–379.

²⁸Bronkhorst, "A Note on "Nirvikalpaka" and "Savikalpaka" Perception", pp. 374-75.

²⁹It is just an analogy. Though Bronkhorst argues for the possibility for the existence of *nirvikalpa* perception, he conceives it as a mental state through which a *yogin* attains *samādhi* (some sort of liberation where only pure consciousness persists). But that is not how we are defining or understanding *nirvikalpa* here. We are more concerned with *nirvikalpa* as an initial state of the perceptual process.

³⁰Shaw, "Cognition Of Cognition Part I: Pandit Visvabandhu Tarkatīrtha Translated from Bengali with Explanatory Notes", p. 166.

a clear picture of what is given to us. So instead of making sense of it (perception) through synthetic cognition, we should understand it through analytical cognition.

Shaw argues that when Naiyāyikas talk about *anuvyavasāya*, the earlier cognition should be a qualificative cognition. It means one can have higher-order awareness only for the qualificative cognitions. It implies that one cannot make claims about higher-order awareness of non-qualificative cognitions at all. A qualificative cognition is one in which there are three distinct components - a qualificand, a qualifier, and a relation. In this type of cognition, qualificand and qualifier are connected through the relation of inherence. For example, the relation between pot and potness. So when someone claims to cognize a pot, it generally means that they have a qualificative cognition in which a pot is qualified by a qualifier potness through an inherence relation. In qualificative cognition, an object is determined by a qualifier. That is why it is called a determined cognition. Shaw also argues,

...since there is no cognition or mental perception of a non-qualificative cognition, it is to be established by an inference. Since a qualificative cognition presupposes the cognition of the ultimate qualificand and the qualifier, we postulate or infer the non-qualificative cognition in which these elements are cognised. Hence, in the case of the cognition of a pot qualified by potness, we infer the non-qualificative cognition of both the pot and potness as such.³¹

He claims that *nirvikalpa* perception cannot be perceived through inner mental cognition because it is not a qualificative cognition. As explained above, he seems to think that only qualificative cognitions can be the object of the higher-order mental cognitions. One reason for maintaining this position could be due to the way he understands the nature of higher-order cognition. He believes that higher-order cognition is

³¹Shaw, "Cognition Of Cognition Part I: Pandit Visvabandhu Tarkatīrtha Translated from Bengali with Explanatory Notes", p. 262.

a qualificative cognition because, at this moment of cognition, the self is characterized by the awareness of the initial cognition. For the higher-order cognition to be a qualificative cognition, he assumes that the initial cognition must also be a qualificative cognition. However, the very conception of *anuvyavasāya* does not make any claims about the initial cognition being qualificative in nature. All it says is that it is followed by a cognition that is non-erroneous (*vyavasāya*). As explained in the earlier section, Gaṅgeśa also did not say that the initial cognition must be a qualificative cognition at all.

Another reason for Shaw's position could be as follows: usually, a subject does not entertain any doubts regarding *anuvyavasāya*. Hence there is no need for another cognition to reveal the cognitionhood of this *anuvyavasāya*. It means that *anuvyavasāya* is certain. At the same time, the very term *vyavasāya* also connotes a similar kind of meaning in terms of cognition being non-erroneous. According to Nyāya, one can talk about the validity and invalidity of only qualificative cognitions. Since *anuvyavasāya* is certain and we can speak of the validity of qualificative cognition only, Shaw might have reasoned that the initial awareness should also be a qualificative awareness in *anuvyavasāya*. However, being non-erroneous does not necessarily mean it should be a qualificative cognition. *Nirvikalpa* perception can be a non-erroneous cognition. In fact, it is a necessary condition for *nirvikalpa* perception to be non-erroneous. It means that at the *nirvikalpa* state, there is no place for error. Then it could very well mean that *nirvikalpa* perception could also be the object of the *anuvyavasāya*. Hence one can possibly know *nirvikalpa* perception in principle through *anuvyavasāya*.

In this chapter, I have discussed the question regarding epistemic access to *nirvikalpa* perception. I have outlined the two dominant positions in the existing scholarship and pointed out the problems in both perspectives. I have argued for the possibility of knowing *nirvikalpa* through higher-order awareness (*anuvyavasāya*). This discussion

shows that *nirvikalpa* perception exists as an epistemic state, and we know it through higher-order awareness. If *nirvikalpa* exists as an epistemic state, then does it play any role in the Nyāya philosophy? Naiyāyikas, who believed in the existence of *nirvikalpa pratyakṣa*, have made a case for it by claiming that it grounds or supports the Nyāya notion of realism by presenting the world as it is. However, there is no unanimous agreement among Nyāya scholars regarding this particular claim, and some say that conditions other than *nirvikalpa pratyakṣa* account for Nyāya's conception of realism. In the coming chapter, I will examine the relation between *nirvikalpa* perception and Nyāya's direct realism. I will attempt to justify the place of *nirvikalpa* perception in the Nyāya system without jeopardizing its commitment to direct realism.

Chapter 4

Nirvikalpa Perception and Direct Realism

Debates around the notion of “Realism” take many forms in philosophical discussions. The question about the conception of realism and the plausibility of the same arise concerning ethics, causation, aesthetics, semantics, mathematics, and many other areas. However, this chapter does not engage in enlisting and enumerating all those interesting details here. Instead, what this current chapter tries to do is to confine itself to a particular notion of realism that is pertained to the philosophy of perception. The first section briefly sketches the debate between realism and anti-realism in the philosophy of perception and lists the dominant positions in each of the standpoint mentioned above. The second section talks about realism in Nyāya philosophy and the emphasis is on the Naiyāyikas criteria of something being considered as real. The thesis that “*whatever exists is knowable and nameable*” is much discussed in the Nyāya tradition, and people have raised questions about the plausibility of this particular thesis. This section continues that debate by responding to some of the objections raised by contemporary Nyāya scholars. The third section maps the arguments put forward by some Naiyāyikas in support of *nirvikalpa* perception. Those who believed in the

existence of *nirvikalpa pratyakṣa* have made a case for it by claiming that it grounds or supports the Nyāya notion of realism by presenting the world as it is. However, there is no unanimous agreement among Nyāya scholars regarding this particular claim, and some scholars say that conditions other than *nirvikalpa pratyakṣa* account for Nyāya conception of realism. This section will attempt to justify the place of *nirvikalpa* perception in the Nyāya system without jeopardizing its commitment to direct realism. I enquire whether the interpretation given by Phillips and Ramanuja Tatacharya (2004) will sufficiently explain the phenomenon of erroneous cognition or not. I will show how they have made certain assumptions that are not justifiable within the system in their interpretation. Hence this section points out the problem with their interpretation and sketches out the inconsistency in it. I will give a slightly different account of it from some of the interpretations in the existing scholarship. The last section discusses the nature of erroneous cognition in detail and tries to give a comprehensive account from a Naiyāyika point of view.

4.1 Realism in Philosophy of Perception

Before endeavoring into the realism debate in the philosophy of perception, I would like to describe a general account of metaphysical realism and write a brief note on some of the major problems linked to this realist position. I believe this broad account of metaphysical realism will function as a background for the subsequent discussion on perceptual realism.

One can generally define metaphysical realism in the following way- “Metaphysical realism is the thesis that the objects, properties, and relations the world contains, collectively: the structure of the world, exists independently of our thoughts about it or our perceptions of it”.¹ There are two aspects to the realist position as referred

¹Theodore Sider. *Writing the Book of the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

above. One, there is a claim about existence. Consider any macroscopic objects that we find in everyday life. For example, the table on which one places her laptop or a tree that gives a shade on a sunny day. A realist claims that the table and the tree exist and also the other facts associated with these two objects, like the table's being brown in color, or a tree having green leaves, etc. The other prominent characteristic of the realist position is the claim about the independence aspect. This independence claim is related to the fact that these trees and tables exist independent of any conceptual framework. It is independent of anyone who happens to say or think about this matter. If someone were to maintain a realist position, she must necessarily uphold these two prominent claims.

Some philosophers believe that it is just a matter of common sense to accept the realist position. However, the long-standing debate between realists and anti-realists about the nature of reality portrays a different picture altogether. This conflict echoes the claim that metaphysical realism is a controversial subject. Let us look at some of the well-known problems that are associated with metaphysical realism. One of the basic questions that it prompted us to ask is a sort of an analytic one: what it really means to assert that the objects exist independent of the mind? The course of the debate around this puzzle has centered chiefly around the linguistic and logical analysis of the propositions related to the existential propositions regarding the objects of the world. Apart from this basic analytical question, metaphysical realism also raises a crucial epistemological problem about the knowability of the world's state of affairs. The epistemological issue has tried to grapple with this important question: how can someone obtain the knowledge of the mind-independent world? In addition to the two issues mentioned above, there is a third important issue related to realism: the representation problem or the semantic problem. To make this issue clear, let us take some belief that, we, in general, entertain about the world. For example, I believe that

there is a thick maroon-colored chair placed in front of my table. According to the realist position, all the macroscopic objects, including this chair on which I'm sitting right now, exist, and they exist independently of any observer. But when I say that I believe a thick maroon color chair placed in front of my table and indeed there is actually a chair of such kind in front of me, then how do we explain the relationship between my belief and the fact of the matter in this case? In short, how do we explain the presumed link that is set up between the beliefs and such a mind-independent world? This is the semantic problem. People who reject the realist position invoke at least one of these issues while denying the mind-independent world.

Now let us look at some of the anti-realist positions. Anti-realists usually take two routes while rejecting realism: either deny the existence dimension altogether or accept the existence claim and reject the independence aspect of realism. Though the forms of anti-realism vary from one subject matter to another subject matter, one can group some anti-realist positions depending upon the claim it rejects about metaphysical realism. For example, anti-realist theories like nominalism, non-cognitivism, emotivism, etc., can be formed into a group because they reject realism by denying the existence dimension. In contrast, theories like idealism, subjectivism, etc., form a different group because they concede the existence dimension but reject the independence dimension. To make this point more clear, let us consider an idealist position. One of the prominent examples of the idealist position is that of Berkeley's notion of objects. He maintains that all physical objects are nothing but collection of ideas. He claims that for an object to exist, it must be perceived. The *esse* of a physical object is *percipi* (for it to exist, is for it to be perceived). From the above exposition, it is clear that Berkeley accepts the existence claim but denies the independence dimension.

One fundamental difference between a realist and an idealist would be their notion of an object. A realist will claim that objects continue to exist in the sense that they

would continue to exist even though no one perceives them and they are also independent. But some idealist would argue that objects are continuous but dependent. Similarly, nominalism is an anti-realist position that rejects the existence dimension of realism altogether. For example, a nominalist would argue that universal or abstract entities do not exist at all. They would maintain that only the particular entities are real or only the concrete things exist. Hence, depending upon the claim that it rejects about realism, one can group most anti-realist theories into either one of the groups. So far, we have familiarised ourselves with the realist and anti-realist theories. Let us turn our focus on perceptual realism.

Perceptual realism is usually defined as follows: “perceptual realism maintains that the objects that we perceive are able to and commonly do exist and retain some atleast of the properties we perceive them as having, even when they are unperceived”.² Here, what perceptual realists are claiming is that the existence of the objects or at least part of the nature of the objects which we generally said to perceive is independent of the existence of any perceiver as such. It means that the objects do exist, and their existence is independent of any cognizing agent as such. For example, a perceptual realist would say that the existence of a tree, which one is said to perceive under normal circumstances, is independent of the very act of cognizing and perceiving. The existence of a tree as a substantial entity does not supervene on any other factor as such. From the above description, it appears that perceptual realists also seem to maintain the two prominent claims of metaphysical realists, existence and independence claims.

There are two competing theories of perception in perceptual realism, namely direct realism and indirect realism. Both these theories accept that objects, when unperceived, retain properties they are said to have. But the fundamental difference lies in the way they are said to cognize the objects in perceptual processes. A naive or

²Jonathan Dancy. *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*. 1st. Wiley-Blackwell, Jan. 1991, p. 144.

direct realist claims that one perceives the objects directly, and there is no place for an intermediary thing between a cognizing subject and the external object. In contrast to this, an indirect realist claims that one perceives the object indirectly, meaning we perceive an external object indirectly by virtue of perceiving an intermediary thing directly. These intermediate things are generally considered to be internal and non-physical objects. These intermediate things could be ideas as in the case of Locke, or they could be sense-data as in Russell's case. Both of them argue that we will perceive the external objects in virtue of perceiving these intermediary things. Let us formulate direct and indirect realist positions in a conditional statement form.

1. "Direct Realist- Perceiver P directly perceives an object O if P perceives O without perceiving any intermediary I."³
2. "Indirect Realist- P would be perceiving an intermediary I if, as things are, it is only in virtue of perceiving I that P perceives O."⁴

Let us illustrate these two theories with an example. A direct realist would say that when someone perceives a tree, she perceives it directly, and the perception is immediate. We are in direct contact with the tree itself, and we will end up cognizing it. But, in the case of indirect realists, when we perceive a tree, we directly perceive the idea of a tree or sense-data of the tree and indirectly perceive the tree. This kind of perception is not immediate. It is mediated through some other entities.

Every direct-realist will agree that the cognizing subject is directly aware of the external world and the surroundings through sense-perception. They accept the directness and/or immediacy of the external objects and the world. However, they differ in the degree of realism that they are willing to accept. Remember that we have defined perceptual realism as maintaining a claim regarding the physical objects that "they

³Dancy, *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*, p. 144.

⁴Dancy, *Introduction to Contemporary Epistemology*, p. 144.

can exist and retain *some at least* of the properties that we perceive them as having, even when unperceived” [emphasis added]. One immediate question that arises in this account is what external objects has said to retain unperceived and what sort of properties a thing continue to have while it is not perceived. Depending upon the response to this particular question, direct realists are divided into two groups: naive realists and scientific direct realists. One can illustrate this division of realism using Locke’s distinction of primary and secondary qualities. Locke has defined primary and secondary qualities as follows:

“Primary qualities are utterly inseparable from the body, in what state soever it be; and such as in all the alterations and changes it suffers, all the force can be used upon it, it constantly keeps, and such as sense constantly finds in every particle of matter which has bulk enough to be perceived....These I call original or primary qualities of body, which I think we may observe to produce simple ideas in us, viz. solidity, extension, figure, motion or rest, and number. Secondary qualities which, in truth are nothing in the objects themselves but power to produce various sensations in us by their primary qualities, i.e., by the bulk, figure, texture, and motion of their insensible parts, as colours, sounds, tastes, etc. These I call secondary qualities.”⁵

So for Locke, primary qualities are objective in nature, whereas secondary qualities are relational properties.

Naive realism holds that when an object is not perceived, it retains all kinds of properties that we perceive them as having. To illustrate this point, let us consider a case in which someone perceives a tree. A naive realist claims that even when this particular tree is not perceived, it retains its shape, solidity, texture, and color. In

⁵John Locke. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975, p. 117.

other words, it is said to contain both its primary as well as secondary qualities.⁶ A naive realist believes that the unperceived object has size and shape and has color, smell, and taste.

However, the scientific direct realists do not uphold the above thesis. They claim that the physical objects do not retain all of the properties when it is unperceived. Like the naive realists, they also accept the directness of our perception of the world but restrict their realism to a particular group of primary properties. They argue that the existence of some of the perceived properties is dependent on the existence of a perceiver, and they are nothing but the secondary qualities. They maintain that the physical objects retain only the primary qualities, and when no one perceives them, the secondary qualities do not remain in the object. They claim that these secondary qualities are relational in nature, and they do not exist independently at all. According to their thesis, secondary properties like taste, color, sound do not exist in the unperceived object.

Though scientific direct-realists have come up with sophisticated explanations to account for the secondary qualities, there is no definitive argument to prove the primacy of scientific direct-realism over and above the naive realism in explaining the perceptual process. There are two worries associated with the scientific direct-realist. One, there is a general disquiet about the primary and secondary qualities distinction. George Berkeley first raised this in his works *Principle of Knowledge*⁷ as well as in *Three Dialogues*⁸. He points out that to reject an independent status to the secondary qualities, Locke has made a relativist argument against secondary qualities (the secondary attributes are relative to the perceiver, and they are dependent on the

⁶The distinction between primary and secondary qualities is not available to the naive realists at all. They do not seem to make this distinction. However, they maintain that an object appears to retain all the properties that it is said to have even though any cognitive agent does not perceive it.

⁷George Berkeley. *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*. Indianapolis :Hackett Pub. Co., 1982.

⁸George Berkeley. *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*. Chicago: Open Court Pub. Co, 1906.

perceiver for their existence). So he argues that the same argument can be charged against the primary qualities also. Secondly, Berkeley pointed out that one cannot abstract the primary attributes, for example, extension, from the secondary qualities like color. Thus one cannot conceive of material bodies which are extended but not colored. Hence Berkeley asserts that there is no merit to this distinction at all.

Apart from the two worries mentioned above, there are other concerns for direct scientific realism. It appears that while giving priority to the primary qualities over the secondary ones, the scientific direct-realist seems to assume that there is a difference in the way that we perceive the primary qualities from that of secondary qualities. But, our common sense tells us that one's awareness of secondary qualities can hardly be of any different order from the awareness of the primary qualities. Both the properties, color, and shape, are presented with equal directedness, and one property is as much part of the object as the other. In addition to this problem, one would wonder what kind of account a scientific direct-realist gives about the color? They claim that a physical object is not itself colored, but we know for a fact that if color is anything, it is directly perceived. But, if the objects are not themselves colored, then we need to posit some intermediary things which are colored to explain the apparent perception of the colored objects. However, if we admit an intermediary thing to bear the sense properties like color, then the account is slipping into the domain of indirect realism.

What does indirect realism mean in the case of perception? An indirect realist claims that we perceive physical objects, which are mind-independent, by perceiving sense-data, which are mind-dependent. But what are these sense data, and how are they different or similar to physical objects? One way of conceiving sense data is to picture them as mental things, some sort of appearance of physical objects. To use Russell's words, "sense-data are the content of perceptual experiences."⁹ One evident difference between a physical object and a sense-datum is that a physical object is

⁹B. Russell. *The problems of philosophy*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press., 2001.

public, whereas sense-datum is private.¹⁰ A physical object is public because one and the same thing is available and can be experienced by all people. But sense-datum, by very definition, is a particular and part of an individual's conscious experience. No one can experience others' sense data. The other difference between the physical object and a sense-datum is that a physical object can exist even if no one perceives it, but that is not the case with a sense-datum. It is argued that sense data exist only while they are being experienced.

How is indirect realism different from that of scientific direct realism? Both of them accept the distinction between primary and secondary qualities, and they use this distinction to base their positions. One fundamental difference between them is the claim about the "openness" of the world. Being direct realists, scientific direct-realist claim that perception is a form of "openness" to the world.¹¹ It gives us direct awareness of the physical objects. However, an indirect realist claims that all we know is only sense-data, and there is a veil between the physical object and the associated sense-data. If the indirect realist position is true, then all we can know is sense-data. If we have access only to the sense-data, then there is no way that we can know the true nature of the objects. This leads to some sort of scepticism about external objects. If we believe that physical objects cause the sense-data, then how do we know this to be true? If we want to know this, then first, we should know the nature of physical objects. But it is not possible to know the nature of physical objects if we believe that all we know is sense data. However, a scientific direct-realist thinks that we have access to reality through the primary qualities, and we know the nature of physical objects by perceiving the primary qualities.

¹⁰Some people have conceived sense data as mind-independent entities. However, this way of understanding sense data as objective things quickly gave way to more coherent theories that understand sense data as mind-dependent entities. Throughout this section, I am using sense-data as mind-dependent entities.

¹¹Michael Lacewing. *Philosophy for AS and A level- Epistemology and Moral Philosophy*. 1st ed. Routledge, 2017, pp. 66-113.

4.2 Nyāya Notion of Realism

So far, we have discussed perceptual realism in general. Now let us look at the Nyāya notion of realism. What is “real” according to Nyāya philosophy? Though there is no direct evidence for a structured formulation for a criterion of reality in *Nyāya-sūtra* per se, the later Naiyāyikas have adopted the following principle as a criterion for something to be accepted as real: “Whatever exists is knowable and nameable.” So, according to Nyāya, there are things that exist, and they are both knowable and nameable. If anything is knowable and nameable, then it exists.

This principle seems to be derived and introduced into the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system from the following statement from *Padārthadharmasaṃgraha* of Praśastapāda: “All six categories possess existence, nameability, and knowability. (*sāṃnnām api padārthānām astitvābhidheyatvajñeyatvāni*)”¹² According to Praśastapāda, *padārthās* (loosely translated as categories) under which all reals are included are characterized by existence (*astitvaṃ*)¹³, nameability (*abhidheyatvaṃ*), and knowability (*jñeyatvaṃ*). Vaiśeṣika system initially accepted six categories of reality. They are substance (*dravya*), quality (*guṇa*), action (*karman*), universal (*sāmānya*), particularity (*viśeṣa*), and inherence (*samavāya*). Later, one more category, non-being (*abhāva*), was added to the list making the total number of categories seven.

¹²Gaṅgānaṭha Jhā, ed. *Praśastapāda Padārthadharmasaṃgraha*. Chaukhambha Orientalia, 1982.

¹³Scholars have rendered this particular term, *astitvaṃ*, in two ways- either as “existence” or as “isness”. For example, Bhaduri (1946) has rendered it as isness, whereas Perrett (2001) has translated it as existence. To maintain the consistency, I will be rendering this specific term as existence throughout the chapter. However, there is a difference between “existence” and “isness”. This is clarified by Shaw (2001, 356-368). He has attempted to make sense of existence in three different ways. He has used existence in these three ways: *existence*₁, *existence*₂, and *existence*₃. *Existence*₁ is understood as a generic property, which is close to the Aristotelian conception of universal, and it is present only in three categories (substance, quality, and action) through inherence relation. *Existence*₂ is the existence of a universal property common to all the positive categories. And lastly, *existence*₃ is that which is posited to explain the commonness of all ontological categories including absence (*abhāva*). He says, “If in order to explain the commonness of substance, quality and action we have to postulate *existence*₁, then in order to explain the commonness of the six positive categories we should postulate *existence*₂ and in order to explain the commonness of all ontological categories including absence (*abhāva*) we should postulate *existence*₃” (Shaw, 2001, 361). According to Shaw’s reconstruction of existence, *existence*₃ is equivalent to *astitva* or isness.

According to the Vaiśeṣikas, these seven categories will cover the entire sphere of reality, including the object and the subject of thought (knower and the known) and even the process of thinking itself (knowing itself).¹⁴ Each real is different because each real possesses its own individual distinctiveness or nature. This makes a particular real unique enabling us not to confuse it with other reals. At the same time, having a unique character prevents a real from subsuming it under a more general or comprehensive category. It means they exist as distinct entities. The *padārthās* are knowable and nameable; they are not forms or ways of knowing but the objects of knowledge.¹⁵ Since the *padārthās* are said to cover the entire reality, any part of the reality or reality itself must be definable in terms of these higher-order properties of existence, namability and knowability.

What is the meaning of existence here? Some Naiyāyikas make a case for the difference between existence as a universal property (*sattā*) and existence as a generic property (*jāti* or *astitvaṃ*).¹⁶ In his commentary on *Praśastapādabhāṣyaṃ*, Śrīdhara asserts two types of existence, *astitvaṃ* (isness) and *sattā* (existence). According to

¹⁴In other words, they claim that both subject and object are real. This is the strongest form of realism.

¹⁵It is argued that categories are primarily ontological entities, and this is how most scholars have interpreted them. However, one may wonder, whether for Naiyāyikas categories are epistemological as well similar to the way Kant's categories of understanding are. If they do not have any epistemological sense associated with it, then how are they used to make sense of reality? Hence the claims like "they (categories) are not forms or ways of knowing, but the objects of knowledge" is slightly misleading. Though categories are primarily ontological entities, they are also used to categorize or order the infinite things of the world. In order to categorise object, they must be also ways of cognizing. Hence, humans use them to make sense of the world in its entirety. This makes one believe that categories work as epistemological principles to classify the innumerable entities of the world in a particular order.

¹⁶It is altogether a different question to ask whether existence is a property or not. We are not concerned with that issue here. However, Naiyāyikas seem to grant that existence is a property. They are making a distinction between existence as a natural-kind property (*jāti*) and existence as a being (*sattā*) which encompasses all the existing entities. Commenting upon this distinction, Shaw says, "According to him [Śrīdhara], existence as a universal property is common to all the six positive categories, viz., substance, quality, action, inherence relation, generic property and particularity. Existence as a generic property, which is very close to the Aristotelian conception of universal, is present only in substance, quality and action through the inherence relation. We can say that any particular individual object in any of the three categories has got existence-1. It is present in such individual objects (*vyakti*) through the inherence relation (*samavāya sambandha*) which is called the inseparable relation." (Shaw, 2001, 356)

him, “...isness (*astitvaṃ*) is a distinctive characteristic or an individuality (*svarūpa*) of a particular entity (*yasya vastuno yat svarūpaṃ tad eva tasyā astitvaṃ*).”¹⁷ Every real has its *astitva*, which is unique. This means that every instance of *astitva* is distinct and exclusive. For example, the isness of a pot is different from that of another pot, and this difference in isness works as a principle to distinguish one entity from another. At the same time, this *astitva* must be differentiated conceptually from that of *sattā* (existence), which is considered the highest universal (*parasāmānya*). It is argued that *sattā* is a comprehensive principle which includes all the existent entities. They say, “...this existence (*sattā*) is considered the highest because it functions as a comprehensive principle that brings all existence under a single category, emphasizing their community of nature, without any reference to their mutual differences.”¹⁸ But the nature of isness (*astitvaṃ*) is quite different from that of *sattā* because it is purely individualistic. We can’t make a distinction between *astitvaṃ* and the object itself. They are one and the same. To say that the “isness of a thing” as separate from “the thing itself” is to make an absurd claim. They argue that an object “...must possess a self-being, i.e., a distinctive self-identity, without which it would neither be what it is nor be different from what it is not. Such a distinctive self-identity necessarily presupposes a definitive intrinsic character.”¹⁹

It seems that the way “isness” as explained in the earlier part, sounds similar to “*viśeṣa*” as a category. However, there is a difference between the two concepts. Here “particularity” (*viśeṣa*) as a category is generally understood as “ultimate particularity”, which is different from the particularity or uniqueness principle in general. One can easily distinguish one gross object or substance from the other because of its form, compositional parts, and nature. But this is not the case with the eternal

¹⁷Sadananda Bhaduri. *Studies in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Metaphysics*. Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute : Poona, 1946, p. 6.

¹⁸Jhā, *Praśastapāda Padārthadharmasamgraha*.

¹⁹Bhaduri, *Studies in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Metaphysics*, p. 8.

substances. Vaiśeṣikas accept the existence of innumerable eternal substances, such as atoms, souls, and minds. Then how can one distinguish one eternal substance from another? Vaiśeṣikas have envisaged the category *viśeṣa* for this particular function. They argue that particularity is the factor that separates one eternal substance from another. According to them, particulars inhere only in eternal substances. Vaiśeṣikas argue that

...particularities are held to be self-differentiating, so there is no need to accept another principle for differentiating amongst multiple particularities. If another particularity be accepted for differentiating one particularity from another, there will be the fallacy of infinite regress (*anavasthā*).²⁰

However, ‘isness’ works as a uniqueness principle to differentiate one (gross)entity from another. For example, one can distinguish one pot from a different pot based upon this unique principle.

So much about the existence aspect of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika criterion of reality. Let us talk about the other two components. Namability means every real has the property of being communicable through language. It is defined as “...the property of being connected or related with a word or an expression.”²¹ This means that the real objects have the property of being referred to by the linguistic expressions. Knowability means the property of being cognized or being known. This amounts to saying that a real entity can be the object of knowledge or cognition. It is argued that both namability and knowability are relational properties of real objects. In the case of knowability, there is a relation between the object and cognition or knowledge, whereas in the case of namability, the relation is between an object and a name or a referring expression.

²⁰ShashiPrabha Kumar. “The Categories in Vaiśeṣika: Known and Named”. In: *History of Indian Philosophy, Routledge History of World Philosophies*. Ed. by Purushottama Bilimoria. Taylor and Francis Ltd., UK., 2018. Chap. The Categories in Vaiśeṣika: Known and Named, pp. 250–275, p. 269.

²¹J. L. Shaw. “The Nyāya On Existence, Knowability And Namebility”. In: *Indian Philosophy: A Collection of Readings- Epistemology*. Ed. by Roy. W. Perrett. Routledge Publications, 2001. Chap. THE NYĀYA ON EXISTENCE, KNOWABILITY AND NAMEABILITY, pp. 356–368, p. 361.

But existence is not a relational property. Naiyāyikas claim that if something has one of these three properties, it must have the remaining two properties

4.2.1 Is Whatever Exists Knowable and Nameable?

One immediate issue with the Naiyāyikas' principle is related to the nameability aspect. *Prima facie*, it seems we can name entities that are non-existent. For example, pegasus, rabbit horn, and barren women's child are all names or expressions of non-existing entities. Hence one can argue that not every nameable entity is existing. However, Naiyāyikas find a way to account for non-existing entities without letting their principle go off by making a distinction between non-empty referring expressions and empty referring expressions. Their strategy is to treat empty referring expressions as complex and treat their simple parts as referring to actual entities. Take an expression like "The rabbit horn". This is an example of an empty referring expression because it supposedly refers to a non-existing entity. For the Naiyāyikas, "the rabbit horn" is a complex expression and hence they break it down to a simpler one, "a rabbit" and "a horn". Each of them refers to the real entities. So, according to Nyāya, there are genuine expressions and non-genuine expressions and the above example is a non-genuine expression. They claim that a genuine expression is one which has got a reference. Nameability applies only to the real ontological categories accepted by the Naiyāyikas metaphysics.

If everything is knowable, then one genuine question would be by whom it is knowable? Who can perceive all the real entities? One possible answer could be that God, who is omniscient, can perceive all that is there in the world. From an early period onwards, Naiyāyikas accept the existence of an omniscient God (*Īśvara*), and it is safe to infer from that this that *Īśvara* knows all the existing entities. However, the scope of knowability is not strictly restricted to God alone. It is supposed to

include human knowability. However, Perrett (2001) claims that one cannot defend the human knowability thesis. He argues, “There are truths that are not known by humans and it is wildly implausible to suppose that all truths are humanly known.”²² He maintains that the human knowability thesis is demonstratively false.²³

How can one defend human knowability? It is almost impossible to know the infinite magnitude of things that are said to be objectively real. The infinitely varying individuality of things may not be known by the human’s finite mind. But Naiyāyikas think that there is a way to tackle this issue. There are two ways that Naiyāyikas can respond to this objection. First, the knowability thesis claims that every real entity is, *in principle*, knowable. This does not mean that everything will be known. It only says there is a possibility of knowing every real entity. Something is knowable, does not mean one knows it. The fact that one may never know it does not mean that it is not knowable. At the same time, if something is knowable, it does not mean that there is someone who knows everything. In the future, one may come to know it, but it might so happens that we may never come to know it. But it does not mean that this is unknowable. The knowability thesis says not everything that is knowable is known at any point in time.²⁴

²²Roy. W. Perrett. “Is Whatever Exists Knowable And Nameable?” In: *Indian Philosophy: A Collection of Readings- Epistemology*. Ed. by Roy. W. Perrett. Routledge Publications, 2001. Chap. IS WHATEVER EXISTS KNOWABLE AND NAMEABLE?, pp. 369–386, p. 373.

²³Perrett (2001, 371) makes an interesting formulation of ‘divine knowability’ and ‘human knowability’, which reads as follows:

1. Divine Knowability: All truths are knowable by an omniscient God.
2. Human Knowability: All truths are knowable by humans.

As for the first claim, it is argued that this assertion just follows from the mere definition of God itself. If there is an omniscient God, then it is asserted that he or she knows everything. If that is true, then for God, knowability collapses into knownness. However, this is not the case with humans. In the case of humans, knowability does not easily collapse into knownness. But one can make sense of human knowability without even referring to divine knowability thesis.

²⁴Chakrabarti (2020, 60-63) also tries to rescue Nyāya principle from Perrett’s objection using a similar move in his recent publication.

The Naiyāyikas can respond in another way also. According to them, entities are not entirely dissimilar, and they are said to possess some common features. Having some common features makes it possible for us to group them under several types or categories of reals, which gives them the same name and designation for the different objects grouped under these categories. These categories are said to be ultimate reals and absolutely objective facts. They are independent of all thoughts referring to them. They would exist as reals even if there is no one to cognize them. Hence they are said to be ontological entities. Since every real cognizable entity can be subsumed under these six or seven categories, it is possible to know all the existing entities with the help of these limited categories.²⁵ If this is true, then it is possible to defend human knowability.

4.3 How Does *Nirvikalpa-Pratyakṣa* Grounds Nyāya Realism?

Before looking at the arguments supporting the claim that *nirvikalpa* perception grounding realism, let us first look at the general reading of the status of *nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa* in Nyāya philosophy. Some Nyāya scholars claim that “...the admission of

²⁵There is a worry concerning whether Nyāya’s list of sixteen categories goes against the Vaiśeṣika’s list of seven categories. It is true that while giving a general scheme of categories, *Nyāya-sūtra* lists sixteen *padārthas* that are different from that of Vaiśeṣika’s seven categories. But this difference in the list of *padārthas* does not mean that Naiyāyikas rejects the Vaiśeṣikas metaphysical scheme of things. For Vaiśeṣika, cognizability (*prameyatva*) is co-extensive with reality. But, Naiyāyikas only enumerates twelve cognizables as constituting the category of *prameya* (the objects of knowledge). They are as follows- “soul (*ātman*), body (*sarīra*), senses (*indriya*), sensible specific qualities (*artha*), cognition (*buddhi*), mind (*manas*), activity (*pravṛtti*), moral impurities (*doṣa*), transmigration (*pretyabhāva*), consequences of activities (*phala*), suffering (*duḥkha*), and the emancipation from the state of suffering (*apavarga*).” (Ganganatha, 1912) Though the list of *prameyas* is different from that of Vaiśeṣikas, the list is not an exhaustive enumeration of all the possible objects of cognition. Vātsyāyana, while commenting on the *Nyāya-sūtra*, says, “besides these twelve, there are countless other cognizables or reals and that it is possible to classify them all under the six or seven heads recognized by the Vaiśeṣika) (Ganganatha, 1912) So Naiyāyikas, in principle are not contradicting the thesis of Vaiśeṣika at all.

non-conceptual perception is vital to Nyāya realism, for only such an awareness opens access to things as they are.”²⁶ At the same time, other thinkers opine that “acceptance of non-conceptual perception is not only an unnecessary and unwarranted feature of Nyāya epistemology, but also it undermines Nyāya direct realism more broadly”.²⁷ Given these opposing views about the role of *nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa* in the Nyāya system, it is an uphill task to defend a place for it within the system. However, I shall attempt to give an account that will justify *nirvikalpa* perception within the Nyāya system without jeopardizing its commitment to direct realism.

Being a realist, Naiyāyikas want perceptual states to have a touch with reality, and they think that it is the non-conceptual perception that provides the link between the object and the cognitive states. Hence, one of the ways that this *nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa* grounds the realism is by directly presenting the world as it is. However, Arindam Chakrabarti rejects this view by saying that *nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa* cannot present things as they are because “things are really qualified.”²⁸ He says, “...since things in the world are qualified in themselves, a perception that shows them to be unqualified and disjointed would not give us access to them as they really are.”²⁹ There are issues with Chakrabarti’s reading of indeterminate perception here. He seems to hold that *nirvikalpa* perception presents objects as divorced from their real nature, and by that, he believes that it does not present the world as it is at all.³⁰ However,

²⁶J. N. Mohanty. *Reason and tradition in Indian thought: An essay on the nature of Indian philosophical thinking*. Oxford: Clarendon Press., 1992, p. 174.

²⁷Chakrabarti, “Against Immaculate Perception : Seven Reasons for Eliminating Nirvikalpaka Perception from Nyāya”, p. 3.

²⁸Chakrabarti, “Against Immaculate Perception : Seven Reasons for Eliminating Nirvikalpaka Perception from Nyāya”, p. 4.

²⁹Chakrabarti, “Against Immaculate Perception : Seven Reasons for Eliminating Nirvikalpaka Perception from Nyāya”, p. 4.

³⁰It appears to me that when Chakrabarti claims that these perceptions are disjoint, he seems to suppose that there are some atomic perceptions (sensations) coming from the sense object from the outside. But he argues that we do not know anything about them. Moreover he seems to hold that it is only by accessing them, we come to know the reality. However, this way of reading *nirvikalpa* perception is unfounded in Nyāya philosophy.

Phillips disagrees with Chakrabarti by saying, "...Naiyāyikas thinks that *nirvikalpa* perception presents the qualifier not as divorced from its qualificandum, but rather as neither divorced nor joined and, furthermore, not as qualified by another qualifier but rather just the plain, unadorned entity."³¹

There seems to be two issues with idea that *nirvikalpa* perception grounds the realism by presenting the world as it is. One, if it is true that the *nirvikalpa-pratyakṣa* indeed provides direct link between the world and the cognition, then there appears to be an inconsistency in Nyāya theory of perception. *Nirvikalpaka-pratyakṣa* is conceived to be a medium that provides the link between the object and the *savikalpa* perception. This resembles the point of view of indirect realism, not direct realism. If Nyāya holds a direct-realist position, then non-conceptual perception cannot be the link between the object and the perception, or else they should jettison *nirvikalpa* perception altogether. Otherwise, we need to discard the idea that their position is direct realism. Between these two positions, Chakrabarti has opted for the first one. If *nirvikalpa-pratyakṣa* acts as a medium, we infer the existence of objects by perceiving the non-conceptual states. Then our perception of objects is mediated, meaning we are indirectly aware of the external objects in virtue of a direct awareness of the non-conceptual perception. Two, if *nirvikalpa* perception presents the world as it is, then does it mean that the *savikalpa pratyakṣa* cannot do this job of presenting the world as it is? However, Naiyāyikas wants both *savikalpa*, and *nirvikalpa* to present the world as it is.

Another way that a non-conceptual perception grounds realism is by providing a direct causal relation between the mind and the world. One of the reasons for the directness of this causal relation is that there is no involvement of subjective elements like either concepts or language at the stage of *nirvikalpa* perception. This

³¹Phillips, "There's Nothing Wrong with Raw Perception: A Response to Chakrabarti's Attack on Nyāya's "Nirvikalpaka Pratyakṣa"", p. 105.

involvement of concepts or language might be one reason for the occurrences of illusory or hallucinatory cases. Chadha argues,

Indeterminate perception provides the direct causal link between the sense organ and the property in the world without any intervening subjective elements....In a first-time perception or an indeterminate cognition of the qualifier ‘cowhood’, there is no contribution from the language and/ or mind: perception originates in the world and gets us in direct touch with the world as it is.³²

So one can explain the causes of illusion and hallucinations by citing the above-mentioned subjective elements.³³

If it is true that the objects of our perceptions are indeed the actual content of the world, then how do we explain the cases like illusions and hallucinations? We know for a fact that the objects of these cases are not part of the real world at all. Giving a satisfactory explanation for errors and hallucination has become a pressing matter for direct realists. How would Naiyāyikas respond to this objection? Let us look at Phillips and Tatacharya interpretations of *nirvikalpa* perception and see how they respond to this issue.

Stephen Phillips and Ramanuja Tatacharya render Gaṅgeśa’s definition of *nirvikalpa* perception in the following way:

And perception is of two sorts, indeterminate and determinate. Of the two, the indeterminate does not have (as object) the tie to name, universal,

³²Monima Chadha. “On Knowing Universals: The Nyāya Way”. In: *Philosophy East and West* 64.2 (Apr. 2014), pp. 287–302, p. 297.

³³Subjective elements are not the same as concepts. Certain kinds of subjective conditions are responsible for erroneous cognitions. For example, a particular person is afraid of snakes. This is a subjective condition. So whenever this person goes out and encounters a rope in the dark, she imposes the fear of a snake onto the object, rope. The error resulted not because of the concepts, but because of this subjective condition of fear. She might have the concepts of snake and rope. But since these concepts are not appropriately applied, this erroneous cognition has occurred. Though concepts are subjective conditions in the sense that they are with the subject, they are also considered as objective conditions, conditions pertaining to the object.

and so on (having which perception is determinate); it does not grasp a qualificative relationality, and it is without predication content.³⁴

They rendered it in a slightly different way than the Bhatta's translation discussed in the first chapter³⁵. They interpret non-conceptual perception as something that directly acquaints us with an object and its identifying attributes, but not presenting the object and its attributes as being related in any way. For instance, they would argue that the non-conceptual awareness of a tree would present the tree and its property of treehood, but it would not yet present the treehood as being related or belonging to the tree. The objects of a *nirvikalpa* perception are ontologically same as that of objects of *savikalpa* perception— real universals, particulars and connecting relation. Yet, they would argue, a *nirvikalpaka* perception presents the qualifying attribute on its own, rather than in a qualificative relation with its bearer. They also describe non-conceptual perception as lacking any predicative content (*niṣprakāraṇam*) i.e., a non-conceptual awareness does not present any properties as being predicated of the object that possesses them. For example, a non-conceptual state of awareness does not present the property of treehood as being predicated upon the tree. Even though the tree and the treehood are metaphysically related, both a property and property-possessor is represented in a *nirvikalpa* perception merely by themselves, and not as being a property and a property-possessor respective to each other.

According to them, *nirvikalpaka* perceptions are distinct from *savikalpaka* perceptions because they present their objects in a pre-predicative, non-propositional manner. But what is it to cognise the objects in such a manner? If *nirvikalpa* perception is pre-predicative and non-propositional, how do we cognise the qualifier in non-conceptual perception? Though they have not explicated it in their commentary,

³⁴Stephen. H. Phillips, *Epistemology of Perception : Gaṅgeśa's Tattva-Cintāmaṇi, Jewel of Reflection on The Truth (About Epistemology): The Perception Chapter (Pratyakṣa-Khaṇḍa), Translated Text, Translation, And Philosophical Commentary.*

³⁵For Bhatta's translation, please refer to the second chapter of the dissertation. (p. 13)

we could make sense of it from their take on Gaṅgeśa's non-conceptual perception. It appears that, according to their interpretation, one perceives the particular and the universal in *nirvikalpa* perception in an unrelated way, and by applying concepts and categories to the non-conceptual content, one reaches the final concept-laden awareness state. However, this account seems incoherent because they argue that we not only perceive the particular and qualifier at *nirvikalpa* stage, but also identify them. However, identifying is nothing but determination of content and more importantly determination of content takes place at *savikalpa* state, not at *nirvikalpa* state. Hence their interpretation sounds incoherent. If the determination of content takes place at the *nirvikalpa* state itself, then there will not be a possibility of perceptual errors and hallucinations. Hence their account of *nirvikalpa* perception does not seem to give a satisfactory explanation to the phenomenons of perceptual error and hallucinatory experiences.

I would like to understand the notion of *nirvikalpa* perception in a slightly different manner. I would say that in the *nirvikalpa* state, things are not so clear. We perceive things in a confused manner, and slowly there emerges a clear knowledge of what we perceived. I am using clear knowledge in this particular sense: when we have clear knowledge, we will recognise what is given to our sense, and also knowledge is clear and distinct when one can enumerate the marks in the objects that make them sufficient to differentiate from other things. When one possesses these identification and enumeration marks, one can say that she possesses clear knowledge. Generally, one reaches this kind of clear knowledge at *savikalpa-pratyakṣa*, due to which one possesses a distinct notion or concept of the perceived entity. If we follow the interpretation that I have given here, we can easily find a way to account for perceptual error and hallucinations.

According to Naiyāyikas, perception is a two-step process, indeterminate and determinate perceptions. Indeterminate perception is simple, in the sense that what we have cognized at this stage is an undifferentiated whole. We do perceive particular, universal, and relational properties at this stage. But we do not perceive them distinctively. We do identify what we have perceived in *nirvikalpa pratyakṣa*, but we fail to distinguish them individually. That is why it is said that what we have perceived in non-conceptual perception is nothing but the undifferentiated whole. Whereas in a determinate perception, we have a structured cognition in the sense that we perceive a thing as having particular qualities, like *X* having a particular quality *Y*. Unlike the indeterminate perception, the determinate perception is complex in the sense that there are at least two distinct elements present in the cognition, a qualifier and a qualificand. The error is said to be "promiscuous", i.e., it deals with and uniting two objects when they are not so connected or united in the actual world (Matilal, 1986). As we have seen here, there is only a simple undifferentiated object in indeterminate perception. Hence the possibility of promiscuity, as well as error, does not arise. But the error occurs at determinate perception because there is a possibility of connecting two entities in a qualifier-qualified relation where the purported relation is not there at all. More about the perceptual error in the next section.

There is one more way of accounting how *nirvikalpa* perception can ground Nyāya realism. This explanation is based upon the nature of the perceptual experience. It is as follows: when an object is in contact with one's sense faculties, all of the object's properties are in full contact with the sense faculties. Yet, a lot of those qualities might go unnoticed in her experience. For example, when someone sees a table as a table, she might fail to recognize all the other finer details about the table, like its smoothness, refined edges, and all other recognizable qualities. Her perceptual awareness only identifies the tablehood leaving out all the further finer details. Then

there should be an explanation as to how only this awareness of tablehood is captured. There should be a mechanism for how this property of tableness is selected and how the other qualities are filtered out in the perceptual process. Clearly, the sense-object contact is not enough to perform this task of filtering out these attributes because the sense-object connection will put senses in touch with all the qualities indiscriminately. Chaturvedi says, “since the sense-object contact alone cannot do this task of the selective function of specifying, Gaṅgeśa seems to accept the existence of *nirvikalpa* perception to explain this selective function of cognizing the specific qualifier alone.”³⁶ According to Chaturvedi, Gaṅgeśa reason for accepting the *nirvikalpa pratyakṣa* is as follows: A qualificative awareness cognizes an object as specifically having particular quality because it is that specific quality that is the object of prior non-conceptual awareness state.

One of the assumptions in the explanation of the existence of *nirvikalpa pratyakṣa* is that our perceptual awareness is layered. First, there arises the cognition of qualifiers in the *nirvikalpa* perception. Later, this awareness causally gives rise to the perceptual awareness of the object as qualified by a specific attribute. Chakrabarti questioned the need for this type of causal layering of the perceptual process. He argues “why an object needs to be disassembled in a non-conceptual awareness of a qualifier to be seen as having the qualifying feature it actually has.”³⁷ To this, Phillips replies as follows:

If the ontological layering of things and their qualifiers were not reflected in the causal ordering that has the qualificandum known through knowledge of one or more of its properties, properties that are already known, then perception of a qualificandum should entail that the “thick” particular be presented, the thing with all of its properties, and as Gaṅgeśa pointed

³⁶Chaturvedi, “There is Something Wrong with Raw Perception, After All—Vyāsātīrtha’s Refutation of *Nirvikalpaka-Pratyakṣa*”.

³⁷Chakrabarti, “Reply to Stephen Phillips”.

out... a blind person in touching a yellow cloth would know its yellow color.³⁸

He argues that in order to perceive an object validly, the ontological structuring³⁹ of an object must be reflected in the causal structuring of the perceptual process.

There is a problem with Phillips's reasoning here. According to him, the causal layering of the perceptual process must mirror the ontological structure. He argues that there is layering at the ontological level and that layering must be reflected in how an object is being perceived. He seems to believe that Gaṅgeśa's account of perception is sensitive enough to take care of this issue. He argues that first, there is a cognition of qualifier non-conceptually. This non-conceptual cognition of qualifier gives rise to the determination of an object qualified by this particular qualifier. In the causal structure, there is an element of temporality built into it. It means, first there is a cognition of a qualifier, and then after some moments, the initial cognition is followed by the determination of an object with this particular qualifier. But can we talk about temporality at an ontological level at all? And one can ask, ontologically which is prior? Is it the table or the brown color? If the causal structuring must reflect the ontological level, then there must be cognition of the table first, followed by the brown color. Phillips seems to have inverted that relation altogether here. But according to Naiyāyikas, what really matters is this: the ontological structuring must be reflected in the perception, but not in the perceptual process.

What grounds realism is the causal link that exists between the object of cognition and the mental state. They argue that the objects cause the perception, and this must be grounded in this causal relation. How do error and hallucinations occur if direct

³⁸Stephen. H. Phillips, *Epistemology of Perception : Gaṅgeśa's Tattva-Cintāmaṇi, Jewel of Reflection on The Truth (About Epistemology): The Perception Chapter (Pratyakṣa-Khaṇḍa), Transliterated Text, Translation, And Philosophical Commentary*, p. 610.

³⁹Here the ontological structuring means the relation between the subject and its predicates, whereas perceptual causal layering means the perception of qualifier followed by the cognition of the qualificand.

realism presents the world as it is and is grounded through the causal link between the objects and the cognitive states? In the coming section, I will explain how would Naiyāyikas explain these two phenomena without jeopardizing their claim about direct realism.

4.4 Perceptual Error

According to Nyāya, valid knowledge (*pramā*) presents the object as it really is, whereas erroneous cognition does not do so. In an erroneous cognition, an object is cognized as having certain attributes, which are not part of the object at all. *Tarkasamgraha* defines erroneous cognition in the following way: “Misapprehension is erroneous knowledge, like the knowledge: That is silver in a piece of an oyster shell.”⁴⁰ It is a misapprehension in the sense that a perceived object is taken to be what it is really not. The standard examples of erroneous cognitions are the oyster shell is mistakenly perceived as silver, the cognition of rope as a snake, and the cognition of pole as a man. The common thing in all of the cases is cognition of the object as other than what it really is. Take the example of mistakenly perceiving rope as a snake. In this case, even though there is a rope present right in front of an observer, she perceives it as a snake. This happens because she misattributed the property of the snakehood onto the object, rope, which is present now. She remembers the past experience of seeing a snake, and due to the apparent similarity between the rope and the snake, she identifies the present object as a snake, not as a rope.

In general, erroneous cognitions are divided into two kinds. First, erroneous cognitions that run counter to another succeeding perception, and second, erroneous cognitions that run counter to other non-perceptual cognitions. In the first type of erroneous cognition, two experiences occur about the same thing that are contradictory

⁴⁰Virupakshananda, *Tarka Samgraha with the Dīpikā of Anāmbhatta and Notes*, p. 138.

to each other. However, the perceiver cannot identify which one of them is veridical at the time of experiencing. But the subject may quickly learn after some time which one of them is veridical. Consider the following schema as an example for the first type of illusory cognition.

1. X looks F to S at t_1 .
2. X looks G to S at t_2 .

F and G are mutually exclusive characteristics. The second case is called “contradicting” or “correcting awareness” (*bādhaka pratyaya*) in relation to the first one. The “correcting awareness” falsifies the first one. This schema is what is available to us in perceptual error of the first type. In the second type, a resultant cognition in one mode runs counter to another in a different mode of cognition. This is not strictly a perceptual error as such.

What happens in the case of perceptual error? Let us demonstrate Nyāya’s conception of perceptual error using the example that is mentioned above. Take the case of erroneously perceiving shell as silver. Suppose there is a shell and the subject is in sense contact with it. She must supposedly perceive what is right in front of her, meaning, in this case, shell. But in the end, she comes to the wrong conclusion that she perceived a silver. What is the reason for this error? Naiyāyikas explain this in the following manner: They argue that there is a similarity between silver and shell. Both these things share some general features; for example, both of them have glittering and bright features. When a subject is in sense contact with the shell, she only perceives some general characteristics of the object due to some defaults. She cannot perceive the distinct and peculiar features of the given object, which will help her identify what it really is. At the same time, it is possible that some other things also share these similar features. As we have noted earlier, both shell and silver share some general features. So the perceived general features being associated with some other

thing (here the silver), the subject recalls the memory-images of peculiar properties of the silver. Through such recollection of the memory images, there is a sense of an extraordinary connection between the sense and the silver. Hence there is a perception of silver in this illusory experience. It is argued that, in an erroneous cognition, "...a universal is not referred to its own locus but to that of locus of a different universal. In the cognition of a shell as silver, the silverness is referred to as a wrong locus, namely the shell. Hence it is a false characterization of the object by the negation of its real characters."⁴¹

But what is this extraordinary connection that we are talking about here? Nyāya philosophers divide perception into two ways based upon the sense-object contact. If the senses are in touch with the objects in the usual way, then we have what we call ordinary or *laukika* perception. But if the objects are not connected with the senses in the usual way, then we have extraordinary or *alaukika* perception. In an *alaukika* perception, the object is not given through the usual way but conveyed through an extraordinary medium. They say in an extraordinary perception, there is a special kind of sense-object contact (*alaukika-sannikarsa*). According to Naiyāyikas, extraordinary perception is of three types. They are *sāmānya-lakṣana*, *yogaśa*, and *jñāna-lakṣana*. Naiyāyikas claim that through *sāmānya-lakṣana*, one can perceive universals. And *yogaśa* is an extraordinary perception by which one can intuitively perceive all the objects belonging to the past, present, and future. This kind of knowledge is possible only through some meditative powers. Lastly, *jñāna-lakṣana* is a complex perception that is a synthesis of past knowledge with that of present cognition of the same object. To explain the erroneous cognition, Naiyāyikas refer to *jñāna-lakṣana* perception and hence I will be only detailing it here.

⁴¹Chatterjee, *The Nyāya Theory of Knowledge : A Critical Study Of Some Problems Of Logic And Metaphysics*, p. 33.

It is defined as follows: “*jñāna-lakṣaṇa* is the perception of an object which is in contact with senses through a previous knowledge of itself.”⁴² Let me take an example to demonstrate this extraordinary perception. Suppose someone looks at a flower from a distance and says, “I see a fragrant rose.” But here, the observer is only in contact with the flower visually, and that too from a distance where she cannot grasp the smell of the flower. Then how come she declares that she sees a fragrant rose? How can fragrance be seen? Fragrance can only be cognized through the sense organ of smell, not by the visual sense. Here the visual sense organ can only perceive color, not smell. Despite not having sensory contact with the smell, she is able to cognize the fragrant rose. This is because the visual perception of the rose revives the memory of the past knowledge of the fragrant rose. By the association of the past knowledge, she perceives the fragrance of rose. In *jñāna-lakṣaṇa*, past knowledge of the same kind of object is invoked to cognise the present perception of object.⁴³ Hence, there is an extraordinary connection between the fragrance and the sense of the sight. In this perception, the past knowledge of fragrant rose acts as a contact between the sense and object.

What is the cause of this perceptual error? Where does the error lie? The phenomenon of erroneous cognition is discussed widely within the Indian philosophical systems. Each system has conceived its way of accounting for perceptual error by giving a unique explanation. However, the fundamental questions regarding erroneous cognition are as follows: where does the error come from? Is it due to the object of perception? Or is it due to the subject’s attitude towards what is being perceived? Or is it resulted out of the sense-object connection? If it is due to the perceived object, then one can say that error is an external phenomenon. If it is due to the conditions

⁴²Chatterjee, *The Nyāya Theory of Knowledge : A Critical Study Of Some Problems Of Logic And Metaphysics*, p. 218.

⁴³In the case of the famous example, “This is the same Devadatta that I met earlier,” it is the knowledge about the same object, the knowledge about Devadatta, that is invoked to perceive Devadatta now.

pertaining to the subject, then the phenomenon of error is an internal phenomenon. Lastly, it could be a mix of both internal and external factors if it is due to the sense-object connection. According to Nyāya philosophy, all valid knowledge is objective in the sense that it is grounded in the object. It means that the validity of knowledge is external in the sense that the knowledgehood of a *pramā* (a cognitive event) is external to the conditions of the origin of knowledge itself. To be a valid knowledge is to have a causal relation between the *pramā* and the object itself.

Naiyāyikas claim that all erroneous knowledge is subjective because it all arises due to the false attribution of properties onto the perceived object by the knowing subject. The error is subjective, pertaining to some of the conditions of the knowing subject. So the error does not have any objective grounding, and Naiyāyikas explains the occurrence of error as some sort of internal phenomenon. They argue that the rope is real, as well as the shell. There is nothing wrong with the object of perception at all. Hence they argue that there is no error in the simple act of apprehension of the object.⁴⁴

The object as given to us through the *nirvikalpa* perception has indeed all the properties it is said to have. But, on account of some defects and the influence of the memory of past knowledge, the presented object is misinterpreted as something else

⁴⁴Chatterjee (1939, 36) says the same thing occurs in the case of mirages. He says, “ The object all the while remains what it actually is. In regard to the flickering rays of the sun, when there arises the cognition of water, there is no error in the object: it is not that the rays are not rays, nor that the flickering is not flickering; the error lies in the cognition: as it is the cognition which instead of appearing as the cognition of the flickering rays, appears as the cognition of water, i.e., as the cognition of a thing as something which is not.” However, there is a difference between this example of mirage and the examples discussed by the Naiyāyikas. The difference between them can be explained by distinguishing between two types of errors: systemic and non-systematic. In a systematic error, one can systematically explain the phenomenon behind the error. It means one can scientifically or objectively explain the phenomenon, and whosoever happens to perceive this phenomenon will eventually end up cognizing it as an erroneous phenomenon. It means that the error does not lie with the observer or subject. Muller-Lyer’s illusion will be an example of this kind. A non-systematic error is an error that cannot be systematically explained. It depends upon the subjective condition of the observer or subject, for example, her past experience, fears, and prejudices, etc. The examples that are discussed in the Nyāya systems fall under the category of non-systematic errors. But the example of mirages seems to be a systematic error. Everyone seems to perceive the same phenomenon.

in the determinate perception. So it seems that error lies not with the presentation of the object but the determination of what is being perceived. According to them, erroneous cognition is presentational in nature and has some basis in facts. But the error occurs due to the misplacement and misreading of the facts. Hence the error occurs not at the level of *nirvikalpa* perception but results from the determination of content at *savikalpa* perception.

According to Nyāya, the sensory illusion is said to be “promiscuous”.⁴⁵ And promiscuity involves presenting two entities as related where in reality, there is no relation between them. Promiscuity involves in presenting an object as existing where it actually does not exist at all. We have seen that in indeterminate perception, there is only a simple undifferentiated object. Hence the possibility of promiscuity does not arise. But the error occurs at determinate perception because there is a possibility of connecting two entities in a qualifier-qualified relation where there is no relation between them. The classic case of rope and snake is promiscuous because the presented rope is characterized as a snake, though the snake’s character does not belong to the rope at all. Here there is a false connection between the two entities, the qualificand (rope), with that of a qualifier (snake), which results in the erroneous perception.

4.4.1 Nyāya Theory of Error: *Anyathā-Khyāti*

So far, we have discussed that the reason behind the erroneous cognition is ascription of a property that is not there in the perceived object. But how do we come to ascribe the false property in the first place? And again, how does this false property appear as something actually perceived in illusion? Most of the Indian philosophical systems have attempted to give an answer to both these questions. Naiyāyikas also comes up with their version of the theory of error, and it is called *Anyathā-Khyāti*. When

⁴⁵Matilal, *Perception - An Essay on Classical Indian Theories of Knowledge*, p. 180.

we mistake an object for a different object, for example, when we mistake rope for a snake, the idea or the knowledge of a snake perceived in the past is imported into the memory through *jñāna-lakṣana*. It is confused with the presented object (rope). They argue that the error is due to the wrong synthesis of the presented object with the represented object. The word *anyathā* means elsewhere and else wise. Both these two senses are captured in the Nyāya theory of error. The presented object is perceived else-wise, and the represented object exists elsewhere. It is argued that

The shell and the silver, the rope, and the snake are both separately real; only their synthesis is unreal. The shell and the rope are directly presented as “this” (when we say: ‘this is silver,’ or ‘this is a snake’), while the silver and the snake exist elsewhere and are revived in memory through *jñāna-lakṣana* perception.⁴⁶

The snake given to the senses is perceived as elsewhere, and the rope that exists elsewhere is cognized as something given to her senses.

The illusory experience is contradicted in two ways -

1. by a subsequent experience that corrects the illusory experience of silver and shows it to be false. For example, we might realize that the cognition of silver in the illusory experience is devoid of its objective characteristics.
2. by the experience of disappointment which results when we try to take possession of the supposedly perceived object. For example, when we are trying to take possession of the mistaken silver, we will eventually realize that we are not in the control of silver but of a shell.

⁴⁶Chandradhar Sharma. *Indian Philosophy : A Critical Survey*. Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1960, p. 229.

So we come to know the erroneous cognitions through the inability of the perceived object to produce a successful activity (*pravṛttisāmarthya*) or by running through a contradiction by the other modes of cognition.

In this chapter, I have discussed perceptual realism in general and explained the Nyāya conception of realism. It is argued that what grounds realism is the causal link between the object and cognition. All those accounts that support the existence of *nirvikalpa* perception must explain its role in the Nyāya philosophy. It seems that they argue that it grounds Nyāya realism by presenting the world as it is. Though both Phillips and Tatacarya argued that *nirvikalpa* is just a posit, they also accept that causal account of the perception, i.e., objects, causes the cognitive states. I have argued that *nirvikalpa* perception is an integral part of Nyāya realism and the Naiyāyika's account of the phenomenon of erroneous cognition is consistent with the interpretation of the *nirvikalpa* perception provided here.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Though there has been an increase in the works on the Nyāya notion of perception, there is little consensus about the nature of *nirvikalpa* perception and its relation with that of *savikalpa* perception. There are two dominant positions regarding the status of *nirvikalpa* perception in the recent literature. Some people (Chakrabarti (2000, 2001, 2004), Chaturvedi (2020)) argue that *nirvikalpa* perception does not exist as an epistemic state and gives reasons to jettison non-conceptual perception from the Nyāya philosophy altogether. While others (Phillips (2001, 2004), Chadha (2001, 2006), Bronkhorst (2011)) argue that it does exist as an epistemic state and presents their arguments to support their claim. By continuing the debate, this dissertation takes up the task of inquiring into the nature of *nirvikalpa* perception and its place in the Nyāya system. I have attempted to give an account that will justify *nirvikalpa* perception within the Nyāya system without jeopardizing Nyāya's commitment to direct realism.

In the first chapter, I have taken up the task of inquiring into the nature of *nirvikalpa* perception. I have outlined Nyāya's account of perceptual experience and explained Gaṅgeśa's definition of *nirvikalpa* perception in the first part of the chapter.

Gaṅgeśa's causal principle, *all qualificative awareness states are produced by a prior awareness of a qualifier*, is taken up for the discussion in the first chapter. Two prominent counter-examples to his principle were also discussed. Memory was seen to be one of the counterexamples to Gaṅgeśa's causal principle. However, on a closer look, it is revealed that perception and memory are two different kinds of cognitions, and hence memory in principle cannot stand as a counter-example to Gaṅgeśa's principle. But, Gaṅgeśa acknowledges that cognition of absence as a counter-example and tries to account for it. However, Gaṅgeśa's account of cognition of absence is deemed as an *ad hoc* explanation. I have focused on four problems that Gaṅgeśa's theory of non-conceptual perception faces because of the admission of this 'apparent' *ad hoc* principle. I have argued that Gaṅgeśa's explanation of cognition of absence is consistent with the Naiyāyikas' account of *nirvikalpa* perception. In the end, I have tried to give an explanation for the cognition of absence which does not go against Nyāya's direct realism. I have argued that the cognition of absence is always a relative cognition. All the other things we can perceive absolutely. But absence is something that we perceive relative to the context.

The second chapter addresses the question of epistemic access to *nirvikalpa* perception. The entire chapter revolves around one central question: how does one get to know *nirvikalpa* perception? Chakrabarti and Chaturvedi argue that *nirvikalpa* perception does not exist as an epistemic state. If it does not exist as an epistemic state, then they say that we cannot know it. At the same time, Phillips and Shaw argue that it does exist as an epistemic state, but we come to know it through inference. Presenting his argument against the existence of *nirvikalpa* perception, Chakrabarti argues that *nirvikalpa* perception does not have any object-directedness. Hence, it does not fit very well with the Nyāya realist philosophy. I have argued that all of their views

are unfounded and proposes the possibility of knowing *nirvikalpa* perception through *anuvyavasāya*. This claim is consistent with the Nyāya conception of perception.

Responding to Chakrabarti's position, I have shown that there is a difference between identifying or determining an object vis-à-vis having an object. It is not the case that *nirvikalpa* perception does not have any object-directedness. The object as a whole is given in the *nirvikalpa* perception. This state of awareness is directed towards this homogeneous object. However, it is only the case that we do not know the nature of the given object at this state. That is why there is no determination of the object. But failing to determine or specify what is given in our perception does not mean that it is not directed towards any object or it does not refer to an object.

Phillips and Shaw believe that even though *nirvikalpa* perception exists as an epistemic state, it is not available for introspective awareness. Phillips argues that *nirvikalpa* perception is a theoretical posit, a hypothetical entity, that is posited for explaining the availability of qualifiers in the concept-laden perception. Since it is a theoretical entity, he says, it cannot be known through introspection. However, we come to know it through some sort of one-step inferential process. There are two issues with Phillips's position. One, his explanation seems like an instance of *arthāpatti*, a presumption, and *arthāpatti* is not a valid *pramāṇa* within the Nyāya epistemology. So Naiyāyikas perhaps would not have accepted this explanation. It also means that Phillip's explanation is inconsistent with the Nyāya view. Two, if *nirvikalpa* perception is a mere hypothetical entity, then why did both Udayana and Gaṅgeśa claim that in the sequence of the events leading up to the occurrence of *anuvyavasāya*, there occurs a non-qualificative cognition of the initial cognition and its cognitionhood at the second moment?

Shaw argues that only qualificative cognitions can have *anuvyavasāya*. Since *nirvikalpa* cognition is not a qualificative cognition, he says, we cannot know it through

anuvyavasāya. I have listed two possible explanations as to why Shaw maintains this position and showed how both explanations are founded on false assumptions. For the higher-order cognition to be a qualificative cognition, he assumes that the initial cognition must also be a qualificative cognition. However, the very conception of *anuvyavasāya* does not make any claims about the initial cognition being qualificative in nature. All it says is that it is followed by a cognition that is non-erroneous (*vyavasāya*). Hence this an unsubstantiated assumption. The second assumption is as follows: since *anuvyavasāya* is certain and we can speak of the validity of qualificative cognition only, Shaw might have reasoned that the initial awareness should also be a qualificative awareness in *anuvyavasāya*. However, being non-erroneous does not necessarily mean it should be a qualificative cognition. *Nirvikalpa* perception can also be a non-erroneous cognition. In fact, it is a necessary condition for *nirvikalpa* perception to be non-erroneous. So the second assumption also seems to be not a justified assumption. In the end, I have argued that it is possible to be aware of *nirvikalpa* perception through *anuvyavasāya* for the following reason. If the conception of error does not have a place in *nirvikalpa* perception, one could say that it is devoid of error altogether. Then it could very well mean that *nirvikalpa* perception could also be the object of the *anuvyavasāya*. Hence one can possibly know *nirvikalpa* perception in principle through *anuvyavasāya*.

The third and the final chapter explore the connection between *nirvikalpa* perception and direct realism. Those who believed in the existence of *nirvikalpa pratyakṣa* have made a case for it by claiming that it grounds or supports the Nyāya notion of realism by presenting the world as it is. It is argued that what grounds realism is the causal link between the object and cognition. All those accounts that support the existence of *nirvikalpa* perception must explain its role in the Nyāya philosophy. If *nirvikalpa* perception presents the world as it is, then how do errors and hallucinations

occur? I have shown how Phillips and Tatacharya's account of *nirvikalpa* perception fails to explain both these cases. Gaṅgeśa has defined *nirvikalpa* perception as "the perceptual knowledge devoid of association of name, generic property, and others, which does not involve any qualification and is without a qualifier" (Bhatta, 2012). However, both Phillips and Tatacharya interpret *nirvikalpa* perception as something that directly acquaints us with an object and its identifying attributes but not presenting the object and its attributes as being related in any way. For instance, they would argue that the non-conceptual awareness of a table would present the table and its property of tablehood. Still, it would not yet present the tablehood as being related or belonging to the table. It appears that according to their interpretation, one perceives the particular and the universal in *nirvikalpa* perception in an unrelated way, and by applying concepts and categories to the non-conceptual content, one reaches the final concept-laden awareness state. They argue that we perceive all the parts separately, and by applying concepts, we synthesize them into a unifying whole. Hence their notion of cognition is synthetic cognition, namely putting all things together. Chadha (2001) also interprets Nyāya's cognitive process as an instance of synthetic cognition.

I have argued that their account is inconsistent with that of Gaṅgeśa's definition of *nirvikalpa* perception. According to their interpretation, we perceive the particular and qualifier at the *nirvikalpa* stage and also identify them. However, identifying is nothing but the determination of content, and more importantly, determination of content usually takes place at *savikalpa* state, not at *nirvikalpa* state. I offered a slightly different account of *nirvikalpa* perception, which is consistent with Gaṅgeśa's definition of *nirvikalpa* perception. I argue that in the *nirvikalpa* state, things are not so clear. We perceive things in a confused manner, and slowly there emerges a clear knowledge of what we perceived. When we have clear knowledge, we will recognize what is given to our senses. Also, knowledge is clear and distinct when one can

enumerate the marks in the objects that make them sufficient to differentiate from other things. When one possesses these identification and enumeration marks, one can say that she possesses clear knowledge. One reaches this kind of clear knowledge at *savikalpa-pratyakṣa*, due to which one possesses a distinct notion or concept of the perceived entity. So a confused whole is given to us, and we do not know what it is. Then we analyse it using the categories or concepts. That is how we get to the *savikalpa-pratyakṣa*. So *savikalpa* perception is an analytical cognition, unlike what others have said. So I have argued that it is through analytical cognition that we perceive things, but not through synthetic cognition.

If *nirvikalpa* perception presents the world as it is, then how do errors and hallucinations occur? This chapter also spends sufficient time in explaining away the phenomenon of erroneous cognition. With the help of the account that I have given for *nirvikalpa* perception, one can easily explain the perceptual error. The sensory illusion is promiscuous, and promiscuity involves presenting two entities as related where there is no relation between them in reality. But according to the account that I have developed here, we have seen that there is only a simple undifferentiated object in indeterminate perception. Hence the possibility of promiscuity, as well as error, does not arise. But the error occurs at determinate perception because there is a possibility of connecting two entities in a qualifier-qualified relation where the purported relation is not there at all.

In short, the dissertation argues for the following points.

1. *Nirvikalpa* perception as an epistemic state does exist, and the question about its existence has arisen primarily due to the (mis)reading of the nature of *nirvikalpa* perception in the Nyāya system. A closer examination of the nature of *nirvikalpa* perception tells us that it is through analytical cognition that we perceive an object in Nyāya's theory of perception but not through synthetic cognition. That

is to say the *savikalpa* perception results from an analysis of what is perceived in the *nirvikalpa* perception.

2. One can know *nirvikalpa* perception through *anuvyavasāya*. A detailed analysis of the concept of cognition of cognition and a critique of the established position on *nirvikalpa* perception proves this point.
3. What grounds Naiyāyikas realism is the causal link that exists between the object of cognition and the mental state, and one can explain the erroneous cognition as a phenomenon resulting from the misattribution of a qualifier onto the perceived entity, which can be explained away easily if what we perceive in the *nirvikalpa* perception is an undifferentiated whole.

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