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THINKING IN-BETWEEN: A CROSS-CULTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM OF
RELATIONS IN SOUTH ASIAN PHILOSOPHY

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*Dedicated to the memory of my mother—
my most beloved and cherished internal relation*

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ABSTRACT

The present dissertation represents a constructive cross-cultural analysis of the philosophical problem of *relation* (Sanskrit: *sambandha*). This involves general theoretical questions such as: What does it actually *mean* for things, or ideas, to be *related*? Are ‘relations’ real kinds of *entities* in the world, like a table or my keyboard, or are they merely conceptual constructions; that is, figments of the imagination *superimposed* on a reality that is *essentially non-relational*? If the latter, then how do separate, independent things come to be interpreted *as* things *in a relation*, i.e., as ‘*relata*’? In this project, I translate, analyze, and compare texts from three philosophical schools in medieval South Asia that provide distinct answers to these relational questions: (a) the ‘naive realism’ of Nyāya Vaiśeṣika; (b) the ‘eliminativism’ of Pramāṇavāda Buddhism; and (c) the ‘reformed realism’ of the tantric school of Pratyabhijñā Śaivism. Under the hermeneutical auspices of the classical American pragmatists, I employ a characteristically Peircean triadic taxonomy of analysis to bring into clear relief the presuppositions and entailments of these Indian schools in conversation with their 20th century Western counterparts. We come to find that these initially highly abstract relational commitments have far-reaching systematic and practical reverberations, ones that touch upon, among other things: the purported dichotomy between ‘realism’ vs. ‘idealism’; the temporality of causation; the reflexive nature of judgment; the significance of phenomenal continuity; the reality of freedom and value; the active vs. inactive status of the divine; and even the practice of religion and the project of its philosophical reconstruction. By way of conclusion, I gesture towards a constructive philosophical project that I call ‘groundless teleology.’

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INTRODUCTION:

A TRIADIC TAXONOMY OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELATIONS

The present dissertation represents a cross-cultural approach to the philosophical problem of the reality of *relations* (Skt. *sambandha*) in the medieval Indian context. This involves very general theoretical questions, namely: What does it actually *mean* for things, or ideas, to be *related*? Are ‘relations’ real kinds of *entities* in the world, like a table or my keyboard, or are they merely conceptual constructions—that is, figments of the imagination *superimposed* on a reality that is *essentially non-relational*? If the latter, then how do separate, independent things come to be interpreted *as terms in a relation*, i.e., as ‘*relata*’? These basic questions underlie both Indian and Western philosophical debates, which often concern the nature of the relationships (or lack thereof) between God, self, and world. And, particularly in the rich pluralistic milieu of medieval India, the way a tradition answers these questions not only lends insight into the rational justifications for why they might adopt a certain conception of God or Absolute Reality (i.e., as dualist, non-dualist, or atheist), but also illuminates how different philosophies, mythical cosmogonies, and ritual practices coevolve and interweave in the practice of religion.

Despite its theoretical importance, however, the study of relations in India has heretofore received relatively scant attention from Western scholars.¹ This is doubtlessly in part because critical editions and/or full translations of two important treatises on the subject had not been made available until recently: the *Sambandhaparīkṣā* (‘*Analysis of Relation*’) [SP] by the 6th century philosopher Dharmakīrti, along with its principal commentary (the

¹ See Gupta (1984) and Jha (1992) for broad overviews of the problem in India, as well as useful classifications of the various types of relations in distinct philosophical traditions. As far as I know, these are the only monographs dedicated explicitly to the general problem of relations in South Asian philosophy—that is, not solely about a specific relational type (cf., e.g., Ingalalli (1990) for a study on the formal relation of identity (*tādātmya*) and B. Shastri (2012) for a study on the ontological relation of inherence (*samavāya*)). Additionally, see Dravid (1977) and Bhattacharya (1977) for two articles that establish some relevant cross-cultural comparisons.

Sambandhaparīkṣāvṛtti) penned by his disciple Devendrabuddhi; and the *Sambandhasiddhi* (*‘Proof of Relation’*) [SS] by the Pratyabhijñā philosopher Utpaladeva.² The centerpiece of this dissertation consists of original translations and analyses of these two treatises on relations. I am thus hopeful that this study will not only constructively flesh out the universal stakes of disputes over relations through a rigorous cross-cultural analysis, but also make a modest textual and scholastic contribution to the field of South Asian philosophy.

In my project, I examine the relational doctrines of three distinct traditions of Indian philosophy: (a) The ‘orthodox’ (*āstika*) Hindu school of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika; (b) the ‘logico-epistemological’ (Pramāṇavada) tradition of Buddhism; and (c) the Tantric non-dual philosophy of Kashmir Śaivism known as Pratyabhijñā (*‘Recognition’*). Accordingly, the work is divided into three parts that isolate and explain the relational arguments and ontological presuppositions of each of these three schools.³ Each part has two chapters, for a total of six chapters. Below, I will outline each chapter of the dissertation, and, in the process, briefly define the relational doctrines associated with each of these three schools. I will then describe my speculative conclusions with respect to the impact of this project on the field of South Asian philosophy and religious studies more generally.

In Chapter I, I introduce the basic relational properties and concepts that recur throughout the dissertation (e.g., reflexivity, symmetry, and the internal/external distinction); discuss some of the central problems associated with the ontology of relations and its epistemic place in

² Aside from the present project, the SS has also recently been translated by MacCracken’s (2021) dissertation, which I have not yet personally seen. The SP was first translated by Jha (1990), but, aside from at least one major typographical error (and some questionable translations), that edition was also unfortunately missing the last three *ślokas* and lacked the original *vṛtti*, as the text was initially lifted from a Jain commentary. Steinkellner was kind enough to share his critical edition of the SP with me before he recently published it (2022), which provided the first complete text of the original Sanskrit and its principal *vṛtti* [SPV]. He has also recently circulated an unpublished translation of the SP (2024). While I do occasionally reference that text, I should mention that I finished the bulk of my translation before I had seen his own.

³ Although, technically speaking, only Chapter II in the Part One deals with an Indian school (i.e., Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika), the division certainly holds for Chapters III-VI.

propositional judgment; and touch upon the relevant temporal and ‘synechistic’ dimensions of the debate. Most importantly, I situate the Indian conversation in a cross-cultural context through a historical survey of 20th Century Anglo-American relational ontologies. Specifically, based on analogous modes of argument in both the Indian and Western context, I propose a threefold ‘Peircean’ taxonomy to describe and categorize the fundamental axiomatic commitments of relational philosophy: (1) ‘naïve relational realism’ associated with the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika logicians and the early atomism of Bertrand Russell and G. E. Moore; (2) ‘relational eliminativism’ that characterizes Dharmakīrti’s Pramāṇavāda Buddhism and the monistic idealism of F. H. Bradley; and (3) the ‘reformed relational realism’ of Pratyabhijñā Śaivism and the classical pragmatism of William James and C.S. Peirce.

I will flesh out the methodological and metaphysical rationale behind this trichotomy throughout the dissertation, but we may briefly define them as such: Naïve realism (1) posits that ‘relation’ designates a type of *substantive, autonomously intelligible term, object, category, or referent*—one whose essential nature is apprehended just like any other *categorematic* expression, logical subject, or ‘pure *a priori* category of the understanding’. In epistemic and linguistic terms, the salient feature of this school is that one and the same referent can function as a self-standing constituent of a proposition ‘in itself’—like, say, ‘*man*’ or ‘*billiard ball*’—but can *also* ‘actually relate’ other independent terms in judgment.⁴ As we will see, for the atomism of Russell/Moore and the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika tradition, this view runs downstream from the ontological commitment to a staunch *grammatical pluralism* that dictates a reality of absolute difference holds between logically independent subjects, terms, categories, or substances. This representation of objective reality as a strict plurality of determinate, externally related

⁴ This distinction between relations ‘in-themselves’ and relations as ‘actually relating’ refers to Russell’s terminology in PoM.

terms/referents/entities, defined through mutually exclusive opposition, is what Peirce dubs the semiotic category of ‘Secondness’ in his own triadic metaphysics.

Eliminativism (2) represents a deconstructive approach to relations, wherein they are either invariably reduced to the monadic properties of unrelated terms or lead to incoherent regress. In short, they are purely conceptual abstractions without any corresponding *objective* referents. I associate this view with Bradley’s monism and Dharmakīrti’s nominalism alike, just insofar as all parties agree that all ‘distributed’ and ‘continuous’ relational patterns/properties are not *ultimately real*; at least, that is, with respect to the conceptually constructed *way* they conventionally *appear*. Indeed, among other things, I contend that the apparent metaphysical differences between Bradley and Dharmakīrti are rather superficial, for upon deeper reflection they share a practically indistinguishable conception of the *ultimately* real: namely, the pure actuality of pre-conceptual, pre-intentional—and constitutively *pre-relational*—objective intuition. Likewise, the conceptually indeterminate, vague sense of the immediate monadic percept corresponds to what Peirce calls the semiotic category of ‘Firstness.’

Finally, the classical pragmatists and the Pratyabhijñā thinkers adopt the transcendental approach of reformed realism (3), which stipulates that ‘relation’ is indeed *real*—but not, like the naïve realist supposes, as a substantive, autonomously intelligible dyadic *referent* with a preestablished or complete formal structure; nor, however, does it finally reduce to pure conceptual fancy, with no objective correspondence to the non-relational monadic immediacy of concrete experience. Rather, a pragmatic assessment of the meaning of ‘relationality’ points to a triadic continuity of action intrinsic to the reflexive nature of mind: From the perspective of practical reason, that is, all reflexive experience flows continuously *from* a plurality of

indeterminate feelings *to* the unity of determinate intentional content.⁵ For this ‘school,’ the intrinsically *recognitive* nature of practical reason entails that experience bears an irreducibly extensive/durational/eventful structure. This is what Peirce will call the categorical mediation of Thirdness, the continuous *interpretant* of each sign that reflexively *takes* Firsts *as* Seconds. More generally, then, Thirdness invokes a commitment to what Peirce calls the metaphysical principle and methodology of *synechism*, “the doctrine that all that exists is continuous” (CP 1.172). Since an implicate background of continuous relational dynamics precedes, and enters into, the reflexive judgment of autonomously intelligible terms, no determinate conceptual content can ever designate the objective form of continuity that characterizes the temporal action of the recognitive event, or the occurrence of a ‘sign,’ in and of itself. Given the intrinsically unrepresentable nature of relational action, I express the transcendental maxim of reformed realism as such: *All tokens of the general type are given in precisely the manner they are self-consciously taken.*⁶

⁵ Aside from echoing the views of James’s radical empiricism and Peirce’s category of Thirdness, another point of comparison here is the notion of ‘tacit knowledge’ coined by Michael Polanyi. For Polanyi, all knowledge—including explicit, linguistically encoded knowledge of an intentional sort—rests upon tacit know-how associated with unspoken, inexpressible features of embodied, personal experience. He writes that the structure of tacit knowledge “shows that all thought contains components of which we are subsidiarily aware in the focal content of our thinking, and that all thought dwells in its subsidiaries, as if they were parts of the body. Hence thinking is not only necessarily intentional, as Brentano has taught: it is also necessarily fraught with the roots that it embodies. It has a *from-to* structure” (2009: xviii; for relevant comparisons with Peirce, see Mullins (2002); Fennell (2013); and Agler (2011). Cf. also Gilbert Ryle’s (2002 [1949]) well-known distinction between “knowing that” and “knowing how.”

⁶ One might suggest here that my relational taxonomy overlooks an important contemporary approach to relations: trope theory. Tropes are not abstract relational properties in a universal sense, but rather particular instances of qualities or feelings, like the particular weight, shape or texture of an individual object. They are variously dubbed “abstract particulars” (Campbell 1990), “moments” (Mulligan et al. 1984), “modes” (Heil 2003), “qualitons” (Bacon 2011), “quality instances” (Segelberg 1999), “concrete properties” (Küng 1967), “particular properties” (Denkel 1996), and “unit property” (Mertz 1996). Regardless of the terminology, the point is that ‘tropes’ do not designate abstract or common universal properties in a realist sense, but distinct, particular qualities; if two objects share, say, a certain shade of ‘blueness,’ they each exemplify blueness-tropes that are numerically and spatio-temporally distinct, and thus do not ‘share’ a general property ‘blueness’ that abides independent of its particular instances in space and time. Accordingly, for many nominalist philosophers motivated by the desire to describe the conventional world purely in terms of particulars without reference to any constitutively *general* forms of continuity, trope theory represents an attractive alternative to naïve relational/universal realism. Putting aside the many versions of trope theory and its detractors, for our purposes, the most salient point is that trope theory still nevertheless adheres to a basic *nominalism* which describes ultimate reality exclusively in terms of particulars. Whether one posits an

In Chapter II, I describe in further detail the naïve relational position of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school. In contemporary terms, Naiyāyikas can be described as pluralistic realists in the sense that all phenomena are exhaustively described as instances of a limited number of autonomously intelligible objective categories. Most importantly, these categories are faithfully transmitted through the abstract structures of *language*—including, most pertinently, the predicative copula. I therefore call their realism ‘naïve’ because they view the objective form of relation in basically the same way they regard other autonomously intelligible, self-standing categorical referents. For the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika thinkers, this objective relation corresponds to the singular category of *inherence* (*samavāya*). Since ‘inherence’ signifies the *cause* of all qualified judgments, the objective form of ‘relation’ is faithfully designated and apprehended in terms of a static, substantive, eternal logical subject or term, just like the other five basic ontological categories (*padārtha*) (i.e., generality (*sāmānya*), quality (*guṇa*), substance (*dravya*), action (*karma*), and particularity (*viśeṣa*)), but also, somehow, concretely *relates* these other categories together in each qualified cognition. To this extent, I claim that the Naiyāyika’s commitment to a pluralistic realism modeled on a logic of absolute difference amongst categorematic expressions represents the same sort of ‘naïve’ relational approach as the 20th century founders of logical atomism, who, in the words of Russell, interpreted ‘relation’ as an abstract nominal term ‘in itself’ that also ‘actually relates’ *other* terms in a concrete verbal capacity.

independent substrate of material that instantiates particular tropes (cf. Mertz 2001); or a pure bundle theory of particular ‘qualitons’ in a Humean or Buddhist vein (cf. Williams 1953a/b); trope theorists deny that relational concepts correspond to anything *ultimately real*. A trope, by definition, is a particular *instance* of a feeling or quality, not a general *concept*. While dyadic tropes supposedly exist, no real conceptual unity or pattern of regularity corresponds to the qualitative nature of these dyads: indeed, that’s basically the whole point of trope theory, viz., to ontologically reduce our reflexive *impression* of similarity strictly into particular instances of feeling. But this is just another way of saying, effectively, that a trope is *essentially discontinuous* with other tropes, and so the conceptual patterns we recognize in the temporal world—viz., those we conventionally describe and comprehend in terms of the regulative persistence of such-and-such universals—do not convey objective knowledge of the nature of reality as such. It is this basic scholastic commitment to the objective unreality of universals that Peirce’s own pragmatic semantics, in particular, will forcefully attack. It is also worth mentioning here that several authors characterize the nominalism of Abhidharma as a bundle theory of ‘tropes’ (see, e.g., Ganeri (2001), Siderits (2021), and Goodman (2004)).

Part Two of the dissertation turns to the Buddhist critique of the naïve position and the doctrine of relational eliminativism. In Chapter III, I provide some of the requisite religious, historical, and philosophical background of the Abhidharma scholastic tradition that sets the conceptual stage for Dharmakīrti's SP. Most pertinently, to establish the truth of the Buddha's teachings of non-self (*anātmavāda*) and impermanence (*anitya*), Ābhidharmikas developed an ontological doctrine of thoroughgoing *nominalism*: Here, all that *really* exists are utterly unique, self-characterized (*svalakṣaṇa*) particulars whose momentary (*kṣaṇika*) essences (*svabhāva*) are completely bereft of any enduring or permanent substratum. For this reason, no real entity can be 'distributed' (*anvaya*)—viz., abide as a unified thing that also somehow participates in the separate existences of many others. Concordantly, the general characteristics (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) that describe the conventional properties of compounded empirical objects do not withstand reductive scrutiny, insofar as the mereological wholes that function as the substantive *bearers* of these predicates inevitably disintegrate into a set of proper atomic parts that constitutively *lack* any such 'distributed' properties.

Furthermore, the Sautrāntika school extended this 'mereological nihilism' (Siderits 2021: 47; 2015: 97) to deconstruct temporal 'wholes' as well; that is to say, nothing ultimately real can last for any longer than a single infinitesimal moment. Any phenomenal complexity that presupposes intrinsic or necessary relations of a 'distributed' sort must reduce to a conceptual *imposition* on a conglomerate of utterly simple (*ekatvā*) and distinct momentary particulars. Accordingly, in my own narrative reconstruction, I portray the historical and theoretical genesis of Dharmakīrti's eliminativism as a penultimate stage in a characteristic progression of reasoning that leads from the axioms of *nominalism* (viz., the denial that universals/conceptual possibilities are objectively *real*) to *epistemic idealism* (i.e., the belief that we cannot know whether a mind-

independent reality exists because all we can *ultimately* know are *mental representations* thereof).

In Chapter IV, I translate and analyze Dharmakīrti's SP. Here we find Dharmakīrti leveraging characteristically Abhidharma modes of reasoning to prove that relations do not ultimately exist. Specifically, the mereological and temporal 'nihilism' (cf. Siderits 2021; 2015) championed by Sautrāntika provides the basic theoretical foundation for Dharmakīrti's critique of relations; just like universals, relations are 'distributed' or 'continuous' (*anvaya*) entities because they are 'situated in two places' (*dviṣṭha*). Throughout the SP, Dharmakīrti argues that the distributed form of dyads cannot really exist on nominalist grounds: e.g., once a momentary 'effect' comes into being as a self-characterized (*svalakṣaṇa*) actuality, the directly preceding momentary 'cause' no longer exists, and *vice versa* (viz., when a momentary 'cause' supposedly exists, the so-called future 'effect' has yet to actualize). Thus, the utterly unique and self-determinative independence of momentary actualities guarantees that no dyadic *dependence* (*pāratantrya/apekṣā*) could ever obtain between a so-called 'cause' and 'effect.'

Epistemically speaking, because relations do not ultimately exist, Dharmakīrti insists they are purely conventional (*saṃvṛti*) conceptual constructions (*vikalpa*), *just like universal objects* (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*). Accordingly, one facet of Dharmakīrti's argument I repeatedly emphasize is the implicit assimilation of the category of *relation* (*sambandha*) into the category of *universal* (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) in virtue of their shared distribution. More specifically, Dharmakīrti describes the appearance of relation as a post-hoc *inference* (*anveti*) that can only be said to 'exist' at the time of conceptual elaboration (*vikalpa*). This understanding accords with Dharmakīrti's dualistic epistemological scheme, which privileges the non-conceptual (*nirvikalpa*) intuition of *perceptual cognition* (*pratyakṣa*) due to its direct contact with the causally efficacious object. In

light of the doctrine of momentariness, this entails that the initial perceptual cognition and its subsequent conceptual elaboration are fundamentally *discontinuous* events in the causal procession; all relational phenomena occur exclusively in the moment of conceptual determinacy when the non-existent causal ‘relation’ can be *retroactively inferred* from a series of discrete perceptions. For the Buddhist, it is a non-starter to claim that a continuous relation can obtain *between* the initial moment of perception and the subsequent moment of conceptual elaboration, because the dyadic *idea* of a relation can only obtain in the latter.

Finally, in Part Three, I analyze the Pratyabhijñā intervention in the relational debate, maintaining that they introduce into Indian philosophy a ‘reformed’ conception of relational realism *à la* Peirce and James. Although not mentioned explicitly in Utpala’s SS, I argue that his ‘transcendental’ understanding of relation, like other aspects of his system, was heavily indebted to the grammarian Bhartṛhari (~5th century CE).⁷ So, in Chapter V, I turn my attention to Bhartṛhari’s *Sambandhasamuddeśa*, where he offers his own grammatical analysis of ‘relation’ that leads to a transcendental theory of relationality-as-such. Here, ‘relation’ is not a determinate linguistic *referent*, but rather the ‘*capacity-of-capacities*’ (‘*śakti-of-śaktis*’) that makes the pragmatic *act* of linguistic reference possible in the first place. More specifically, as the definition of *sambandha* becomes more and more general, it ultimately coextends with that primordial power (*śakti*) of discursive awareness (‘*para-vāk*’) to delineate linguistic terms through relational tokens. At this level of generality, one cannot reify ‘relation’ as a determinate conceptual referent without also thereby vitiating its transcendental nature as such (cf. Houben: 174).

In the Pratyabhijñā system, we find Bhartṛhari’s relational vision cohere with the non-dual, idealistic doctrines of Kashmir Śaivism. For Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta, everything

⁷ I have recently published some of my results from this chapter (Berger: 2023).

that exists is, in fact, Lord Śiva—a single omnipotent being who consists of infinite consciousness (*cit*) and absolute freedom (*svātantrya*). Cosmogonically and mythologically speaking, Śiva creates the limited universe out of His unlimited consciousness through the ‘power’ of His female consort, Śakti, who is both unified and distinct from the absolute nature of Śiva himself. Thus, unlike the Brahman of, say, Advaita Vedānta, Śiva is not a static and inactive God, but something much more akin to a Hegelian principle of Absolute Spirit that manifests reality through the transcendental unity of a dialectical process.

Although Utpala does not explicitly mention Bhartṛhari in his ‘*Proof*’, in Chapter VI, I interpret the text largely as an implicit *pragmatic* defense of the grammarian’s transcendental theory of *sambandha*. In particular, Utpala accepts the general form of relation as something that requires reference to both ‘unity and diversity’ (*bhedābheda*), but he argues that this is not, as the Buddhist maintains, a flat-out oxymoron. Rather, the relational principle refers chiefly to the synthetic capacity of ‘recognitive/reflexive judgment’ (*vimarśa*) that manifests (*prakāśa*) the phenomenal world. In this philosophical reconstruction, the cosmogonic power (*śakti*) of Śiva to conceal his free and unbounded nature—and consequently create the limited conventional world—is practically conceived as the reflexive capacity of the *ātman* to interpret diverse perceptual cognitions in coextension with the relational unity of finite self-consciousness. In other words, the world only appears as such through the spontaneous action of practical judgment, which takes a manifold of perceptual appearances and renders them reflexively intelligible in a recognitive process of conceptual determination. For Utpala, the simultaneous unity-and-diversity of this recognitive activity—i.e., the irreducible semiotic *mediation*, or *continuity*, that obtains between diverse perceptual appearances and their unified conceptual

representation—is far from nonsensical; indeed, this sort of irreducible synthetic unity is just what practically *defines* the intentionality of perceptual judgment.

To defend this position, Utpala argues that even though relation *theoretically* requires a paradoxical reference to both unity and diversity, *practically speaking*, it is permanent and never overturned. Additionally, he claims that ‘relation’ cannot be a form of conceptual ‘error’ (*bhrānti*) because to establish something as such presupposes a synthetic cognition that *contrasts* different moments of time. For all practical intents and purposes, then, *sambandha* is perfectly *real (satya)*—where ‘real’ means something that does not *appear* to be constitutively *otherwise* than it *actually is*. According to Pratyabhijñā doctrine, the dynamic function (*śakti*) of awareness that conceptually *interprets* content to be so-and-so, in that very moment, spontaneously actualizes the requisite relational tokens that intelligibly determine the perceptual content as such. This, again, is the defining principle of ‘reformed’ relational realism: All tokens of the general type are objectively *given* in *exactly the manner* they are self-consciously *taken*. Since the objective world is phenomenal turtles *all the way down* for the idealistic school of Pratyabhijñā, the ‘cause’ of relational phenomena does not ‘bottom out’ at some ontological bedrock of constitutively particular, non-relational, impersonal causal factors. Quite to the contrary: ‘Relations’ are ultimately real, not *despite* being conventional, but rather *precisely because* they are conventional—that is, because their objective form is established through their coextension with the modal force of reflexive consciousness.

In my conclusion, I discuss the impact of this relational conversation on South Asian philosophy of religion, and religious studies more generally. Specifically, insofar as a disjunction holds between the representational or ‘epistemic idealism’ of Dharmakīrti and the objective idealism of Pratyabhijñā, I submit that the most compelling Buddhist interlocutor for

Pratyabhijñā is not *Yogācāra*, but rather *Madhyamaka*. For although almost no comparative work has been undertaken with respect to these two schools, I speculate that a promising constructive philosophical project—one I call ‘groundless teleology’—can be gleaned from a common pragmatic reading of Pratyabhijñā and Madhyamaka. Furthermore, I claim that this constructive theory of groundless teleology can buttress contemporary Kantian approaches to religious studies that emphasize the need for scholars to treat religious practitioners as if they were truly free.

PART ONE

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM OF RELATIONS IN 20TH CENTURY ANGLO-AMERICAN PHILOSOPHY

It is perhaps not too much to say that a philosopher's views on internal relations are themselves internally related to all his other philosophical views.

-Richard Rorty (1967: 337)

Synechism is the doctrine...that elements of Thirdness cannot entirely be escaped.

-C. S. Peirce (CP 7.653)

Introduction

This chapter aims to identify, categorize, and describe distinct axiomatic approaches to the philosophical problem of relations in the Anglo-American tradition at the turn of the 20th century. In the context of our larger comparative project, the purpose is twofold; first, a survey of the modern debate yields useful formal language and conceptual tools to scrutinize the work of Indian thinkers like Praśastapāda, Dharmakīrti, Bhartṛhari and Utpaladeva. In more constructive terms, though, I seek to formulate and defend an overarching cross-cultural taxonomy of relational ontology. I am thus not principally interested in parsing *epistemic* divisions among relational categories, properties, or special types—although some of that will inevitably occur along the way—but rather focused on the more basic question of what relation *is* in metaphysical terms. Can ‘relation’ be said to really *exist*, and, if so, in what sense?

To this end, I maintain relational ontology can best be understood in terms of three axiomatic doctrines, whose core principles remain relatively consistent throughout the ensuing cross-cultural discussion: (a) naïve realism, (b) eliminativism, and (c) reformed realism.

According to our guiding analogy, these schools correspond to the shared positions of (a) Russell, Moore, and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, (b) Bradley and Dharmakīrti, and (c) Peirce, James and Pratyabhijñā.¹ Furthermore, as I will explain in detail, we can broadly associate each ‘school’ with a respective commitment to the ontological primacy of a single Peircean semiotic category: (a) Secondness, (b) Firstness, (c) Thirdness, as well as the Trika system of (a) *apara* (‘inferior’ diversity), (b) *para* (‘superior’ unity), (c) *parāpara* (the ‘middling’ realm of unity-and-diversity).

Section 1 introduces the general problem of relations and defines the basic conceptual tools philosophers most often employ in their logical analysis. I describe some of the most important formal properties of relations (i.e., *reflexivity*, *symmetry*, etc.) that recur throughout our discussion, as well as the central distinction between *internal* and *external* relations that drove much of the 20th century debate. We also explain how the traditional ontological commitments of monism and pluralism became associated with the traditional picture of a monistic/rationalist ‘doctrine of internal relations’ vs. a pluralist/empiricist ‘doctrine of external relations.’ This distinction between internal and external relations naturally leads to the question of whether a ‘general logical form of relation’ [GLFR], or relationality-as-such, makes any sense. Here we draw upon work by Samuel Alexander, who anticipates James and Peirce when he defines the general form of relation in terms of objective *continuity*.

¹ This classification is, of course, a rather broad-stroke generality that abstracts the most salient relational features of these diverse thinkers for the sake of a useful hermeneutical framework. We must keep in mind that it applies exclusively to their ontology of *relations*—and even then, there are important caveats and distinctions in each case, many of which will be addressed along the way. Part of the argument here is that the division between monistic idealism and pluralistic realism belies a deeper concordance *vis-à-vis* the objective nature of relations. There is, we might add, some scholarly precedent for this comparison; Stcherbatsky (1932: 246, fn.1) was the first to recognize that Bradley’s relational arguments bear a strong resemblance to Dharmakīrti’s. In terms that would be congenial to both parties, he asserts that “Ultimate reality is unrelated, it is non-relative, it is the Absolute. Relations are constructions of our imagination, they are nothing actual.” Additionally, Lawrence (e.g., 2018a; 2018b) has consistently drawn similarities between Peirce’s semiotics and Pratyabhijñā, which implicates relevant questions about the ontological status of relations in terms of ‘Thirdness.’

In Section 2, I explore in more detail the relational extremes of monism and pluralism, as well as the sorts of arguments Bradley and Russell invoked to justify these opposing positions. While Bradley argued on *a priori* grounds that relations are incoherent, Russell adhered to grammatical and empirical realism that emphasized the determinative function of external relations, and thus the objective reality of *difference* that Bradley's monism negates. I also discuss two different asymmetrical arguments against Bradley's monism; the mereological arguments of Russell and Moore, and the temporal arguments of Whitehead and Hartshorne. Although they differ profoundly over the meaning of internal relations, these thinkers agree that knowledge of asymmetrical relations—and thus, again, the objective reality of bona fide *difference*—proves that the substantival monism of Bradley is wrong. However, contra Russell and Moore, Bradley's results do not actually prove a 'doctrine of internal relations,' but rather a doctrine of relational *eliminativism*. Bradley instead held that *any* relational judgment (internal or external) is ultimately *false* relative to the essential non-duality of immediate 'feeling.'

In Section 3, I tie this relational conversation to three different solutions to the problem of the unity of the proposition, which correlate to the taxonomy of relational schools outlined above. Although not identical to the problem of relations, Russell and Bradley both grapple with the consequences of relational regress in terms of the semantic unity of propositional constituents, mainly because the relational unity of the proposition represents the minimal unit of intentional knowledge to which a determinate truth-value can be assigned. While Russell attempts to salvage an atomistic view of propositional constituents through a 'twofold' theory of the verbal noun, Bradley contends that Russell is not entitled to claim the existence of irreducible semantic complexes in a universe of pure external relatedness between simple terms. Instead, Bradley proposes that the unity of propositional judgment depends upon the transcendental unity

of ‘feeling’, which designates a pure form of non-conceptual intuition that precedes relational/conceptual stages of thought altogether.

Peirce offers a different solution to propositional unity based on his triadic categories. Here, copular unity represents a *real* relation, but its meaning can only be apprehended in terms of the irreducibly *transitive* structure of the predicative sign itself; that is, through an operation of ‘hypostatic abstraction’ whereby something we think *through* transforms into something we think *about*. In semiotic terms, the predicative unity of the sign ‘*p*’ consists in an interpretive action (‘Third’) that moves continuously *from* the apprehension of an indeterminate object (‘First’) *to* its oppositional conceptual determination (‘Second’).² Accordingly, we will see Peirce argue that, as one repeatedly abstracts from tokenized relational properties to designate more and more general relational forms, they inexorably find the semantic content of the predicative sign begin to expand and asymptotically approach a transcendental limit on the representational capacities of language: At some point in the process of abstraction, one finds that the semantic content of ‘relation’ invariably begins to *gesture* at the implicit continuity of mental action *itself*. Curiously, then, Peirce argues that, in the pragmatic attempt to designate exactly what the predicative “relation” *is* in linguistic terms, we enact a transitive *process* that the determinate sign necessarily fails to represent—i.e., the relational conditions for linguistic designation itself. In this way, I argue that, in contrast to contemporary *absolute* idealists like

² In this respect, Peirce associates logical ‘relations’ with the dyadic nature of *seconds*, but the continuous activity of interpretation with the triadic mediation of *thirds*: “[W]hat is commonly in our minds when we speak of individuality is a positive repugnance to generality. Our thoughts are so impregnated with generality, that we look at everything from its standpoint. Instead of thinking of thisness [i.e. particularity] as it is in itself and for itself, we think of it in its relation to generality. But then we so exaggerate the importance of feeling or immediate consciousness, that we are accustomed to think of generality as characterized by unity, instead of by mediation, and its positive contrary, thisness, we think of as also characterized by unity,—which is logically absurd. Positive anti-generality is not unity, but duality,—the setting of objects over against one another with a great gulf between, instead of conceiving them as cases joined by a continuous medium or perpetual thirdness” (NEM 4:135-6). I want to suggest that the ambiguity of term ‘relation’ in Peirce—that is, whether associated with dyadic seconds or triadic thirds—anticipates the distinction we will draw between the *general form* of relationality-as-such and its dyadic ‘tokens’, viz., the diverse relational ‘tropes,’ that appear to bind the categorematic relata of predicative judgment.

Kimhi and Rödl—who argue for a strict *formal identity* between the propositional sign (the categorematic ‘content’ of judgment) and reflexive consciousness (the syncategorematic ‘force’ of judgment)³—Peirce offers an *objective* idealist solution to propositional unity without throwing the real relational baby out with the hypostatic bathwater.⁴

Peirce’s proposed solution to propositional unity functions as a segue into an elaboration of the reformed relational realism of the American pragmatic tradition. In Section 4, I discuss how James comes to articulate the basic principles of reformed realism, which explicates Peirce’s solution to the problem of propositional unity in a more embodied, temporal, and phenomenological framework of analysis. Specifically, starting with his *Principles of Psychology*, James argues that substantive, explicit states of conceptual determinacy presuppose *transitive* forms of experience that are not strictly representable in terms of the former, but nevertheless implicitly *constitute* the semantic content of all qualified cognitions. In his self-described ‘radical’ form of empiricism, the fact that the transitive relations of experience are *themselves felt* as an extensive concrescence into substantive conceptual states speaks to the irreducibly *continuous* structure of temporal experience; the ‘multiplicity-in-union’ that characterizes the essential nature of changeful awareness. Here, the conceptual determinacy of propositional content always owes itself to an implicit sense of temporal depth that precedes the representational capacities of discursive thought. Although this ‘vertical’ sense of relation is fundamentally unrepresentable, tokens of this general type are differentiated based on our

³ The distinction between categorematic and syncategorematic expressions comes from medieval logicians who recognized that some expressions have an autonomously intelligible capacity for signification or meaning apart from other words (i.e., nouns, pronouns, and verbs) and some do not (e.g., conjunctions, prepositions, quantifiers, and articles) (cf. Uckelman: 2015).

⁴ In this regard, Peirce’s semiotic form of realistic or objective idealism is much closer to Brandom’s own ‘Hegelian’ thesis that “we cannot understand the ontological structure of the objective world...except in terms that make essential reference to what subjects have to *do* in order to count as *taking* the world to have that structure—even though the world could have that structure in the absence of any subjects and their epistemic activities” (2019: 670).

pragmatic interests and intent, being neither more nor less real than the way they present themselves to practical reason. The upshot is that ‘relationality-as-such’ isn’t necessarily oxymoronic a real entity that simultaneously unified and diverse, nor subject to perennial regress arguments that exploit the fallacies of relational reification.

Finally, in Section 5, I explain how Peirce’s semiotic worldview can be thought to systematize James’s relational realism into a forceful transcendental argument against scholastic *nominalism*—which, we will suggest, closely mirrors the Pratyabhijñā critique of the Buddhists in the later chapters.⁵ First, Peirce offers his own critique of the notion of *unmediated* cognition, or pure perceptual ‘intuition,’ which he interprets as self-refuting. According to Peirce’s pragmatic semantics, all substantive cognitive content must be understood relative to its import for practical action. In this case, qualified discursive awareness naturally depends upon an implicit recognition of a constitutively *general* rule, or formal regularity, that cognitively establishes a sign’s anticipated application to an indeterminate scope of potential circumstances. Hence the core dictum of Peirce’s pragmatic semantics is arguably that “the rational meaning of every proposition lies in the future” (1905: 173). Since an implicit sense of futural indeterminacy must always practically inform the conceptual or recognitive determination of the percept, semiosis requires the mediation of an ‘interpretant’ whose irreducibly *continuous* structure instantiates the reflexive ‘mindedness’ of each sign.⁶ While Peirce’s triadic categorical scheme therefore does not adhere to the preferred phenomenological register of James, they agree that the cognitive relation consists of an irreducibly continuous form of *sui generis* action—one

⁵ Note that Peirce and James diverged primarily over the pragmatic definition of *truth*, which is covered in depth by Misak (cf. 2004; 2013; 2016).

⁶ We will see that such irreducible cognitive continuity *between* the intuitional and discursive moments of experience is *precisely* what the Buddhist nominalist *denies vis-à-vis* the manifest ‘form’ or ‘image’ of determinate cognition, which serves as the fully actualized content of immediate reflexive perception.

whose transitive procession *from* perceptual *to* conceptual phases constitutes the metaphysical ‘logic of events.’

In conclusion, I discuss two senses of the intuitive scholastic correspondence between ‘unity’ and ‘reality’ (*ens et unum convertuntur*) based on the present conversation: substantial unity and relational unity.⁷ While the former reflects the kind of unity endorsed by Russell and Bradley, the latter speaks to the pragmatic and processual thinkers who focus on the concrete form of unity-in-diversity that comprises the temporal realization of finite practical reason. In this way, Western presumptions apropos the philosophical significance of unity and diversity can help elucidate the relational doctrines of the Indian non-dualists in the coming chapters. Specifically, we will see that while the substantial unity embraced by Russell and Bradley resembles the views of the naïve Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika realists and the Pramāṇavādins, respectively, the pragmatic appeal to concrete relational unity associated with the reflexive action of diachronic experience comes to resemble the objective idealism of Pratyabhijñā.

1. The Problem of Relations

a. What Are We Talking About When We Talk About ‘Relations’?

Relations are perhaps the most ubiquitous forms of experience, yet still nevertheless quite mysterious. After contemplating them for some extended period, one might justly come to feel like Augustine in his analytical dismay over the elusive nature of time⁸: ‘If no one asks me, I

⁷ For a complementary analysis of this distinction in Pratyabhijñā philosophy, see Ratié (2007): “To experience action in the world is to recognize a unity within a multiplicity, to perceive the “extension” (*vaitatya*) of an individual through a multiplicity of places, times and forms. The Buddhists rightly point out the oddity of such an experience of unity-and-multiplicity; nevertheless they are wrong to say that because action seems to involve a contradiction, it should be discarded as an illusory phenomenon, for action does not possess any of the features that the Buddhists themselves attribute to illusory phenomena” (350-1).

⁸ The appositeness of this example is not accidental, since, as we will see, ontological conceptions of relations and the nature of temporality are highly intertwined.

know; if I want to explain it to someone who asks me, I do not know' (*Confessions*: XIV [2001]). Like 'time,' we all understand the meaning of 'relation' in daily practice—but when we try and conceptualize *precisely* what this 'relation' *is*, we find ourselves unable to draw upon ideas that do not themselves presuppose relations of one sort or another. Accordingly, Alexander remarks that "relation is indeed the vaguest word in the philosophical vocabulary, and it is often a mere word or symbol indicating some connection or other which is left perfectly undefined; that is, relation is used as a mere thought, for which its equivalent in experience is not indicated" (1950: 170-1). For all rational inquiries invoke the same abstract term 'relation,' but each presupposes their own language-game in which it makes sense to posit said relation as operative, given the distinct nature of the relata and the rules for its semantic engagement. For it is one thing to know, say, that the sky's being blue is 'internally related' to the judgment 'the sky is blue'—and thus a certain form of relation 'makes the proposition true.' But it's another thing entirely to know the *essential nature of this relation*—to know *how* this act of 'making true' actually *happens* (cf. Heil 2021: 20).

Etymologically, the term "relation" comes from the 16th century Latin '*relatio(n-)*' or 'brought back', and from the Old French verb '*re-ferre*,' which literally means 'to carry' or 'to bring back' (from *re-*'back' + *ferre* 'bring'). The very term 'relation' therefore already suggests the basic sense of intentional 'towardness' that constitutes the cognitive act of '*re-ference*,' the 'bringing back' of something to mind.⁹ We must hence appreciate from the outset that the elementary epistemic status of 'relation' problematizes delineating the exact nature of the referent under discussion. As such, the unique—and perhaps intractable—dilemma that confronts

⁹ In this regard, it's worth mentioning that the Greeks formulated a technical phrase for relation to emphasize the preposition 'to' or 'toward': *πρός τι* (Lat. *ad aliquid*). Mattingly (2024) translates this as 'toward something,' but it can also mean 'pertaining to' or 'regarding something.' Similar connotations surround the Indian semantic relation of '*apekṣā*' which we discuss thoroughly in the coming chapters.

the philosophical analysis of relations implicates the most basic theoretical problems imaginable, for any conceptual system that attempts to clearly define anything *at all* will presuppose, at minimum, some corresponding set of relations to *do* this definitional work. In other words, we seem to have a huge family of notions that all somehow *relate* to ‘relation’, but the logical form of the ‘relata’ are often so diverse that when we try to abstract a single idea from these diverse instances, it is not at all evident we have picked out the same ‘thing’ in each case. Citing Alexander again: “While specific relations are defined, relation as such, what relation is, appears most often to be taken for granted without any attempt at determination. I do not doubt that relation is a notion so simple as to defy definition. Unless you know what a relation is, no one can explain it to you...But unless this [attempt] is done we are likely, in speaking of relations, to be vague and to move about in the dark” (1912: 306). Owing to its basicness, the meaning of ‘relation’, when not treated as its own logical subject, often signifies a prism of presumptions that refract into different axiomatic commitments before inquiry even begins.

Practically speaking, this means that from ancient Indian to modern Anglo-American philosophy, the attitude taken towards the explanatory purchase of relations has granted predictable insight into one’s general epistemological and metaphysical intuitions. Bertrand Russell affirms, for instance, that “[t]he question of relations is one of the most important that arise in philosophy, as most other issues turn on it: monism and pluralism; idealism and realism; perhaps the very existence of philosophy as a subject distinct from science and possessing a method of its own” (1994: 170). We also quoted Rorty above, who observes that “[i]t is perhaps not too much to say that a philosopher’s views on internal relations are themselves internally related to all his other philosophical views” (1967: 337). And R. K. Tripathi, echoing these thinkers, claims that the question of relation is the “central problem” in Indian philosophy,

because it “determines the peculiar logic of every system so that any change in that logic affects the whole metaphysical structure” (1969: 39).

To put it bluntly, then, I want to emphasize from the outset that a cross-cultural assessment of relational debate primarily suggests that when we try to rigorously describe the ways in which relations factor into our own experience, we are often left with less insight into the ontological status of ‘relation’ than into our personal, pre-theoretic prejudices about the essential nature of reality. Due to the slipperiness of the subject matter, the status of relation, when not explicitly treated as a metaphysical problem, represents a sort of theoretical blind spot, filled-in with axiomatic assumptions. What we accordingly find in relational debates is that any attempt to justify one’s characterization of the nature of relations will unravel upon analysis into a ‘hard-core’ of philosophical valuation, one that dialectically manifests in either rhetorical stalemate or gross misunderstandings.¹⁰ While it should become clear, in any case, where my sympathies lie in this debate, the broad aim of this project is just to delineate and characterize what I consider the fundamentally different ways of talking about relations, and, in the process, to shed light on the basic presuppositions that necessarily attend their explanatory scope in a range of systematic ontologies; alas, perhaps this is the best one can hope for *vis-à-vis* this perennially vexed topic.

¹⁰ The Bradley vs. Russell debate demonstrates this intrinsically valenced character of opinion on the matter; at a certain point, it is clear that the basic ontological referents under discussion are simply no longer commensurate with the first principles of both worldviews. Consider a sampling of the baffled language that Joachim (a staunch Hegelian idealist) employs regarding Russell’s view on the problem of the relational unity of the proposition: “I can see nothing but a statement of the problem in terms which render its solution inconceivable...I can only protest that a simplicity of this kind is too deep for me to fathom” (1906: 46-48). In a response to the atomism of Moore and Russell, he further affirms, “what the theory requires seems to me as contradictory as an ‘evil virtue’ or a ‘round square’” (1907: 412). As for Russell, the feeling was mutual: “They are simply statements as to what Mr. Joachim can or cannot imagine. It is of course implied that what he cannot imagine is nothing; but this can hardly be taken to be one of the fundamental premises of all philosophy...The curious and discouraging thing about this dispute is, that conversely I cannot see what the ‘problem’ is which I am supposed to be merely re-stating” (1906: 531-2). He ultimately acknowledges that “our differences are so fundamental that almost all arguments on either side necessarily begin by assuming something which the other side denies” (ibid: 528).

b. *'Neither Fish nor Fowl'*

Although we will touch upon diverse issues in relational philosophy, the thinkers in this paper all believe that to determine the *reality* of relations, two basic, interconnected questions must be answered: 1. *Are relations the same sorts of substantive 'things' as their relata, or not?* 2. *Are relations dependent upon, or independent of, their relata?*

As an initial survey of the tricky philosophical terrain, consider Russell's inquiry: "Suppose, for instance, that I am in my room. I exist, and my room exists; but does 'in' exist? Yet obviously the word 'in' has a meaning; it denotes a relation which holds between me and my room. This relation is something, although we cannot say that it exists *in the same sense* in which I and my room exist" (1912: 139). Let's pose this observation in differently: Given a binary relation R that holds between a and b , we can express the relation as $R(a,b)$. Now, suppose we construct a set that consists only of object a , and construct another with only object b . So far, so good. But now, can we construct a set only of R ? What would such a set *look* like? Since any genuine relational function, by definition, must hold *between* terms, one might venture that this set is not possible: we cannot have a set that consists solely of, say, the relation 'in', *at least insofar as it functions in its semantic capacity as actually relating distinct terms* (viz., it is not simply *mentioned* as a linguistic placeholder 'in').¹¹

Russell's thought experiment speaks to a primary reason contemporary analytic philosophers are reluctant to admit relations into a fundamental ontology: they are difficult to locate or situate in the objective world. Consider the proposition 'Los Angeles is west of New York.' The stated relation conveys a presumed empirical fact about the physical locations of

¹¹ One might counter that we can simply construct a set, say, of $\{\forall$ instances of $(R)a,b$ where $R = \text{'in'}\}$. But it is unclear what, if any, mileage we get from this; for the identification of some primitive notion of 'instances' in virtue of their common instantiation of the relational property 'in-ness' seems to already presuppose an ability to recognize the relation abstractly, or independently from its instances. But this clearly *cannot* obtain if the relation of 'in' is formally *defined* just in terms of its instances.

these two cities. But *where*, exactly, is the *relation* that holds *between* them, viz., the relation *in virtue of which* Los Angeles is situated west of New York? We can't place the relation in one city at the expense of the other, nor in each one taken in isolation, since then we lose sight of the fact that the relation must obtain *between* both of them (McTaggart 1920: §80). But insofar as the relation must somehow hold *between* these two entities, we are regarding it as a special sort of 'substance' that is divided, or perhaps distributed, *over* the locations of Los Angeles and New York, without *itself* being distributed or divided. On a pre-theoretic level, this seems peculiar, insofar as we assume that gross entities like cities, which have definite locations in a conventional sense, set a standard for how substantial entities in general should behave. If this assumption is unwarranted, the question facing philosophers of relations amounts to whether we should admit substantial entities into the world that behave quite differently with respect to space and time from these sorts of readily locatable entities (MacBride: 2020).

We might alternatively conceive of relations as a class of purely abstract entities or accidental properties, ones that are actually "nowhere and nowhen" (Russell 1912: 55–6), although they can still nevertheless 'inhere' in substantial existents. But treating relations as *merely* a certain class of abstract properties or attributes generates a whole other set of problems. Speaking in Aristotelian terms, that is, an 'accident' is a contingent property that inheres in an ontological substance, or subject of a proposition, which retains its essential identity regardless of the presence or absence of any such accident. Thus, accidents function like dents or scratches in a car door, or the wrinkles of a fabric; the dent itself depends upon the door, but the door would exist regardless of the dent. In this respect, relations, apropos Russell's observation, initially appear similar to accidents, insofar as they intrinsically depend upon their bearers, and thus cannot be independent substances with an intrinsic or essential nature.

However, as Leibniz famously points out in a letter to Samuel Clarke, the peculiar ‘adicity’ or ‘arity’ of relations—viz., the pluralistic valence of arguments or operands a relational function takes (i.e., dyadic, triadic, etc.)—necessarily distinguishes them from the monadic structure of accidental properties or substances:

The ratio or proportion of two lines L and M may be conceived in three ways: as a ratio of the greater L to the lesser M , as a ratio of the lesser M to the greater L , and finally as something abstracted from both, that is, as the ratio between L and M , without considering which is the antecedent and which the consequent, which the subject and which the object. In the first way of considering them, L the greater is the subject, in the second, M the lesser is the subject, of that accident that the philosophers call relation or respect. But which of them will be the subject in the third sense? It cannot be said that both of them, L and M together, are the subject of such an accident, for in that case we should have an accident in two subjects, with one leg in one, and the other leg in the other, which is contrary to the notion of accidents. Thus we must say that this relation, in this third way of considering it, is indeed outside the subjects; but that, being neither a substance nor an accident, it must be a purely ideal thing, the consideration of which is nonetheless useful (1715 V: §47 [in Arthur 2021: 337-356]).¹²

Unlike the dent in the car door, a relational ‘accident’ does not belong to an individual substance: it seems, that is, to have one ‘leg’ in a single subject and a second ‘leg’ in another. Aristotelian accidents, on the other hand, cannot belong to multiple subjects or substances in this way, e.g., the dent in the car door modifies the *particular* substance of the door, and cannot be transferred or shared amongst different places—like, say, the adjacent panel or windshield (Heil 2021: 32). Accordingly, some analytic philosophers find relations ontologically suspect because, like a purely abstract property, they appear to depend upon the existence of the substances that instantiate them, but their oddly ‘distributed’ nature renders them fundamentally incomprehensible as such (Campbell 1990: 108–9). As Lowe opines, “a ‘relational accident’, if there could be such a thing, would not be ‘in’, at least not be wholly ‘in’, any of its two or more ‘subjects’, nor even wholly ‘in’ the totality of them. I consequently find it hard to conceive what

¹² Russell took this statement to entail that Leibniz denied relations altogether. However, this eliminativist interpretation does not actually do justice to the complex place of relations in the context of Leibniz’s monadic metaphysics. For instance, Leibniz also wrote that “there is no term which is so absolute or so detached that it does not involve relations and is not such that a complete analysis of it would lead to other things and indeed to all other things. Consequently we can say that ‘relative terms’ *explicitly* indicate the relationship which they contain” (1704 [1981: 228] emphasis added).

such an entity could really be” (2016: 111–2). Relations are thus “ontologically weird” (Lowe 2016: 111), “neither fish nor fowl,” i.e., neither substances nor attributes (Heil 2012: 141; 2016: 130). Understandably, others feel that relations are “unsatisfactorily characterized” (MacBride 2020: §2).¹³ Note, however, that it doesn’t follow that relations themselves are ontologically suspect merely because they require relata—or at least, not any more than attributes are suspect because they require bearers. After all, Leibniz’s observation does not show that relations do not exist *tout court*—*it merely shows that they cannot be considered either substances or properties.*

Yet the conceptual problem of relations differs substantially from those that confront inquiry into dependent properties, for the distributed form of a ‘relation’ in concrete experience appears dependent upon its relata in a manner that vitiates even its monadic *identification* as any sort of universal *term*. Although we can clearly designate relational properties or patterns in the abstract (causal, semantic, internal, external, etc.), these abstract properties cannot ‘engage’ in the business of *actually* relating *particular* things—for these are just abstract monadic *terms*, not causal *actions*. In concrete experience, that is, the sense of two things being ‘related’ does not remain *autonomously intelligible* taken apart from the relata themselves, whereas the designation of a formal property can unproblematically function as a self-standing subject of a proposition. For this reason, many philosophers often deal with the question of the ontological status of ‘relation’ in an indirect fashion, or sweep it under the rug of higher-level topics, without paying much attention to the more foundational question of what relation *actually is*. For how can we subject ‘relation’ to a conceptual analysis on its own terms, if, as just mentioned, no relation in its concrete capacity of actually relating can be abstracted from its relata? In that case, how do we *know* what we are talking *about* when we talk about a *particular* ‘relation’? What, in other

¹³ However, as MacBride notes, while it’s certainly true that n -adic relations, where $n > 1$, cannot be characterized as either substances or (monadic) attributes, “it only follows that relations are unsatisfactorily characterized if we assume that substances and attributes provide the benchmark for satisfactory characterization” (ibid.).

words, are the logically necessary and sufficient conditions whereby we can come to *recognize* something as a distinctly ‘relational’ sort-of-thing, as opposed to a terminological sort-of-thing?

c. Relational Properties

As just noted, the definitional adicity of relations means they always come under the guise of the particular relata being related. Another way to state this is that not all relations relate in the same *way*; relations have *modal* properties in virtue of their distribution that universal terms lack. Of course, there are likely innumerable forms of ‘relation’ in particular experience, but clearly some general types stand out for philosophy: the influence of a particular cause on effect; the spatial distance between physical objects; the formal mappings between abstract numbers or sets; concrete relations of feeling (‘qualia’) etc. Each of these relations relates its relata in some particular *way*, and thus the first principles that guide one’s philosophical approach will often depend upon what relational patterns or properties they are willing to admit into the furniture of concrete experience. To describe these various modal properties of relations, logicians differentiate species based on certain relational properties.¹⁴ The determination of these properties answers the question of *how* the specific relata relate.

Three of the most important relational properties are *transitivity*, *reflexivity*, and *symmetry*, primarily because these three properties together provide the necessary and sufficient

¹⁴ There are generally around 6-10 important relational properties for homogenous binary relations (e.g., ‘*reflexive*, *irreflexive*, *symmetric*, *anti-symmetric*, *asymmetric*, *transitive*, *intransitive*, *connected*, *strongly connected*,’) but most of these have little ontological or phenomenological relevance. Again and again, however, the meaning and ontological status of transitivity, reflexivity and symmetry will come into play throughout the ensuing discussion, partly because of their strong connection to the distinction between internal and external relations that we discuss below.

conditions for the relation of formal equality to obtain between any two terms.¹⁵ Accordingly, each of these relational properties also has its corresponding logical negation—i.e., asymmetry, irreflexivity, and intransitivity—which signifies some real *distinction* between the terms in question such that formal *inequality* applies thereto.¹⁶

Firstly, equality exhibits the relational property of *transitivity*: If $x=y$, and $y=z$, then $x=z$. More generally, a binary relation R on a set X is *transitive* if, for any elements a, b, c in X , whenever R relates a to b and b to c , then R also relates a to c . We find transitivity in the notion that ‘friends of my friends are my friends.’ Note, however, that transitivity also obtains for *unequal* terms: If $a < b$ and $b < c$ then $a < c$. Thus, if Barry is shorter than Maurice, and Maurice is shorter than Andy, then Barry is necessarily shorter than Andy. In this case, transitivity relates other binary *relational properties*, not particular *relatum*, and thus remains indeterminate as to whether its isolated relata are equal or unequal to each other. In other words, since a triadic

¹⁵ In formal terms, a binary *relation* R over a set S is *symmetric* for all a and b in S iff, if a is related to b , then b is also related to a ($\forall a, b \in S R(ab) \Leftrightarrow R(ba)$). Conversely, an asymmetric relation is a binary relation R on a set S where for all a and b in S , if a is related to b , then b is not related to a : ($\forall a, b \in S R(ab) \rightarrow \neg R(ba)$). The standard example of an asymmetric relation is the “less than” relation $<$ between real numbers: if $(a < b)$, then $\neg(b < a)$. On the other hand, the “less than or equal” relation \leq is not asymmetric, because both $a \leq b$ and its reversal of $b \leq a$ are true. A *relation* R is *reflexive* over a set X if $R(x,x)$ for every $x \in X$. Reflexive relations are thus also, by definition, symmetrical and transitive. Finally, a binary *relation* R on a set X is *transitive* if, for all elements $a, b, c \in X$, whenever $R(ab)$ and $R(bc)$, then $R(ac)$.

¹⁶ It seems noteworthy and significant that we cannot establish formal identity or difference without knowledge of these three relational properties. Here one might posit a speculative Peircean cognitive interplay between the *binary* logic of identity and difference (Secondness) and the triadic conditions for its conceptual realization (Thirdness). Consider: we cannot establish the *difference* or *sameness* of two terms without knowledge of *three* relational properties. These three relational properties minimally operate over monads (reflexivity), dyads (symmetry), and triads (transitivity). Yet, knowledge of transitivity alone—precisely in virtue of its *triadic* function as a relator of *relations*, not dyadic *terms*—does not guarantee sameness or difference amongst any two things one way or the other. For this, the dyadic property *symmetry* is needed, which further determines whether a relates to b in *the same way* that b relates to c , such that the relational property between any two relata also transitively applies to a third relatum. One can observe, therefore, that these three relational properties progressively establish *degrees* of determinacy with respect to the relational property of reflexive identity or absolute difference. In this case, our understanding of the function of thirdness cannot be reduced to knowledge of a set of binary relations between any number of determinate *dyads*, because the progressive determinacy of relational properties *themselves* cannot, *ipso facto*, be expressed strictly in those very terms—i.e., as particular things that have fully determinate natures or haecceities in binary opposition to everything else. Peirce and Bhartṛhari, I imagine, might take transitivity and symmetry as *quasi-determinate* relational properties—properties which signify the progressive reflexive determination of actual signs. For Peirce, this comprehension of thirdness would phenomenally consist in a direct primitive acquaintance with the nature of *continuity*—the sameness-in-difference of experience—that cannot be reduced to contentful knowledge of any set of dyads.

relation signifies the minimal arity that could possibly take other *relations* as operands—viz., not simply two oppositional *terms*—it represents a necessary, but insufficient, condition to define the primitive notions of identity or difference.

One question that confronts relational philosophy, and that will recur throughout this dissertation, is whether triadic relations like transitivity necessarily reduce to a set of binary relations with equivalent formal or semantic content. For example, if we specify that Barry is shorter than Maurice, and that Maurice is *also* shorter than Andy, it only *trivially* entails a third binary relation of *Barry being shorter than Andy*; given the two former binary relations, that is, the triadic relational property does not disclose some relational fact *in addition to* three *binary* relations *taken independently* of one another. Since transitivity refers to three separate relational pairings—and every binary relational property necessarily supervenes upon the nature of its relata—transitive properties obtain *just in case* certain dyads obtain. Thus, one could argue that the formal or semantic *content* of any transitive relation between three elements is necessarily exhausted merely in the specification of the determinate relations that obtain amongst its pairable subsets.

Yet, at conventional levels of discourse, we often describe situations where subjects stand in triadic and higher-arity relations to other terms; namely, through verbs that take *indirect* or *mediated* objects: Barry (*a*) composes (*R*) a song (*b*) for Andy (*c*) = (*R*)*a,b,c*. Barry (*a*) composes (*R*) a song (*b*) about Robin (*c*) for Andy (*d*). = (*R*)*a, b, c, d*. Can the ordinary sense of these sorts of transitive relations, then, be faithfully redescribed as a formal set of strict pairable dyads? Or are they only *intelligible* as such from a holistic perspective, which takes the relational form as an indissoluble semantic whole?

With respect to Peirce and Pratyabhijñā, we will see that this question attains a singular metaphysical significance. For, much like Hegel and certain Catholic trinitarian theologians, these philosophers view the categorical structure of reality as *irreducibly* triadic.¹⁷ What invariably binds these traditions together, I gather, is the conviction that the metaphysical archetype of relation is the *transitive* action of *giving*: *a* gives *b* to *c*. In the semiotic framework of Peirce—who, unlike James, was equal parts scholastic realist and pragmatist—the question was whether the ‘givenness’ of empirical ‘signs’ can be exhaustively characterized in terms of a *binary* relation between a particular (signified) and universal (signifier); or, instead, does semiosis betray a constitutively *triadic* relation between three categorical modes of being. Obviously, Peirce opts for the latter view: “A Sign, or Representamen, is a First which stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a Second, called its Object, as to be capable of determining a Third, called its Interpretant, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object. The triadic relation is genuine, that is its three members are bound together by it in a way that does not consist in any complexus of dyadic relations” (1903: EP 2:272-3). Thus, contra the dichotomous ‘semiology’ of de Saussure, Peirce held that cognitive signification cannot transpire merely with reference to a dyadic relation between ‘signifier’ and ‘signified’.

As evident, Peirce’s definition of the sign not only demands reference to a triadic relation, but also that the sign’s triadic identity consists in the ‘power ‘of the sign to determine *itself* through spontaneous conformation to the dyadic representation of the object.¹⁸ Hence, the

¹⁷ See Murphy (1986) for a relevant cross-cultural discussion on the triadic mystical traditions of Kashmir Śaivism and Catholicism.

¹⁸ In a related set of lectures from 1903, Peirce elaborates upon the implications of this triadic structure in a manner that explicitly highlights its relevance to an unactualizable form of metaphysical ‘power’ that becomes relevant in the Pratyabhijñā context apropos the unrepresentable reality of ‘śakti’: “A REPRESENTAMEN is a subject of a triadic relation TO a second, called its OBJECT, FOR a third, called its INTERPRETANT, this triadic relation being such that the REPRESENTAMEN determines its interpretant to stand in the same triadic relation to the same

‘thirdness’ of the ‘interpretant,’ which conveniently brings us to the next important relational property, i.e., *reflexivity*. In analytic terms, reflexivity expresses a law of formal identity: For any real number x , $x=x$. Insofar as we consider ‘Barry’ always *necessarily* equal to *himself*, reflexivity also trivially entails equality. First-order logical calculus is therefore predicated on reflexivity as a primitive relational property of all elementary terms. But in philosophical and phenomenological circles, the relational property of reflexivity becomes much more theoretically fraught. For, aside from the question of its analytic application in formal reasoning, cognition *itself* is commonly said to instantiate a ‘reflexive’ property—namely, self-consciousness. More specifically, unless one seeks to deny their own intentional awareness, cognition doesn’t happen ‘in the dark’ for a bunch of philosophical zombies—i.e., hypothetical entities that resemble humans in all respects but lack any corresponding phenomenal states (cf. Chalmers: 1996 and Kirk: 2023). We are *aware that we are aware*, and many philosophers, ancient and modern, have claimed that this makes all the difference—practically speaking, at least—between things appearing *to us* or not appearing to *anyone at all*.¹⁹

object for some interpretant. It follows at once that this relation cannot consist in any actual event that ever can have occurred; for in that case there would be another actual event connecting the interpretant to an interpretant of its own of which the same would be true; and thus there would be an endless series of events which could have actually occurred, which is absurd. For the same reason the interpretant cannot be a *definite* individual object. The relation must therefore consist in a *power* of the representamen to determine some interpretant to being a representamen of the same object” (CP 1.540-542).

¹⁹ Obviously, the question of the difference, or lack thereof, between consciousness and self-consciousness is a huge topic in philosophy, one that we will touch upon in later chapters. Some philosophers—e.g., Candrakīrti (Arnold: 2010; Garfield: 2006); Rorty (2009); Ryle (2009)—believe that reflexivity need not be considered an intrinsic property of consciousness. In *The Concept of Mind*, for instance, Gilbert Ryle comments that: “Self-consciousness, if the word is to be used at all, must not be described on the hallowed para-optical model, as a torch that illuminates itself by beams of its own light reflected from a mirror in its own insides. On the contrary it is simply a special case of an ordinary more or less efficient handling of a less or more honest and intelligent witness” (174). In other words, we do not directly ‘intuit’ ourselves in a reflexive sense, but rather *infer* a ‘self’ based on witnessing our own sensory-motor activity, analogous to the way we observe the purely objective behavior of others: “To concern oneself about oneself in any way, theoretical or practical, is to perform a higher order act, just as it is to concern oneself about anybody else” (175). Like Rorty’s historical account of the progressive emergence of the concept of a reflexive mind from certain confused and misbegotten reifications in modern philosophical discourse (2009: Ch. 1 & 2), Ryle considered ‘self/reflexive consciousness’ a higher-order conceptual activity that infers subjective characteristics based on practical behavior—viz., not a property intrinsic to the nature of cognition itself. In Indian scholarship, the topic is covered extensively in Williams’s seminal (1998) study of the Tibetan Madhyamaka

But does this reflexive nature of cognition designate a *binary* relational *property* between a singular referent—‘cognition’—and *itself*? Or does the reflexive ‘property’ of intentional consciousness suggest some *sui generis* transcendental form that accords with Peirce’s *triadic* metaphysical framework? In later chapters on the Indian traditions, I will argue that the question of whether the reflexive nature of cognition (*svasaṃvedana/svasaṃvitti*) *makes sense* in the strictly binary ontological schema of universal and particular also captures the critical theoretical schism that separates the skeptical representationalism and/or epistemic idealism of the Pramāṇavāda Buddhists and the objective idealism of the Pratyabhijñā Śaivites.

Lastly, the property of *symmetry* will also play a significant role in debates about the ontological status of relations: In terms of equality, symmetrical relations express the property that for any x and y , if $x=y$, then $y=x$. For instance, if Barry is *next to* Andy, then Andy is also *next to* Barry. The bidirectional structure of the conditional $R(a\leftrightarrow b)$ means the relation *next to* is ‘symmetrical’ in the sense that a and b are not simply *related*, but $R(a\rightarrow b)$ *in the same way that* $R(b\rightarrow a)$. In this respect, all *spatial* relations—but not necessarily *directional* relations (e.g., *left*→ *right*)—between distinct objects are generally symmetrical: e.g., my being 20 inches away from my screen entails my screen’s being 20 inches away from me. The mark of a symmetrical relation is thus that the *order* of the relata remains irrelevant to describe the relation in question. Conversely, if Barry is *taller than* Andy, it cannot follow that Andy is *taller than* Barry. The unidirectional relation of being *taller than* is *asymmetric* in virtue of the *a posteriori*, empirical fact of whether some a is actually taller than some b . This places the two objects into an ordered

defense of Śāntarakṣita’s theory of reflexive awareness against eliminativists like Candrakīrti. As we will see, Utpala and Bhartṛhari also represent two other Indian philosophers who believed that reflexive consciousness must be considered *constitutive* of sentient cognition on practical grounds—in other words, it cannot be understood as a *consequence* of any inferential or conceptual activity, but a rational condition for its possibility.

set such that one can only infer a relational property obtains in a single direction (viz., $R(a,b) \leftrightarrow R(b,a)$).²⁰

Alternatively, consider the *parental* relation *mother*→*daughter*. Unlike a relation such as *being next to*, this relation is not the same as the relation *daughter*→*mother*; viz., the relational property of ‘parenthood’ only proceeds in a single ‘direction’ *from* one relatum *to* another. Likewise, if lunch came before dinner, dinner could not have occurred before lunch. The asymmetrical properties of these sorts of empirical circumstances does not result from, say, the different heights of extensive *objects*, but rather from the vectoral dimension of temporal or causal *events*, whereby a strict asymmetrical order obtains such that the ‘terms’ in question can only be arranged in one irreversible direction. For this reason, debates about the epistemic status of asymmetrical relations often implicate questions about the ultimate reality of the so-called ‘arrow’ of *time*.

As we will see in more detail below, for process philosophers, the relevance of the distinction between symmetrical and asymmetrical relations does not concretely manifest in the designation of certain properties between such-and-such synchronous *terms*, but rather in the diachronic *feelings* that differentiate the symmetry of spatial objects from the asymmetry of temporal events. Accordingly, diverse process thinkers like James, Peirce, Hartshorne, Whitehead, and Bergson all viewed the stakes of the reality of temporal asymmetry in terms of the objective validity of the normative, aesthetic, and teleological—in short, the *creative*—orientation of finite creaturehood. For these thinkers, it is the concrete flow of temporal life that should effectively place transcendental limits on the meaning and scope of theoretical knowledge

²⁰ Note that some relations are non-symmetric without being asymmetric. For instance, Barry might admire Andy, but Andy need not necessarily admire Barry. Here the ‘direction’ of the *admires* relation runs from Barry to Andy, but the same relation could just have easily been symmetric. Thus, if *a* admires *b*, *b* may or may not reciprocate the relation.

in *general*. This temporal realist view therefore opposes in principle a ‘view from nowhere,’ or a divine mind/substance that only apprehends *eternal* and *timeless* truths of formal necessity—in other words, ‘truth’ as it abides entirely *independent* of the apparent contingent circumstances of the benighted state of human ignorance. In Western philosophy, philosophers have often characterized the sort of timeless relations that such a divine mind would apprehend in terms of the notion of ‘internal’—in opposition to ‘external’—relations.

d. Internal and External Relations

In most philosophical debates about relations, the significance of relational properties become subsumed in the broader distinction between *internal* and *external* relations, which emerged as an explicit topic of debate in the Anglo-American tradition around the turn of the 20th century in response to Bradley.²¹ Put most simply, *internal* relations are *necessary* relations: They obtain given the bare *existence* of the relata, or are relations without which the relata would not be what they are. *External* relations, in contrast, are *contingent* relations: They obtain *independently* of the essential properties of the relata, or are *unnecessary* to describe each relatum taken on its own. Let’s discuss each of these in a bit more detail.

According to Russell, internal relations are “grounded in the natures of the related terms” (1907 [1910]: 160). Hence internal relations are often said to obtain in virtue of the ‘intrinsic properties’ of the relata—viz., those properties without which the relata would not be what they are. Analytic propositions and the tautological formulae of mathematics typify internal relations: ‘ $1+1=2$ ’ expresses an internal relation between the numbers ‘1’ and ‘2’ because the relata would

²¹ See MacBride (2016), Rorty (1967), and Heil (2021) for an overview and sampling of various problems in the study of internal and external relations in contemporary philosophy.

not be what they are if they did not fulfill that relation. For 1 to qualify as 1, it must necessarily be the case that ‘ $1+1=2$.’ Hence relations between mathematical objects obtain in virtue of the formal definition of numerical objects themselves, and thus all mathematical relations, in this sense, are considered internal relations. In conceptual terms, consider the notion ‘black cat’ and its relation to the concepts ‘black’ and ‘cat’; the latter two concepts are *internally related* to the former because they *comprise its essential character*. If we subtracted either one of these ideas from ‘black cat,’ we could no longer *conceive* of the referent as such.²² This *epistemic* rendering of internal relation resonates with Wittgenstein’s own definition in 4.123 of the *Tractatus*: “A [relational] property is internal if it is *unthinkable* that its object should not possess it.”²³ He proceeds to give his favorite example of *shade* as a type of internal relation: it is unthinkable that two particular shades of blue do not also stand in some internal relation of lighter and darker (viz., because any two shades of blue will, *ipso facto*, be either lighter or darker than one another). Internal ‘relations’ are thus often used interchangeably with the notion of the constitutive or essential properties of a thing. In general, *similarity* or *resemblance* qualifies as an internal relation: Two blue billiard balls are said to *resemble* each other in virtue of the mere fact that they exist as such (that is, they both have a similar shape, weight, color, etc.).

Internal relations naturally contrast with *external relations*, which obtain irrespective of the nature of the relata, or are unnecessary to describe a thing’s intrinsic properties. Russell generalizes them as such: “I maintain that there are such facts as that x has relation R to y , and that such facts are not in general reducible to, or inferable from, a fact about x only and a fact

²² Note that universals may also be said to stand in *external* relations to one another when the internal relation in question is one of the logical entailment of one property by another. So, for instance, one may say that a universal such as “cowhood” stands in an *internal* relation to certain universals (e.g., “mammalian”) but in an *external* relation to other universals (e.g., “reptilian”) (cf. Rorty: *ibid.*). Thus, there can be senses in which concepts can be internally related at one level (i.e., the entire ‘logical space of reasons’) but externally related at other levels (i.e., a particular line of inference).

²³ N.b. Wittgenstein substituted internal ‘relation’ for ‘property,’ but they effectively mean the same thing in his early work.

about y only: they do not imply that x and y have any complexity, or any intrinsic property distinguishing them from a z and a w which do not have the relation R " (1910: 374). In this respect, external relations correspond to *synthetic* propositions, for they express contingent, accidental, or secondary properties that cannot be deduced from the intrinsic properties of the relata as such. While formal conceptual relations thus exemplify internal relations, spatial relations canonically instantiate external relations: the relation of two objects in space do not enter into the constitution of the objects themselves—or, at least, we do not conventionally suppose that their essential natures depend upon what spatial relations they instantiate.²⁴

Hence while the spatial relations among billiard balls during a game are constantly in flux, the balls themselves presumably remain the same throughout. Likewise, the relation expressed by the proposition ‘I am now south of Canada’ is wholly ‘external’ to me as a person; my intrinsic properties would (presumably) be the same regardless of my spatial relationship to Canada. For similar reasons, objects in a contingent causal relationship are often considered independent of the causal relation itself.²⁵ In general, then, *difference* qualifies as an external relation between two spatially distinct objects: e.g., two billiard balls that collide upon a table are said to be *different* in virtue of their spatial independence from one another.

²⁴ We will see that Bradley, in fact, questions this exact common-senseism about the *pure* externality of spatial relations, which James and Whitehead would also, in their own ways, proceed to question.

²⁵ Technically speaking, whether causal relations are internal or external begs the metaphysical question of whether “logical necessity is involved in causal relations” (Nagel 1954: 290). Blanshard expresses the reasoning behind the rationalist’s support of this idea: “[T]o say that a produces x in virtue of being a and yet that, given a , x might not follow, is inconsistent with the laws of identity and contradiction. Of course if a were a cluster of qualities abstracted from their relations, and its modes of causal behaviour were another set conjoined with the former externally, then one could deny the latter and retain the former with perfect consistency. But we have seen that when we say a causes x we do not mean that sort of conjunction; we mean an intrinsic relation, i.e., a relation in which a ’s behaviour is the outgrowth or expression of a ’s nature. And to assert that a ’s behaviour, so conceived, could be different while a was still the same would be to assert that something both did and did not issue from the nature of a ” (1939: 513). For Blanshard, then, when we scrutinize the nature of causality, we posit an *internal* relation that necessarily obtains between the intrinsic properties of the cause and the generation of an effect. Nagel simply counters that Blanshard’s analysis depends upon a tendentious identification of ‘the nature of a ’ with all its properties (ibid.).

Canonical formalizations expose an important distinction between the *logical* and *ontological* forms of these relations. Moore (1919: 47), for instance, defined a binary relation R as *internal* iff, if x bears R to y , then x does so necessarily. It follows that if x exists then x must bear R to y . Conversely, R is *external* iff it's possible that x exists while failing to bear R to y . This type of definition is purely *logical*—it does not entail anything at all about the intrinsic nature of relation or their place in a fundamental ontology. But Armstrong (1989: 43) offers his own definition that has an ontological dimension: A relation R is internal iff its holding between x and y is necessitated by the intrinsic natures, i.e., non-relational properties, of x and y ; otherwise, R is external. Lewis (1986: 62) goes further and simply defines internal relations in virtue of their being an ontologically reducible property: it is a property that supervenes upon the intrinsic natures of its relata. His definition of “external” complements this construal: R is external iff (1) it fails to supervene upon the nature of the relata taken separately, but (2) it does supervene on the nature of the composite of the relata taken together. In short, then, it suffices for an internal relation to obtain if *either* the things it relates *exist*, *or* the things it relates have such-and-such *intrinsic properties*.

Obviously, however, this view simply takes for granted that ultimately real beings consist of intrinsic, non-relational properties, and so it would naturally appear that internal relations become explanatorily extraneous—or at least purely conceptual—in the nominalist framework of supervenience.²⁶ We can now appreciate why the question of the *reality* of relations—and in particular *internal* relations—is essentially problematic; any response implicates axiomatic presuppositions about the status of the nature of the connections (or lack thereof) between

²⁶ Consider the internal relation ‘being taller than’ in regard to two propositions: (1) I am taller than my brother. (2) My brother is 6’0 and I am 6’1. The first relation supervenes upon the second, because it is impossible that (2) obtain without (1) also obtaining. We can say that (1) is analytically entailed by (2). Any truth we can state about the internal relations in this case is determined by the existence of the intrinsic characters of the things they relate, and thus supervene upon them. So, these reductionists argue, truths about internal relations don’t correlate to ontological truths about the intrinsic nature of the things they relate.

thought, language, judgment, and the external world. While Moore's definition of internal relation is purely one of *logical necessity*, that is, Armstrong and Lewis' definitions are *ontological*, extending the idea of internal relations to a metaphysics in which all complex relational facts formally supervene on some finite set of intrinsic properties in external relations of absolute difference: A change in the state of one nominal relatum does not affect the intrinsic properties of any other.

This sort of reasoning bottoms out in the metaphysics of 'Humean Supervenience' after David Lewis, who claims that there is no difference in reality without a difference in the arrangement of intrinsic properties/qualities localized over points:

Humean supervenience is named in honor of the great denier of necessary connections. It is the doctrine that all there is to the world is a vast mosaic of local matters of particular fact, just one little thing and then another. (But it is no part of the thesis that these local matters are mental.) We have geometry: a system of external relations of spatiotemporal distances between points. Maybe points of spacetime itself, maybe point-sized bits of matter or aether or fields, maybe both. And at those points we have local qualities: perfectly natural intrinsic properties which need nothing bigger than a point at which to be instantiated. For short: we have an arrangement of qualities. And that is all. There is no difference without difference in the arrangement of qualities. All else supervenes on that (1986: ix–xvi).

Under the banner of this sort of nominalist-empiricism, analytic philosophers in the tradition of Moore, Russell (and the early, picture-theory Wittgenstein) have proceeded to reduce all apparent 'internal relations' to ontological superfluity or triviality.²⁷ The position taken towards internal relations in this camp amounts to an argument from parsimony: Why acknowledge a complex ontology of 'necessary relations' whose explanatory work is already fulfilled by the *essential properties* of particulars themselves? Here, only external relations are 'real', in the strict sense that only those relations instantiated by the constitutive plurality of discrete intrinsic properties *exist* in physical terms. Hence, in the literature on the subject, one invariably encounters declarations that internal relations can be "simply left behind" (Mácha: 211), because

²⁷ See, e.g., Fisk (1972), Armstrong (1978; 1997), Campbell (1990), Candlish (2007), Heil (2009), Simons (2010; 2014), Mácha (2015), and Lowe (2012; 2016).

they provide “no addition of being” (Armstrong 1978: 86) and thus are “absent from the fundamental ontology” (Heil 2009: 316–7)—or, simply put, “there are no such things” (Simons 2010: 204–5). Armstrong coins the charming phrase “an ontological free lunch” to describe these relations, because “given [the relata], the relation is necessitated” (1997: 25).

This characteristic reduction of necessary relations onto discrete particulars represents the legacy of Russell and Moore’s logical atomism on the contemporary reception of the ontological status of internal relations. For many analytic philosophers, all talk about internal ‘relations’ is just that—merely talk, because these relations *definitionally* supervene on externally related intrinsic properties; all complex phenomena ultimately reduce to ‘local matters of particular fact’. If all forms of internal relation wholly supervene on intrinsic properties spread over atomic points, then one can argue we need not admit necessary relations into a fundamental ontology *at all*—they are purely conceptual impositions or constructions.²⁸

²⁸ We do not intend to go into the matter very deeply, but it is worth mentioning that there are compelling *empirical* reasons to doubt Humean Supervenience. In particular, classical physics depends upon all sorts of vectorial and tensorial expressions of an extensive space-time that do not self-evidently correspond to the intrinsic properties of any particular relata (e.g., force, stress, strain, elasticity, etc.). But as we move from classical to general and quantum physics, the *a posteriori* case against global Humean supervenience looks even stronger due to the replacement of localized matter with extensive fields: In relativistic field theory, e.g., the equivalence principle of $E=mc^2$ entails that the localized mass of an electromagnetic particle corresponds to a distribution of energy in an all-pervasive electromagnetic field with certain classical properties like momentum, stress, etc. Additionally, the determination of the properties of a certain electromagnetic field depends upon the global form of space-time; thus, not only are the properties of fields no longer assignable to particular lumps of matter in a ‘simple location,’ but even these distributed properties are constitutively relational *vis-à-vis* the metrical structure of space-time itself (cf. Lehmkuhl: 2011). And, in quantum theory, the supervenience theorist about internal relations faces the gravest challenges of all: According to elementary quantum mechanics, every ‘particle’ can be understood as a continuous field with a distribution that assigns, for each instant of time, a complex number to every point of space. But in quantum field theory, even the notion of a ‘particular particle’ gives way to a universe where distinct elementary particles (the mass, charge, and spin of, say, electrons, quarks, and leptons) represent relatively localized excitations of a single, all-pervasive field (e.g., a single electron field, photon field, etc....). Furthermore, because the continuous (and thus infinite) distribution of these quantities typically requires a statistical process of “renormalization” (Butterfield 2014; 2015) the units of excitation that correspond to the mass and charge depend upon the scalar length at which one chooses to probe and describe the field. Teller (1986) leverages the case of entangled particles (or fields) to argue against relational reductionism, for these queer structures exhibit a global holistic quantum state wherein the properties of one relatum cannot be determined independently of the other. Taking all this into account, some philosophers of physics even argue that it’s relational turtles all the way down (e.g., Esfeld 2004; 2016, Epperson: 2013, and Rovelli: 1996): there is nothing in the world that corresponds to the classical notion of intrinsic properties that define the non-relational status of particular objects (French & Ladyman: 2003; Ladyman & Ross 2007: 130–89, Ladyman: 2016; MacBride 2020: 3).

In the early-to-mid 20th century, a ‘doctrine of internal relations’ had been traditionally associated with Hegel and British monistic rationalists like Bradley and Joachim who operated in his wake. Hegel, for instance, writes in the *Logic* that “Everything that exists stands in correlation, and this correlation is the veritable nature of every existence. The existent thing in this way has no being of its own, but only in something else: in this other however it is self-relation; and correlation is the unity of the self-relation and relation-to-others” (1892: 245).²⁹ Hegel clearly inverts the pluralistic realism of the nominalist, because every particular thing *really* just consists of its *necessary* relations to everything else. Likewise, if we take our bearings from the early rationalists, Leibniz argued that all truths are ultimately analytic, and Spinoza explained the apparent contingency of causal relations as logical relations of the one substance. From this rationalist perspective, the Real possesses no *truly* ‘external’ relations, since the *appearance of contingency itself can only reflect a product of human ignorance*. For the one timeless substance, all must *necessarily* be as it *is*; or, what amounts to the same thing, for an omniscient God, everything *must* relate to everything else in precisely the way that it does—spatial and causal relations included.

Put in crude terms, this expresses the so-called ‘doctrine of internal relations,’ which maintains that all things are internally, or necessarily, related to all other things. Blanshard describes his understanding of the “principal meaning” of the doctrine:

(1) that every term, i.e., every possible object of thought, is what it is in virtue of relations to what is other than itself; (2) that its nature is affected thus not by some of its relations only, but in differing degrees by all of them, no matter how external they may seem; (3) that in consequence of (2) and of the further obvious fact that everything is related in some way to everything else, no knowledge will reveal completely the nature of any term until it has exhausted that term’s relations to everything else (1939: 452).

²⁹ In East Asian Buddhism, this notion is mirrored in the Hua-Yen tradition, where the doctrine of emptiness is interpreted in accord with the image of the ‘Jewel Net of Indra’ as the mutual interpenetration of each thing in all others. See Odin (1982), whose distinction between the symmetrical interpenetration of Hua-Yen and the asymmetric, cumulative interpenetration of Whitehead clearly bears on the metaphysical topics at hand.

In other words, for the monistic idealist, to understand the nature of any one thing in its essence, one must also understand its relations to all other things—and ultimately the Absolute itself. Hegel and Blanshard insist that we cannot both isolate something from the whole and at the same time claim to know the thing as-it-is, because it only exists as-it-is in virtue of its relationship to all other things. Since, in this case, *all* of a thing’s properties—including its *apparently* contingent properties—are essential to its being what it is, *ipso facto*, *all* its relations are actually *internal*. Accordingly, Blanshard flatly rejects the doctrine of external relations held by “many philosophers of the present day [, who] are convinced that every existing thing and event is logically unconnected with any other and could disappear from the world without necessarily affecting anything else. Such a rubbish-heap view of the world I cannot accept” (1980: 132).

For a rational idealist like Blanshard, the entire *telos* of thought is to discover the ‘real essences’ of things through its necessary relations.³⁰ From this idealistic perspective, the essential nature of any object would be asymptotically revealed in the chains of analytic entailment that proceed from the universals that structure our awareness of the one substance. The identification of ‘the nature of *X*’ with *X* itself—i.e., the identification of a particular thing with the totality of its internal properties (as experienced by an ideal knower that could comprehend the analytic entailments that obtain between all of these internal properties)—is necessarily disclosed when we analyze the full meaning of ‘knowing *X*’. In this case, the analytic features of internal relations are most certainly *real*, because they constitute the essence of concrete reality as a process of knowing through universal entailments.

³⁰ Blanshard thus remarks, “I have never been able to accept the realist view that the objects of direct experience are independent of consciousness. Indeed everything we sense or feel seems to me to exist only in consciousness” (1980: 142). Blanshard’s view thus echoes the Pratyabhijñā internalist position *vis-à-vis* the mental dependence of external objects. Here particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*) are explained in terms of a complex of appearances (*ābhāsa*) of universals (*sāmānya*) defined in terms of the relational capacities (*sambandha-śakti*) of judgment (*vimarśa*). We will discuss this further in Chapter V.

Russell interpreted the doctrine of internal relations to mean that the nature of a term must include all its relational properties, or all relational properties somehow inhere in the term itself. There are consequently no properties of a term that are not constitutive of its ‘essential nature.’ Clearly, though, the notion that there *are* external relations, *in some form*, is closer to empirical and common sense than an abstract ontology of pure internal relatedness. For the doctrine appears to commit one to the claim that, for any given term, if anything, anywhere, in whatever way, were different, the term itself would *also* have to be different. This seems *prima facie* absurd. Accordingly, Rorty (1967) posits that

[t]here probably would never have been a problem about internal relations were it not for the efforts of speculative metaphysicians, such as Parmenides, Spinoza, and Hegel, to undermine our commonsense conceptual framework. If one rejects such attempts out of hand, one will treat the adoption of monism and of the thesis of the internality of all relations as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the premises from which these views are derived. Since Moore, the vast majority of Anglo-American philosophers have rejected such attempts and have differed only in their diagnoses of the confusions of falsehoods that engendered metaphysical conclusions. As long as the dogma that logical necessity was a matter of linguistic convention remained unchallenged, a simple and elegant resolution of the problem of internal relations seemed possible.³¹

We can now appreciate how the ontological and explanatory status of internal relations is predicated entirely upon axiomatic metaphysical commitments. For those contemporary empiricists or positivists (e.g., A.J. Ayer, Ernest Nagel, Gilbert Ryle) who argue that *all* ‘essences’ are ‘nominal’—and thus that any ‘real essence’ is an incoherent notion—whether a given property is included within a thing’s ‘essential nature’ is merely a question about the conventions of *language*, rather than a question that can ever be resolved by further empirical inquiry into the misguided notion of the ‘essential nature of the thing itself.’³² If one accepts the

³¹ We can also put Rorty’s point—viz., the validity of conventional perspectives goes hand-in-hand with the reality of external relations—in temporal terms: That is, only the ignorant, *temporal person* views reality in terms of contingent external relations. It is for this reason that the early Wittgenstein defined *temporal* relations as “external” and *atemporal* relations as “internal” (Mácha: 93-6). If an expression asserts the existence of an external relation, it refers to a *temporal* circumstance, not to the formal truths of mathematics or logic, which only communicate internal relations.

³² Nagel, e.g., argued against Blanshard’s doctrine of internal relations on the grounds that it hinges on a perverse construal of ‘nature:’ “It is quite clear that just what characters are included in an individual, and just where the

nominalist-empiricist vision—where the building blocks of reality are constituted by a plurality of discrete, utterly unique particulars, externally related through such-and-such sets of intrinsic properties—the analytic features of internal relations/properties reduce to *nothing more* than epistemic convention.³³ In the language of Sellars (1997) and McDowell (1994), the only rightful place for internal relations here is the ‘logical space of reasons’—they do not exist in ‘the logical space of nature’ governed by external relations.³⁴

e. Is There a General Logical Form of Relation?

One way to frame the logical quandary of ‘relation’ is this: What *is it* that actually *relates relations* together *qua* ‘relations’? More to the point: Does the notion of a ‘relation of all relations’—a relation that supposedly relates all *other* relations together (e.g., internal and

boundaries of an individual are drawn, depend on decisions as to the use of language. These decisions, though motivated by considerations of practical utility, are *logically arbitrary*” (1954: 275). In other words, Nagel argues that the ‘nature’ of *X* consists of just those properties *P* in whose absence we would stop using “*X*” to refer to *X*—properties that are determined purely by convention, not empirically. While such properties are definitely finite with respect to what we can *know* about *X*, the properties that *X* *actually possesses* are (potentially) infinite. Rorty classifies Nagel as adopting Ryle and Ayer’s (1935) position, i.e., ‘the standard empiricist view’: “To determine which properties of *X* are internal to it is merely a matter of determining which propositions about *X* are analytic and that determining *this* is simply a matter of consulting linguistic usage. To urge that the nature of a thing includes all its properties would, given this view, be to urge that *all* propositions about *X* are analytic. Both Nagel and Ayer treat this conclusion as a *reductio ad absurdum*.”

³³ To one familiar with Buddhist philosophy, despite the ontological and soteriological differences, a broad conceptual analogy should be apparent between the point-like particulars of Humean Supervenience and the Abhidharma project. According to both theories, at its core, all of reality reduces to a set or sequence of changeless particulars of such-and-such intrinsic nature in some causally efficacious (read:: *external*) relation to other changeless particulars of such-and-such intrinsic nature.

³⁴ This observation relates to Arnold’s (2014) epistemological thesis. He argues that Dharmakīrti’s theory of mind, despite being founded on a non-physicalist ontology, is susceptible to the same critiques that contemporary Kantian thinkers like Sellars and McDowell level at *physicalist* theories of mind. The salient point for Arnold is that Dharmakīrti and physicalists like Jerry Fodor and Daniel Dennett try to describe the workings of mind in strictly *causal* terms, and thus both fall prey to a similar sort of transcendental argument; any causal theory of mind will presuppose reference to the irreducible intentional states that it seeks to explain away. Part of the constructive goal of this paper *vis-à-vis* Arnold’s cross-cultural analysis is to account for this epistemological insight with reference to processual metaphysical frameworks that define internal relations as concrete elements of a constructive reality. In this way, we are not left with the potential dualism that Kantian thinkers like Sellars and McDowell introduce between epistemology and ontology. In particular, I would argue that these thinkers leave us in the dark about *how* the irreducible set of internal relations that obtain in the logical space of reasons, and the external relations that obtain in the logical space of nature, *relate to each other in concrete experience*. According to these Kantian thinkers, we may *prima facie* accept both domains as coherent sets of formal relations, but we cannot seek their transcendental synthesis through any rational system. We can (and will) interpret the philosophy of Pratyabhijñā and Peirce, though, as similar attempts to do just that.

external) into a single recognizable class—*make sense*? The basic conundrum involves a precise characterization of a general logical form of relation [GLFR], that is, a generic referent that supposedly marks all relational phenomena as *tokens* of a single common *type*. This would effectively signify ‘relation-as-such,’ or relationality as abstracted from all distinct *modes* of relatedness. Since the logical form of a dyadic relation always appears highly dependent upon the nature of the terms, though, we wind up with a unique conceptual problem when we inquire into how relations, or domains of relatedness, actually relate *to each other*. This problem arguably represents the principal question that motivates the current project.

In naïve set theoretical terms, let’s assume that for such a GLFR to exist, there must be some set of all relations, *R*, over which this general form obtains. For as the universal property of ‘cowness’ inheres in all particular cows, every particular instance of ‘relation’ must presumably instantiate the general property of ‘relatedness’ to count as a *bona fide relation*. Since the meaning of the GLFR coextends with *R* and its members, and *R* is the set of *all* relations, *R* must either be a member of itself or not³⁵: If it *does not* include itself, then, *ipso facto*, *R* isn’t the set of *all* relations—viz., it does not include the relation that relates all relations. In this case, there can be no such thing as the GLFR, since there is no sufficient formal determination of the set of all relations over which GLFR would need to operate to qualify as such.

Alternatively, let’s assume that *R* reflexively includes *itself* as a distinct, self-standing member. Since this reflexive property of *R* would presumably signify *its own* distinct relational property, it would *also* need to be included in *R* as a *separate, self-standing member*—viz., as a

³⁵ One might argue that we are conflating apples and oranges here, insofar as *R* supposedly represents a definite *set* while GLFR represents a *relational operation over R*. Thus, we are conflating sets and relations, which already dictate distinct formal categories, akin to the basic division between monadic substances and their relational properties. Of course, though, sets are themselves defined in terms of the relation of *membership*—even the empty set, e.g., is defined in terms of its lack of any members. The set *R* and the GLFR can thus remain referentially equivalent just to the extent that both notions are sufficient to formalize a plausible definition of the generic class of all relations.

necessary *relation* between R and *itself*. Consequently, though, we must now specify a further membership relation, R_1 , to designate the inclusion of the reflexive relational property of R in R . Of course, now this relation, R_1 , would require its own new relation, R_2 , to represent the separate inclusion of R_1 in R , *ad infinitum*. And so, a characteristic relational regress ensues in virtue of the intrinsically reflexive *constitution* of R , insofar as we must regard R as *both* a fixed set with a determinate formal unity *and* a reflexive member of itself.³⁶ In other words, R 's own constitutively relational structure can never be resolved into a determinate formal unity—and thus there cannot be any corresponding GLFR that generalizes over the hypothetical set of R .³⁷

We can also pose this dilemma in semantic terms: The GLFR is either a *relation* or *not*. On the one hand, if GLFR is *not* a *relation*, the GLFR refers to a *general entity*, and should thus

³⁶ Another relevant critique of trope theory, first noted by Russell (1912: 48), is that it also can't avoid relational regress. If some particulars exactly resemble each other, then either the relation of resemblance would apparently have to exist *as a universal*, or we wind up with a (vicious) infinite regress. Daly offers a succinct account of this argument (1997: 149): "Consider three concrete particulars which are the same shade of red... each of these concrete particulars has a red trope—call these tropes F , G , and H —and these concrete particulars exactly resemble each other in colour because F , G , and H exactly resemble each other in colour. But it seems that this account is incomplete. It seems that the account should further claim that resemblance tropes hold between F , G , and H . That is, it seems that there are resemblance tropes holding between the members of the pairs F and G , G and H , and F and H ... Let us call the resemblance tropes in question R_1 , R_2 , and R_3 ... each of these resemblance tropes in turn exactly resemble each other. Therefore, certain resemblance tropes hold between these tropes...we are launched on a regress."

³⁷ Note that two wholly internally related terms are *ipso facto symmetrically* related, while an *asymmetrical* relation entails some difference (read: external relation) between its terms such that we can account for its irreflexive properties (that is, $a \rightarrow b$ does not equal $b \rightarrow a$). (For the later Bradley, we will see that this entails that all judgments must be partially internal *and* external—the degree to which may depend on how the object of judgment is evaluated and described). More precisely, if we say that a relation R is *reflexive* iff $R(x,x)$ obtains for every element in its domain, then no internal relation can assume the reflexive form $R(a,a)$ without semantic vacuity. Mácha dubs this "the maxim of no reflexive uses of internal relations" (210). Formally, it entails that if two terms a and b are related by the internal relation R_{int} , there must be some external relation R_{ext} that ensures that a and b are distinct: $(\forall R_{int})(\forall a, b) ((R_{int}(a, b) \rightarrow (\exists R_{ext})R_{ext}(a, b))$. According to Mácha, both Bradley and Wittgenstein's eliminativist arguments show that a reflexive internal relation is nonsensical, merely reflecting "a failed case of emphasis...a signpost indicating the way to the very place where the signpost actually is" (207-8). Instead, of a 'doctrine of internal relations,' one should consider Wittgenstein's method of "straightening [the relation] out into an intransitive use (where no relation is expressed at all), [which] would make the language-game more plausible" (ibid: 210). Here Mácha endorses the familiar reduction of pure (which, in this case, just means reflexive) internal relations to a monistic property of substantival terms, so that we can—in some idealized space of total logical transparency—simply "leave them behind" (211). Clearly, the question of the objective form of *reflexive* internal relations—that is, whether a nonsensical notion or a real factor of experience—will come to represent a critical issue in transcendental philosophy and the present paper (in particular, whether the reflexive determination of cognition makes sense in strictly *dyadic* terms, or whether it requires some inescapable measure of 'thirdness').

be *cognizable* independently of its particular relata—viz., specifiable as a self-standing, autonomously intelligible referent. In this capacity, the GLFR should be able to function, say, as the subject or predicate of a proposition like any other substantive referent. But if ‘relationality’ is just another sort of self-enclosed generic term, it seemingly no longer functions in its capacity as *actually relating things*—viz., it would indicate a categorically separate mode of being, recognizable in itself as fundamentally distinct from its various relata. To add fuel to the fire, if we treat relation itself as merely another general referent, we now can’t seem to account for the distinct behavior of *dyadic* relations and *monadic* properties. On the other hand, if we choose to classify the GLFR as a type of *relation*—i.e., that relation which supposedly relates all other relations together *as relations*—then its logical form would necessarily refer to the particular nature of its *relata*. However, since the GLFR is now a second-order *relation* defined exclusively in terms of relating all other *relations* (i.e., decidedly *not* particular terms), its general logical form could only be determined by the common *relational* ‘property’ of its relata—which is precisely their *relationality*. So then, what determines the logical form of relationality would apparently depend upon the common property of relationality. Clearly, if ‘relation’ must refer to itself to define itself, it is, at best, a circular or tautological notion, or, at worst, vacuous and nonsensical.

In short, we can see that a GLFR would need to be both formally *external* to its relata such that it is distinguishable as a separate, autonomously intelligible referent, but also *internal* to its relata, insofar as a concrete ‘relation’ must *actually relate* its terms, and thus not simply remain wholly independent therefrom. Given this bewildering situation, one might surmise that there can be no *general* type of relation. On this account, a GLFR is practically meaningless, precisely because all real instances of relation are only apprehended relative to the particular

form of the relata. For these reasons, most philosophers consider a GLFR either ontologically *trivial* (i.e., it vacuously reduces to the intrinsic properties of particular relatum), or otherwise unintelligible, insofar as no possible set of relata can be specified whereby the GLFR could resolve into a definite formal type without vicious circularity. Indeed, up to this point, the pluralistic nominalist and monistic idealist would probably even agree: all this conceptual muddle just goes to show that there is no general objective form of ‘relationality’ because the very notion would contradict the law of the excluded middle; real entities cannot be *simultaneously* unified *and* diverse. Like the naïve set theoretical notion of a “set of all sets that are not members of themselves,”³⁸ the self-referential notion of an objective ‘relation’—one that supposedly relates all *other* relations together—is fundamentally misguided.

In marked contrast to this position, Samuel Alexander opines in a neglected 1912 essay on relations that “it does not...follow that because there are no abstract relations there are no general ones” (313). The problem for Alexander is not necessarily that a general relational form is *incoherent*, but rather the non-sequitur that, because we cannot *abstract* relations from their particular relata like laws or other universal regularities, relations do not exist in a constitutively *general* sense.³⁹ Following on the heels of James, he remarks that “if we separate the world into terms *and* their relations, we are making an abstraction. The world consists of things *in* their

³⁸ I am referring, of course, to Russell’s famous paradox that crushed the hopes of Frege and the naïve set theorists: “The comprehensive class we are considering, which is to embrace everything, must embrace itself as one of its members. In other words, if there is such a thing as “everything,” then, “everything” is something, and is a member of the class “everything.” But normally a class is not a member of itself. Mankind, for example, is not a man. Form now the assemblage of all classes which are not members of themselves. This is a class: is it a member of itself or not? If it is, it is one of those classes that are not members of themselves, i.e., it is not a member of itself. If it is not, it is not one of those classes that are not members of themselves, i.e. it is a member of itself. Thus of the two hypotheses—that it is, and that it is not, a member of itself—each implies its contradictory. This is a contradiction” (1919: 136). The key parallel here is that *R*, like the set of all sets that are not members of themselves, represents a notion so general that its own reflexive inclusion as a member of itself renders it paradoxical.

³⁹ He comments that, “just as we are apt, because we can legitimately distinguish in things the law of their constitution from the particularities which obey the law, to think of the concept or law as something altogether separate from its particulars; so by taking relations in their generality, we are apt to set up the relation as an independent existence, as if it did not always assume in our experience the form of some situation involving particulars and therefore itself coloured thereby” (313).

relations” (310). The real issue is therefore not the existence of a general form of relation *per se*, but rather the insistence that we can only logically analyze or comprehend relation through a conceptual process of abstraction—which, by its very nature, distinguishes terms from their concrete situational togetherness, and thereby automatically vitiates the notion of a general form of relational existence.

Alexander therefore suggests that the general form of relation—that is, what all relations have in common—must be defined in terms of the *continuity* that comprises the basic ‘togetherness’ of particular existents: “The thesis which is maintained here is that...[no relations are] capable of abstraction from their terms, if they are represented truly. There never is a jump from term to term: the terms are parts of one continuous tissue” (307). He explains:

A relation...may be described as the whole situation into which the terms which stand in the relation enter; so far, of course, as the situation concerns the relation. The situation may be one of events, as in the causal relation, or of things which are simultaneous, as the points of a line. By, the situation, [*sic*] is meant the real system of circumstances, which used to be called the *fundamentum relationis*, in so far as that system of circumstances brings the terms into continuous connexion with one another...It is a matter of subsidiary moment whether the relations are as in these examples asymmetrical, or as in the relation of equality, symmetrical. In so far as the situation of mother and child is a total situation, the two relations of mother to child and child to mother are the same situation seen from two different ends. What is action in the one case is passion in the other (308).

In other words, Alexander argues that, no matter what relation we discern, we always make implicit reference to the whole continuous ‘situation’ into which the terms enter, one that we must interpret from some limited conceptual perspective. This whole is not a mere ‘aggregate of circumstances’ but a concrete form of continuity—‘literally an integral situation,’ one which provides the prior conditions for the realization of any ‘subspecies’ of relation (ibid.: 310).

Generally speaking, then, true ‘relations’ are neither strictly internal nor external for Alexander, because they cannot be reduced to mere intrinsic qualities of their separate relata, nor an abstract description of essentially discontinuous terms. (As we will see below, this is the view that Bradley himself comes to explicitly endorse). For Alexander, “*the relation exhibits*

itself in the acts or states by virtue of which the things participate in the relation” (311). That is to say, relations are not themselves ‘things’ but *modes of action* that denote the way things actively participate in the continuity of situational existence. In alignment with James, Alexander invokes our pre-established, holistic comprehension of continuity to argue for its objective validity: “For while you can explain wherein consists the continuity of elements which are taken to be relatively independent members of a continuum, you cannot explain how a continuum can be generated from elements supposed to be discontinuous and completely independent” (311).

Turning to the cognitive relation of subject and object, he suggests it does not denote a unique *kind* of togetherness, but is itself rather “the most general and most elementary of all relations...It is the fundamental relation of which all relations are the developments under more complicated conditions” (317). Here he takes a basically Kantian stance that specific subsets of relations—e.g., similarity, succession, causality—never empirically appear as a form of general togetherness, but rather “species of togetherness under the forms of the categorial or *a priori* elements of things.” That is to say, while all worldly *relata* partake in a continuous form of concrete situational togetherness, the appearance of this continuity always empirically manifests under the guise of some categorial form of intelligible relational properties—*ones necessarily indexed to the epistemic faculties of the finite subject*. In other words, we can never consciously apprehend the objective nature of continuity because we always necessarily experience the concrete fact of togetherness from the embodied perspective of a finite, practical agent; viz., one who deploys conceptual properties to intelligibly apprehend *the way in which* particular objects factor into the concrete fact of situational unity.

Ultimately, this doctrine leads Alexander to embrace some form of panpsychism, wherein the objective significance of occupying a shared world—i.e., the essential metaphysical solidarity of empirical existents—depends upon the mutual ‘knowing’ of all things by all other things:

Thus the relation of togetherness which...is called knowing, occurs wherever there are finite individuals in the world, relatively independent or separate, but belonging to one world. *The relation is, therefore, the most universal type of relation, or is relation as such.* Instead of declaring it unique, it would be truer to say that between any two individuals whatever there subsists a relation such that the one may be said to “know” the other. In this wider employment of “knowing,” not only does mind know things, but life “knows” material things and one material thing “knows” another...Everything A knows everything else B and enjoys itself. It depends on the special nature of A, whether it is a mind or a living being or a stone or a vibration, how much of B it knows, that is how much and in what shape B is revealed to it. A only knows an aspect L of B if A first of all can be stirred to an activity appropriate to the revelation of L, and, secondly, if it actually is so stirred, by whatever means. But all togetherness (and every A is together with every B) evokes in A and B the possible and appropriate response on either side (318 [emphasis added]).

In Alexander’s scheme, all particular things ‘know’ all other things, insofar as they occupy a single world in virtue of which they are brought into a continuous situational unity. But the ‘knowledge’ in most cases reflects what we would call modes of intuition or feeling—which, for human subjects, occurs primarily on an embodied level of non-discursive or subconscious awareness.⁴⁰ For Alexander, then, we ‘know’ the entire empirical universe, but only in the sense of coming into continuous relation with it through the concrete mediation of physical embodiment. Put differently: It is *precisely in virtue of* embodied finitude that only a very small portion of one’s essential continuity with the universe can come under the *a priori* sphere of conscious understanding.

The basic upshot is that for Alexander—like the other reformed relational realists in this project—there is undoubtedly a GLFR; namely, the necessary *continuity* established through the

⁴⁰ Alexander claims, for instance, that a tuning fork vibrating at a certain frequency is interpreted by a listener as some specific note; but another tuning fork that vibrates in unison does not ‘hear’ the other tuning fork as *sound*, but ‘only knows a vibration of a certain rate.’ Likewise, we are not generally conscious of the pressure of the air, but our bodies ‘know’ it in the act of breathing; we ‘know’ the world as we walk upon it.

epistemic and existential solidarity of different beings occupying a shared world. The internal relations of feeling and knowing a shared world testifies to mutual participation in a single, unified situation, despite the relative discontinuity of particular existents. Due to the constitutively finite nature of empirical knowledge, however, we can never apprehend the concrete reality of situational continuity in its general, objective form. Like a prism that refracts white light into a boundless spectrum of colors, the pure form of concrete relatedness—the continuous action that manifests knowledge of a shared world—forever eludes formal analysis in terms of any static representational content.

2. The Extremes of Monism and Pluralism

a. Bradley's Eliminativism and Monistic Idealism

In *Appearance and Reality* (1893; second edition 1897), Bradley purports to demonstrate the incoherence of both internal and external relations. He takes this result to entail a rather straightforward idealistic monism: Reality consists of one indivisible, undifferentiated substance, or Reality-as-a-Whole, intrinsically non-relational and absolute. On an epistemic level, however, Reality is divided into Appearances, or conceptual abstractions that represent conditioned parts or aspects of this Whole. Everything that is distinct and determinate in human experience—all objects, concepts, judgments, and, most critically, *relations*—are mere Appearances. Appearances have no substantial nature since they ultimately depend upon the One Reality for their existence, or rather, they are real only insofar as they qualify Reality. To this extent, Appearances represent modes or accidents of the One substance, and thus many of his philosophical intuitions Bradley shares with Spinoza and Parmenides (cf. Della Rocca: 2020). Given the self-standing, absolute nature of Reality, Bradley believed that a substantival monism

is the only plausible metaphysics to adopt after coming to terms with the *a priori* contradictions of relational existence.

He comes to the topic of relations through an analysis of substances and properties in Chapter II. Here, Bradley inquires into the unity of complex objects: How do we understand the relationship between the essential singularity of a particular substance and the plurality of its accidental, or secondary, properties? How does a particular lump of sugar, for instance, unify the abstract properties of sweetness, whiteness, solidness, etc....into a single totality? (1897: 19-24) In short: How is a complex concrete unity derived from the simple existence of independent, externally related parts?⁴¹ Bradley suggests that we could posit the existence of bare particulars devoid of all qualities—but this seems like a contradiction. And, further, the mere positing of such bare particulars fails to address the problem of unification that troubles Bradley, since we still do not know *what relates* these qualities to said particular. On the other hand, if we instead conceive of the thing as a mereological assemblage of qualities, then we can relinquish the predicative conception of a particular substance as the nominal bearer of such qualities. However, we are then faced with another dilemma, because in this case we have once more a mere collection of differentiated, substantial, intrinsically existent qualities. We have failed to understand the object as a *particular, individual unity*, which is what we were aiming to identify in the first place.

Perplexed, Bradley turns to relations in Chapter III to try and grasp how they function in the presumed unification of an individual substance and its distinct qualities. He uses a famous set of arguments to attack the coherence of both internal and external relations as ways to

⁴¹ N.b. the problem of the unity of complex objects represents the ontological counterpart to the epistemological problem of the unity of the proposition that we explore in section IV below. Both problems, in relational terms, represent subsets of a more general quandary: How do supposedly intrinsically *discontinuous* terms or substances appear together in an apparently *continuous* form of synthetic unity?

logically connect supposedly distinct terms. For Bradley, the rational impossibility of relating a plurality of terms or properties together amounts to an unacceptable glitch in the logic of predication: “If you predicate what is different [viz., externally related to the subject], you ascribe to the subject what it is not; and if you predicate what is not different [viz., internally related to the subject], you say nothing at all” (1893:17). In other words, the intentional content associated with the synthetic unity of predication cannot be derived from the existence of either external or internal relations, because to postulate one or the other entails either a regress of absolute difference or the triviality of formal identity, respectively.⁴² Since the same logic applies to the relationships, or lack thereof, between primary substances and secondary qualities, the relational appearances of predicative judgment must give ultimate way to a substantial, undifferentiated monism.

He initially considers external relations as an attempt “to abstract so as to take terms and relations, all and each, as something which in and by itself is real independently” (28). A relation is thus external if both it and its terms are independently real. He then makes two subsequent claims: First, that distinct qualities conceptually depend upon external relations. “Their plurality depends upon relation, and, without that relation, they are not distinct” (ibid). To the extent that we can even conceive of a quality, we must necessarily conceive of it *as distinct* from other qualities, a distinction which itself presupposes their externally related status. Yet, we must also admit that relations *without* terms are meaningless: “A relation without terms seems mere verbiage; and terms appear, therefore, to be something beyond their relation” (32). For a relation to hold, as already discussed, there must be relata that bear the relation. However, if we accept that relations and terms, or qualities, are impossible without each other, we arrive at a

⁴² See McHenry (1992: 73-102) for a useful overview of Bradley’s criticism of internal and external relations in contrast to Whitehead’s asymmetrical theory of internal relatedness.

contradiction: In order for two qualities to be distinct from each other, they must be externally related in some way. But, if the relation is external, then, by definition, the terms exist independently of the relation. External relations, then, must obtain *both* between the terms (as independent) *and* form parts of their terms (as necessary properties). This is a contradiction.⁴³

On the other hand, if we try to connect the external relations via further *external* relations, we are quickly led to a regress. Here is Bradley's original description: "Let us abstain from making the relation an attribute of the related, and let us make it more or less independent. 'There is a relation *C*, in which *A* and *B* stand; and it appears with both of them.' But here again we have made no progress. The relation *C* has been admitted different from *A* and *B*, and no longer is predicated of them. Something, however, seems to be said of this relation *C*, and said again, of *A* and *B*. And this something is not to be the ascription of one to the other. If so, it would appear to be another relation *D*, in which *C*, on one side, and, on the other side, *A* and *B* stand. But such a makeshift leads at once to the infinite process" (Bradley 1893: 18). We can unpack the regress as follows:

1. Let there be an independent relation *R* that obtains between *A* and *B*.
2. Independent relations are distinct from their relata, and so cannot relate.
3. Therefore, *R* cannot relate *A* and *B*.
4. An additional relation *R'* is needed to relate *R*, *A*, and *B*.
5. *R'* is an independent relation.
6. From 2, 4 and 5, it follows that *R'* cannot relate *R*, *A*, and *B*.
7. A new relation *R*² is needed to relate *A*, *B*, *R*, and *R'*. And so on *ad infinitum*.⁴⁴

⁴³ We can express this point more precisely: suppose a relation exists of the form *aRb* where *R* is an external relation. In spatial terms, *R* must exist between its terms. But how does *R* actually connect to the terms themselves? If it is wholly external to both terms, then we must posit some further dyadic relations *R*₁ and *R*₂ in order to connect the original relation *R* to the non-relational ground *a*, *b*. We have now decomposed the original relation *aRb* into two other relational facts, *aRR*₁ and *RR*₂*b*. We can see, however, that we have a looming regress: as external themselves, relations *R*₁ and *R*₂ will in turn need their own new dyadic relations to relate them to *aRR*₁ and *RR*₂*b*, and so on and so on. *Prima facie*, then, Bradley's regress shows that purely external relations are incoherent.

⁴⁴ See Perovic (2024) for the formulation of this argument as one of three logical forms of Bradley's regress. Also, cf. Cameron (2008; 2018), Gratton (2009), and Rescher (2010) for technical discussions on the nature of regress arguments in general.

Therefore, Bradley argues, external relations cannot exist: “While we keep to our terms and relation as external, no introduction of a third factor could help us to anything better than an endless renewal of our failure” (1935: 643).

Now, let’s address his complementary argument against internal relations. We established above that qualities are nothing *without* relations; external relations must obtain ‘between’ independent terms if the terms are to be distinguished from each other at all. But that entails these relations cannot be ‘together’ with their terms. Bradley now suggests that qualities taken *with* their relations are equally untenable; if we take internal relations as ‘together’ with their terms, they necessarily fail to obtain ‘between’ them. We must assume, in other words, that qualities cannot be reduced to their relations if we are to distinguish between primary and secondary qualities at all. Bradley insists that qualities act as *relata* to support the existence of their relations, and thus they make the relation possible. When we take a relation as internally related to the quality, however, then each quality has a double character, “[t]he qualities must be, and, must *also* be related. But there is hence a diversity which falls inside each quality. It has a double character, as both supporting and as being made by the relation” (1899: 31). In other words, a quality *A* has an intrinsic ground *a* and a consequent *a’* of the internal relation. The former distinguishes the quality as what it is, while the latter is the presumed distinctness of the connection. Both must enter into the constitution of *A*, even though they are formally distinct. But then Bradley asks: how are *a* and *a’* related? If they are *internally* related, then we are likewise led to posit a further dual-nature of ground and consequent for each term, such that *a* becomes *aa* and *a’* becomes *a’a,* and so on *ad infinitum* (cf. McHenry: 31). The complementary argument against internal relations can thus be summarized as such (Perovic 2024: 1.2):⁴⁵

⁴⁵ We can also think about this problem in terms of the Identity of Indiscernibles. How, exactly, can we practically distinguish between two internally related terms? Since, by definition, such a relation necessarily obtains in virtue of

1. Relations that relate are *internal* in the sense that they are grounded in *parts* of qualities that they relate.
2. Qualities need relations to differentiate them from other qualities.
3. Qualities need relations to unite them with other qualities.
4. From (1) and (2), it follows that a given quality *A* must have a part *a*, which is part of the ontological ground for the difference-making relation R_d , i.e., it is a part on which the distinctness of *A* from other qualities is based.
5. From (1) and (3), it follows that quality *A* must have a part α , which is part of the ontological ground for the unifying relation R_u , i.e., it is a part on which the unity with other qualities is based.
6. Parts *a* and α of quality *A* are different.
7. Difference within parts of a quality requires *internal* relations.
8. Each of the original parts of *A*, namely *a* and α , must have a part that grounds the distinction of *a* from α , say a' and α' , respectively, as well as a part that grounds the unity of *a* with α , say a'' and α'' , respectively.
9. But the parts a' and a'' are distinct and yet unified; and so are α' and α'' . Thus, each of these parts must have further parts that ground such distinctness and unity. And so on *ad infinitum*.

In this case, we are faced with another potential regress, only this time it occurs *within* the supposed *relational constitution of the term in question*, rather than *between two distinct* terms.

Bradley concludes that “we are led to a principle of fission which conducts us to no end” (ibid).

In short, relations are incomprehensible taken either with (internal) or without (external) their terms, and, likewise, terms are equally incomprehensible taken either with or without their relations.

These arguments against internal and external relations do most of the legwork to establish Bradley’s idealistic monism: “The reader who has followed and has grasped the principle of this chapter, will have little need to spend his time on those which succeed it. He will have seen that our experience, where relational, is not true; and he will have condemned, almost without a hearing, the great mass of phenomena” (1897: 34). Once the existence of both sets of

the mere existence of the term, it cannot have any other properties but those that inhere in the terms themselves. But then a wholly internal relation cannot obtain ‘between’ its terms—that is, they would lose their individuality. The original binary relation is subsumed into becoming another property of a whole that consists of both terms. Formally, the relational fact aRb becomes a non-relational predication $R(a,b)$ where $ab=R$. In other words, wholly internal relations blur the very distinction between terms that must hold in order to posit a genuine relation in the first place. As Vallicella writes, “They [internal relations] are ‘between’ their terms as *relations*, but not ‘between’ their terms as *internal*” (2002: 8). Wholly internal relations between apparently distinct terms leads us to equally incoherent conclusions as wholly external relations.

relations is demolished, it becomes easy to critique all other phenomenal structures and categories—space, time, motion, matter, etc.—as fundamentally illusory, for all of these structures presuppose certain relational forms. And, since neither external nor internal relations ultimately exist, and these represent the only possible logical forms of relation, Bradley inferred that we must accept a substantival monism that relegates all distinction—which logically depends on *some kind* of relatedness—to the realm of mere Appearance. If reality can only be rationally understood as one undifferentiated totality, then one must concede the truth of monistic idealism.⁴⁶

b. The Pluralistic Atomism of Russell and Moore

In some ways, the early 20th century logical atomists advanced a staunch pluralistic realism as a direct reaction to the perceived monism of Hegelians like F.H. Bradley. Russell and Moore adhered to the view that philosophical inquiry should proceed within a rigorous grammatical framework. As Russell proclaims in a well-known passage of *The Principles of Mathematics* [PoM], “[o]n the whole, grammar seems to me to bring us much nearer to a correct logic than the current opinions of philosophers; and in what follows, grammar, though not our master, will yet be taken as our guide” (§46).⁴⁷ This approach is best exemplified in PoM, where Russell

⁴⁶ We take *epistemic idealism* here to mean that we only have epistemic or immediate access to mental representations, regardless of whether these representations correspond to external objects that exist independently of mind. Thus there is a skepticism built into this sort of idealism. Whereas we take *metaphysical idealism*, in its most general form, to mean that mind or experience is all that exists in an ontological sense—there simply are no physical objects independent of mind or experience. We can further distinguish between objective and subjective forms of idealism; e.g., the former we associate here with the idealism of Peirce and Pratyabhijñā, wherein the processes of mind or consciousness in a general, collective, or cosmic sense signify the real; while the latter is exemplified in Kant’s transcendental idealism, where perception of the world is constructed through the categories of the human mind, but they do not apply to the noumenal realm of things-in-themselves. (Cf. Chalmers (2019), who provides a contemporary breakdown of different forms of idealism.)

⁴⁷ Candlish calls this ‘the transparency thesis,’ referring to Russell’s later assertion that “[I] had thought of language as transparent – that is to say, as a medium which could be employed without paying attention to it” (1959: 14). The transparency thesis is meant to convey the idea that the logical structure of grammar is epistemically ‘transparent’ as a precondition for any valid philosophical analysis. While Candlish himself admits that this ‘thesis’ needs certain qualifications, it does capture something of the grammatical approach that Russell took for granted, particularly in the ontology of PoM. Given the idealists suspicion of language and grammar to accurately characterize the object of

effectively sought to ontologize the relations and terms of grammar to break with Bradleyan monistic idealism and secure a foundation for the validity of empirical knowledge—namely, one that discloses a pluralistic world of mutually independent unities or terms: “Whatever may be an object of thought...or can be counted as one, I call a term....I shall use it as synonymous with the words unit, individual, and entity. [E]very term has being, that is, *is* in some sense. A man, a moment, a number, a class, a relation, a chimera, or anything else that can be mentioned, is sure to be a term” (§43). This ‘Platonic nominalism’ effectively undercuts any ontological sense of ‘internal relations,’ because fundamental reality is characterized in terms of the *external relations* that define independent terms, not any conceptual properties internal to the terms themselves. And although Russell shifted his views on the matter over time (particularly in his post-Wittgenstein phase⁴⁸), it remains axiomatic through all his work that an essential correspondence obtains between grammatical distinctions and concrete states of affairs.

Accordingly, his early analytic approach, as encapsulated in PoM, combined an empirically grounded pluralistic realism with a basically Platonic view of universal objects: “A [grammatical] term is, in fact, possessed of all the properties commonly assigned to substances or substantives. Every term, to begin with, is a logical subject: it is, for example, the subject of the proposition that itself is one. Again every term is immutable and indestructible” (§47). Since distinct terms entail distinct substances, “the admission of many terms destroys monism” (ibid). Thus, in contrast to Bradley, Russell’s logical atomism was founded on the notion that the

philosophical knowledge, Candlish notes of “the passage’s gesture at Russell’s defection from the ranks of the idealists” (107).

⁴⁸ The early Wittgenstein forced Russell to question his strict atomistic mindset and its attendant multiple-relation theory of judgment. A main feature of this conversion was the acceptance of complex propositional facts as isomorphic to genuine states of affairs, thus moderating the thoroughgoing atomism of PoM. (Although even the latter Russell maintains that complex facts are ultimately comprised of simples). On the history of Wittgenstein’s influence on Russell’s theory of judgment, see Lebens (2017).

elements of language and the structure of grammar faithfully transmit the actual distinctions in the ontological furniture of the world. In other words, they are not mere appearances, but reality.

At least for the Russell of PoM, this meant that the terms that figure into propositions literally factor into our thoughts through a primitive relation of direct ‘acquaintance,’ and thus even the distinctions between elementary propositions exist *whether people are even there to think such propositions*: “But a proposition, unless it happens to be linguistic [i.e., it is about words] does not itself contain words; it contains the entities indicated by words” (§51).⁴⁹ He expresses the upshot of this position in the conclusion of the classic paper “On Denoting”:

Thus in every proposition that we can apprehend (i.e., not only in those whose truth or falsehood we can judge of, but in all that we can think about), all the constituents are really entities with which we have immediate acquaintance. Now such things as matter (in the sense in which matter occurs in physics) and the minds of other people are known to us only by denoting phrases, i.e., we are not *acquainted* with them, but we know them as what has such and such properties (1905: 479-93).

Since we may not omit any distinctions that present themselves in language from the ultimate structure of reality, the *external* relations transmitted in grammar *also* must be real. For the early Russell, then, this sort of grammatical realism translates into a metaphysical atomism that dictates all relations between real atomic simples must be external. He was consequently comfortable asserting, for instance, that “all relations are external” in an early 1899 paper, “The Classification of Relations,” which means relational judgments cannot be expressed in terms of judgments which ascribe internal properties to its terms or to a whole of which the terms are

⁴⁹ Makin (2000: 181) comments that the objects that constitute propositions could not coherently be the ordinary objects of our world, since the objects in *our* world are not ‘immutable and indestructible’ terms. He believes that Russell’s ‘theory of real propositional constituents’ is purely illustrative for pedagogical purposes. In other words, the worldview suggested by the logical project in PoM is not an explicitly *ontological* theory, because Russell’s metaphysical atomism only emerged after some time of critical self-reflection. While this may be the case, we generally agree with Candlish when he writes: “Whatever the ontology, the fact that Russell held the doctrine of real propositional constituents as well as the transparency thesis [that language is ‘a medium’ whose grammatical forms are self-evident] means that the philosophical significance of grammar will turn out to be ontological: grammar is a window on the world” (109).

parts (Griffin: 2022).⁵⁰ In a relevant 1911 article, he articulates his own understanding of ‘realism’ based on the external relations between fully actualized particulars: “The fundamental doctrine in the realistic position, as I understand it, is the doctrine that relations are ‘external.’ This doctrine is not correctly expressed by saying that two terms which have a certain relation might have not had that relation. Such a statement introduces the notion of possibility and thus raises irrelevant difficulties. The doctrine may be expressed by saying that (1) relatedness does not imply any corresponding complexity in the relata; (2) any given entity is a constituent of many different complexes” (158).

Granted, this will turn out to be sloppy phrasing on Russell’s part, for in his later career, particularly in his post-Wittgenstein phase, he did warm somewhat to the referential validity of internal relations. In the most charitable reading of Russell’s atomistic philosophy, relationality pertains to complex *fact*, not the concrete matter of simple particulars. As he explains in the later *Philosophy of Logical Atomism*,

Particulars have this peculiarity, among the sort of objects that you have to take account of in an inventory of the world, that each of them stands entirely alone and is completely self-subsistent. It has the sort of self-subsistence that used to belong to substance, except that it usually only persists through a very short time, so far as our experience goes. That is to say, each particular that there is in the world does not in any way logically depend upon any other particular. Each one might happen to be the whole universe; it is a merely empirical fact that this is not the case. There is no reason why you should not have a universe consisting of one particular and nothing else. That is a peculiarity of particulars.⁵¹ In the same way, in order to understand a name for a particular, the only thing necessary is to be acquainted with that particular (2009: 30).

⁵⁰ I assume Candlish may not be familiar with this early text, as he mistakenly asserts that “no one ever openly avows” (58) the idea that all relations are external—but clearly an early Russell *did* assert exactly that. In this text, Russell defends the irreducibility of relations to pairs of predicates of their terms. For instance, the relation aRb cannot be reduced to the pair of predicates $a(a)$ and $b(b)$, because the concept of relation demands a distinction between its terms, one that a mere pair of predicative statements does not guarantee. Thus, external relations must exist. Although his views on the reality of complex facts become more nuanced after Wittgenstein, in any case, it is not “inexplicable” (*pace* Candlish) why Bradley chose to attribute a doctrine of strict external relations to Russell.

⁵¹ N.b. that Russell’s *a priori* claim here—that the ‘peculiarity’ of particulars is that there could just as well be a universe that consists of just one particular and nothing else—betrays the relevant philosophical solidarity that the pluralistic Russell shares with his monistic nemesis Bradley: For the notion that the intuitive correspondence between ‘unity’ and ‘reality’ consists in the fact that the Real refers to a self-contained, static, countable (in short, *non-relational*) existence, represents the common touchstone for both Bradley and Russell’s divergent ontological commitments.

Here systemic relational complexity or internal relatedness is to be definitionally located in complex ‘facts’, not particular simples: “I do myself think that complexes—I do not like to talk of complexes—are composed of simples” (ibid: 31). From this perspective, internal relations can still unproblematically obtain as features of factual propositions, but these are ultimately regarded as complexes that reduce, in some important sense, to the objective simples constitutive of their physical instantiation. The relation of internality cannot, by definition, refer to the *intrinsic* properties of any simples—because if any atomic simple *did* have a complex relation to some other independent property, it *ipso facto* wouldn’t be simple!

For many later thinkers in the analytic tradition, this implies that any complexity that conceptually depends upon internal relations *ultimately* supervenes upon units of externally related simples with some inaccessible—but essentially non-relational—intrinsic properties. Although these ‘intrinsic properties’ are epistemically inaccessible (aside, of course, from that very fact!)⁵², and not internally related to the subject in an *ontological* sense, our empirical

⁵² Given his structuralist view of theoretical physics, Russell’s later metaphysical theory of neutral monism—wherein a single set of properties provide the ground for both consciousness and basic physical entities—was partly conceived in order to overcome the epistemic limitations of his early theory of denotation. In a well-known reflection in his later book, *My Philosophical Development*, he explains that “[i]t is not always realised how exceedingly abstract is the information that theoretical physics has to give. It lays down certain fundamental equations which enable it to deal with the logical structure of events, while leaving it completely unknown what is the intrinsic character of the events that have the structure. We only know the intrinsic character of events when they happen to us. Nothing whatever in theoretical physics enables us to say anything about the intrinsic character of events elsewhere. They may be just like the events that happen to us, or they may be totally different in strictly unimaginable ways. All that physics gives us is certain equations giving abstract properties of their changes. But as to what it is that changes, and what it changes from and to—as to this, physics is silent” (1959: 18). The relevant thrust of the problem is that, by and large, physics only describes the behavior of entities *in terms of their relationships to other entities*, relaying no positive information about the quiddity of the entities under consideration. And this is not just an *epistemic* fact, but rather endemic to the structuralist methodology of physics. As Chalmers explains: “[P]hysical theory only characterizes its basic entities *relationally*, in terms of their causal and other relations to other entities. Basic particles, for instance, are largely characterized in terms of their propensity to interact with other particles. Their mass and charge is specified, to be sure, but all that a specification of mass ultimately comes to is a propensity to be accelerated by certain forces, and so on. Each entity is characterized by its relation to other entities, and so on forever. ...The picture of the physical world that this yields is that of a giant causal flux, but the picture tells us nothing about what all this causation *relates*” (1996: 153). No doubt, such questions represent one bridge between theoretical models about the ultimate nature of physical entities and metaphysical speculations about the origins of the power of relationality itself. For instance, James, Peirce and Whitehead all opine that, if we only have experiential access to things *as characterized by their relations*—including

‘acquaintance’ with a particular as possessing such-and-such properties is faithfully denoted and transmitted by the conceptual distinctions naturally present in the structures of language. In this framework, part-to-whole relations, for instance, are still *internal* relations for both Russell and Moore—but, again, not in any *ontological* sense. Their status is purely epistemic, dependent in some measure upon how we choose to define the term as the subject of a proposition in logical analysis.

c. Asymmetrical Arguments Against Monism

The assumption that whole-to-part relations are purely *external* conveys what both Russell and Moore considered the most damning argument against the monism of Bradley: the necessary supervenience of symmetrical internal relations in light of the objective asymmetry of external relations. Recall that the atomists interpreted Bradley as advocating a ‘doctrine of internal relations’ which, according to Russell, maintains “every relation is grounded in the natures of the related terms” (1910: 139). We can see the consequences of this ‘inherence’ interpretation of internal relations play out in PoM, where he claims that the necessary symmetry of internal relations cannot account for the reality of asymmetrical relations, and thus monism cannot be true: “ (a,b) is symmetrical with regard to a and b , and thus the property of the whole will be exactly the same [for both $R(ab)$ and $R(ba)$]” (227). This represents another way to pose the above-mentioned fact about internal relations: viz., an internal relation R between a and b can decompose into a non-relational predication, $R(a,b)$, where $ab=R$. An internal relation is thus reducible to a unary property of both of its terms taken together as a single whole. But then the whole (a,b) is logically *equivalent* to (b,a) , a result that confirms the symmetry of internal relations. Translated into ontological terms, Russell believes these sorts of ‘relations’ correspond

physical entities—why should we take *abstract things* as *more* ontologically primary than the empirical reality of the *relations themselves*?

to simple inherence. So, in this case, a symmetrical relation resolves upon analysis into a monadic property of a substantial whole. Russell then simply dispatches with (what he takes to be) Bradley's position, since, even in mereological terms, asymmetrical relations manifestly exist (the '*greater than*' relation, for instance).

This asymmetrical argument made by both Russell and Moore has interesting philosophical ramifications worth exploring. As mentioned, consider the fact that *spatial* part-to-whole relations are still technically *internal* for both Russell and Moore: "Every relational property of the form 'having *this* for a spatial part' is 'internal' in our sense" (Moore 1919: 288). But, conversely, whole-to-part relations are entirely *external*. Indeed, this fact indicates the basic axiom of atomism; the essential nature of each simple object is retained regardless of its spatial placement or causal connection with other simple objects. Without the asymmetry of part/whole relations, a part internally related to a whole would ultimately collapse the distinction between the two.

This subject emerges in §22 of Moore's *Principia Ethica*, where he laments the influence of Hegel, who sought to do away with this asymmetry and thus made the relation of parts-to-wholes unintelligible:

...[I]n recent uses of the term 'organic whole'...asserts the parts of such a whole have a property which the parts of no whole can possibly have. It is supposed that just as the whole would not be what it is but for the existence of the parts, so the parts would not be what they are but for the existence of the whole; and this is understood to mean not merely that any particular part could not exist unless the others existed too (which is the case where relation exists between the parts), but actually that the part is no distinct object of thought—that the whole, of which it is a part, is in turn a part of it. That this supposition is self-contradictory a very little reflection should be sufficient to shew (1903: 84).⁵³

⁵³ Moore's mereological critique of Hegelian 'organic wholes' connects the relational debate directly to matters of primary teleological significance that will become relevant in the concluding chapter. The conceptual touchstone is Kant's third critique, where he defines two types of real purposes: first, an 'extrinsic purpose' which is the role a thing may play in being a means to some end. An example would be an object of art in the general sense, or, more broadly, any object that was made for a purpose, in which the purpose is the *reason* for the thing being made. Alternatively, Kant defines a second type of purpose, an 'intrinsic purpose.' In this case, rather than the purpose being primarily understood as independent from the thing itself, a thing *embodies its own purpose*. These are what Kant calls 'natural ends' (also translated as 'physical ends'), and the primary example is the living organism (1987:

Moore argues that an internal relation between a part and a whole makes no sense. For suppose there were an organic whole whose parts would not be what they are but for the existence of the whole. This situation is self-contradictory, because the parts of the whole cannot be distinct objects of thought to begin with. For if we tried to name a part of the whole W by a predicate a , the whole would figure in the definition of this predicate. When we assert that something is a , we could also assert that the same thing is W . This means, however, that W is a part of a . This is contradictory unless W is identical with a . This implies that we cannot successfully assign a name to a part of a whole. Hence, the asymmetrical properties of part-to-whole relations cannot be internal relations, and therefore Bradley is wrong: the mereological logic of nominalism, predicated on the reality of external relations between parts and wholes, must instead describe the true structure of the world.⁵⁴

§61-70). The mark of an 'intrinsic purpose' is that the object is "cause and effect of itself." The parts, in other words, reciprocally produce, and are produced by, the form of the whole. They are organized in such a way (i.e., they are determined to be the parts that they are) according to the form or purpose of the whole creature. Unlike extrinsic purpose, there is no abstract *telos* distinct from the living form of the organism itself—the object and purpose are identical. In Kantian terms, the nature of such a purpose would bridge the divide between the understanding and sensibility; an intrinsic purpose would instantiate an 'intellectual intuition,' wherein the faculty of understanding and physical sensibility are one. This "*intellectus archetypus*" creates the objects of its knowledge in the very *act* of thinking them, in contrast to our so-called "*intellectus ectypus*," which derives its knowledge of objects from intuitions of things-in-themselves without abstract forms of intuition. It is clear that the activity of an *intellectus archetypus* can be framed in terms of constitutive internal relatedness. We can say that an intellectual intuition is the marriage of the universal and particular, wherein the part-to-whole relation is an *internal* relation. The archetype of the whole must condition and structure each part, such that an analysis of the nature of the part must ultimately make ontological reference to the whole (ibid; §76-77). This would entail, however, a subversion of Moore's objection above. Like Moore, then, Kant argued that the rational incoherence of this situation means teleological judgment, like mechanistic judgment, is just a 'regulative ideal' of the understanding, rather than a constitutive fact of things-in-themselves. Hegel, on the other hand, used Kant's argument for intellectual intuition as a springboard for his own theory of absolute idealism. In the conclusion, I suggest that Madhyamaka and Pratyabhijñā both answer to a 'groundless' form of teleology that involves a *sui generis* kind of internal relatedness between 'whole' and 'part.' Suffice to say, the ontological nature of internal relations regarding the part/particular vs. whole/universal dichotomy profoundly impacts theories about the ultimacy of value, teleology, and temporality.

⁵⁴ These considerations apropos scientific discourse encouraged Russell to dismiss Bradley's argument because philosophers who deny the reality of external relations cannot explain the foundations of science, which presuppose external relations (Russell 1924: 339). Methodologically speaking, Russell found it more plausible that Bradley's argument belies a logical error than that all modern science rests on so fundamental a falsehood, i.e., a world of spatio-temporal relations really don't exist. The point here relates to Quine's indispensability argument for the reality of mathematics: just as we cannot make sense of scientific discourse without taking seriously those portions

However, a different argument from asymmetry comes from the Anglo-American process philosophers. Although not monistic ‘idealists’ in their metaphysical outlook like Bradley, thinkers in the process tradition of James, Whitehead and Hartshorne promulgated a different ontology of internal relations. While one might construe their broadly empiricist orientation as necessarily committed to some form of pluralistic nominalism—that is to say, opposed in principle to, say, Blanshard’s rational idealism (though I believe these sorts of characterizations are overhasty⁵⁵)—, generally speaking, they share a commitment to the reality of the internal relations that constitute concrete or intentional experience. As Whitehead tersely avows, “[k]nowledge is ultimate. There can be no explanation of the ‘why’ of knowledge; we can only describe the ‘what’ of knowledge. Namely we can analyse the content and its internal relations, but we cannot explain why there is knowledge” (1920 [2006]: 32).

The critical move that distinguishes these process thinkers from rational idealists and most analytic philosophers is that particular objects of knowledge are not static *substances* with

irredeemably committed to numbers, functions, etc., we likewise cannot make sense of scientific discourse without taking seriously those propositions committed to spatio-temporal relations (1981: 149–50).

⁵⁵ For instance, although Arnold acknowledges that the “phenomenological case for Peirce’s realism is largely available in James’s radical empiricism,” he blames James’s “unregenerate nominalism” for his failure to develop pragmatic “insights in the realist ways favored by Peirce” (2021: 58). However, this description of James does not, I think, do justice to passages where he seems to *accept* some form of real generality: for example, he claims that pragmatism “has no objection whatever to the realizing of abstraction, so long as you get about among particulars with their aid and they actually carry you somewhere” (1907: 40). In other words, James admits we need abstractions to practically act in the world, but that does not mean the ‘reality’ of these abstractions come ready-made, independent of the human experience and the evolutionary process. For an explicit rebuttal of the idea that James was a nominalist, see Pihlström (2008), who argues that the distinction between James and Peirce is not one between radically different *pragmatisms*, but rather, at least for James, a matter of applying pragmatism itself to the realist vs. nominalism debate *without assuming either one is true beforehand*—and thus not coming to conclusions about what we *mean* by our concepts being ‘real’ in a *metaphysical* sense. James would thus view the postulate of ‘real’ universals as subordinate to the pragmatic *method*, not *vice versa*, in order to determine its practical ‘cash value’ (which may even change over time). Likewise, although universals are causally effete in his system (and thus not actual realities themselves), whether one considers Whitehead a ‘nominalist’ depends entirely upon the ontological status of God as an actual entity—viz., a particular real that simultaneously acts as a repository of all the ‘eternal objects’ that grant ‘forms of definiteness’ to the plurality of ‘actual occasions.’ Insofar as God is both a particular real and the eternal source of universal patterns or properties, Whitehead could also be considered a Platonic ‘realist’ in some qualified sense. (Notably, this is an area where Hartshorne diverged from Whitehead, for he argued that qualities like “being like Shakespeare” could not have existed in the mind of God before the actual existence of Shakespeare himself.) In any case, whether, and to what extent, Whitehead was a nominalist represents a debatable and fraught issue.

such-and-such intrinsic properties, or a single undifferentiated absolute substance, but *particular durational events* constituted by their internal relations to other such events.⁵⁶ This event-based metaphysics directly opposes Democritus' vision of the world as an assemblage of unchanging atomic substances. Instead, it subscribes to the Heraclitan view that being itself essentially consists in a flow of becoming. In *The Concept of Nature* (1920), Whitehead articulates his own early processual view, with reference to both its overlap and divergence from the idealistic views of Bradley and Blanshard:

The false idea which we have to get rid of is that of nature as a mere aggregate of independent entities, each capable of isolation. According to this conception these entities, whose characters are capable of isolated definition, come together and by their accidental relations form the system of nature. This system is thus thoroughly accidental; and, even if it be subject to a mechanical fate, it is only accidentally so subject....The explanation of nature which I urge as an alternative ideal to this accidental view of nature, is that nothing in nature could be what it is except as an ingredient in nature as it is. The whole which is present for discrimination is posited in sense-awareness as necessary for the discriminated parts. An isolated event is not an event, because every event is a factor in a larger whole and is significant of that whole. There can be no time apart from space; and no space apart from time; and no space and no time apart from the passage of the events of nature. The isolation of an entity in thought, when we think of it as a bare 'it,' has no counterpart in any corresponding isolation in nature. Such isolation is merely part of the procedure of intellectual knowledge (1920 [2006: 142]).

Like Blanshard, Whitehead considers the atomistic notion of reality as a mere assemblage of externally related particulars—i.e., existents whose essential properties can abide in utter isolation from each other and from nature as a whole—unable to account for the concrete experience of nature as an internally related process of knowledge. 'Reality' cannot reasonably bottom out in independent 'substances' with such-and-such accidental, changing properties, but rather must consider the relational constitution of knowledge itself. In his later work (most notably, *Process and Reality*) Whitehead develops this organic worldview into a systematic metaphysics of experience based on the concrete 'feelings' among particular events—or, in his

⁵⁶ We are leaving aside the 'eternal' and 'primordial' nature the actual entity of God in Whitehead's system, although it bears crucial relevance to the question of the existence of a GLFR. Most notably, Hartshorne argues that Whitehead's notion of the divine should "be conceived as relative beyond all other relative things, but this relativity itself must have an abstract character which is fixed or absolute...God himself is a supreme relativist, his absoluteness consisting in the ideally exhaustive way in which he relativizes his evaluation to all factors in the concrete actual world. This ideal relativity, absolute in its immutable adequacy, is the standard of all" (1948: 120-9).

own neologicistic terms, ‘prehensions’ between ‘actual occasions/events.’ For Whitehead, there is nothing *more* to the objective nature of reality in this system other than the mutually constitutive relations that comprise the procession of concrete events. Hence the meaning of ‘internal relations’ in this case is not a purely *analytic* or *conceptual* form that reduces to the intrinsic properties of intrinsically unrelated bits of ‘matter,’ but rather ‘concrete facts of interrelatedness’ whose synthetic action manifest the temporal ‘concrescence’ of experiential events.

Quite *unlike* the rationalism of Blanshard, then, Whitehead’s empirical and scientific orientation demanded a commitment to pluralistic realism—avowedly *not* monism or subjective idealism (at least in the traditional philosophical sense). Since the validity of pluralism itself logically depends upon the validity of some form of genuine *difference*, though, certain *external relations* must obtain between the relata; without the ontological admittance of *any* external relations, that is, Whitehead’s ‘organic realism’ would remain indistinguishable from the substantial monism of someone like Spinoza or Bradley. To this end, Whitehead described knowledge of objective external relations, not principally in terms of *spatial relations* between distinct substances with ‘simple locations’ (which do not, after all, exist in his processual ontology⁵⁷), but rather as integral to *the asymmetry of causation*: present events causally *depend upon* the ‘feeling’ of past events, but are also simultaneously causally *independent* of future events, which do not yet exist relative to the present occasion.⁵⁸ Past events are thus *internally*

⁵⁷ Whitehead’s *Science and the Modern World* presents an extended critique of what he calls ‘the fallacy of simple location.’ Here an object’s simple location “means that, in expressing its spatio-temporal relations, it is adequate to state that it is where it is, in a definite finite region of space, and throughout a definite finite duration of time, apart from any essential reference of the relations of that bit of matter to other regions of space and to other durations of time” (1925 [2022: 81]).

⁵⁸ More precisely, consider a temporal series of events, $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C \rightarrow D$, where D is an immediately present event and A, B, and C are past events relative to D. The immediately preceding event C is *internally related* to D, in the sense that D ‘prehends’ C and thus C is incorporated into D’s essential nature as an event. However, C and D are *externally related* to A and B, which occur in the respective futures of A and B. In other words, A and B are *independent* of C and D, since the latter *did not exist* at the time of the former, but C and D are *dependent* upon A and B. Thus, the temporality of causation represents an asymmetrical process whereby past events are internally related to present events, but present events are externally related to future events. Since these events are

related to present events, but present events are *externally related* to the inherently indeterminate *future*. As McHenry summarizes, “actual occasions are internally related at one end and externally related at the other...Whitehead holds that the internal-external dichotomy is not simply one in which internal relations occur only within any one stream of experience while external ones occur as a result of a break within or without the stream. Rather, internal and external relations are grounded in the temporal asymmetry of process where, at each successive moment, the world moves from disjunctive diversity to conjunctive unity” (1989: 164).

In effect, Whitehead viewed the synthetic unity of each experience as the novel result of an active ‘concrecence’ of the entire universe of past objective causes progressively constraining the spontaneous freedom of the imaginative subject; not, to be sure, the ignorant human representation of a single, timeless substance that only trades in analytic relations between static terms. For Whitehead and Hartshorne, the objective determinacy of the past and the indeterminacy of the future not only make sense of temporal experience, but also reinstates real degrees of freedom, teleology, and creativity back into the mechanistic disenchantment of nature— notions that had become historically eclipsed through the nihilistic conceptions of an omniscient God with a predetermined, changeless knowledge of all possible being, and the scientific models predicated on spatialized abstractions and algorithmic laws.

While the details of Whitehead’s metaphysical system lie outside the scope of this dissertation, his temporal realism illustrates that the *meaning* of ‘necessary/internal relations,’

fundamentally indeterminate, the external relation cannot reflect a complete relation, but rather one relatum remains determinate while the other remains a cognition of pure conceptual possibility. We will find in Chapter III that James’s similar critique of a momentary ontology predicated resonates with the Sarvāstivāda-Sautrāntika debate in the Abhidharma context; specifically, over whether a theory that allows for the temporality of causal properties is ultimately consistent with the Buddha’s doctrine of impermanence. We will find that the Sautrāntikas opted for the reality of momentary particulars on the basis of *a priori* arguments that closely track the logic behind the intelligibility conditions that justify Bradley’s own relational deconstruction. Given the Sautrāntika influence on Dharmakīrti, it is no accident that he finds a general affinity with the relational eliminativism and epistemic idealism of Bradley.

like all other relations, depends upon the nature of the relata under discussion; the ‘necessary’ relations between abstract ideas or mathematical formulae does not necessarily capture the mode of ‘necessity’ that characterizes the *causal* influence of the *past* on the *present*. We mean different kinds of ‘necessity’ here. For in the latter case, inferences bear an *asymmetrical* structure due to the contingency of empirical knowledge, while the former case most often only applies in formal circumstances of contrived abstraction.⁵⁹ The process theorist thus challenges the monist: Why deny the concrete validity of the asymmetrical entailments associated with contingent or temporal forms of knowledge merely on *a priori* grounds? After all, this just seems to beg the question, insofar as the inquirer appears to merely *prefer* to admit a strict logic of symmetrical relations into his account of what it means for the ‘real’ to be genuinely *intelligible* or *cognizable* in the first place. Blanshard insists, for instance, that optative or subjunctive modes of judgment that refer to the indeterminate status of future events proceed from human *ignorance*, not *knowledge of objective reality*.⁶⁰ For Hartshorne, though, an open appraisal of concrete experience reveals that our embodied epistemic faculties of perception, imagination and

⁵⁹ In Hartshorne’s Whiteheadian critique of Blanshard, he points out that the symmetrical form of inferential necessity (i.e., if *p* entails *q*, then *q* also entails *p*) is “clearly a special case of entailment. Otherwise entailment and equivalence would be the same...The normal case of entailment is one-way: *p* entails *q* but not conversely. In special cases the distinction disappears. Symmetry is always a special case in which difference reduces to zero, at least for some purpose...Were all true propositions equivalent, they would form a totality in which no particular order had any significance. Is this supposition an aid to understanding? I fail utterly to see it” (in Blanshard 1980: 630). Hartshorne ultimately urges that we have no empirical justification to deny the objective reality of the asymmetrical inferences, which correspond to finite human knowledge of the empirical world: “To grasp that ‘this is a fox’ entails ‘this is an animal’ is a part of understanding the relation of the two propositions. But to see that ‘this is an animal’ does *not* entail ‘this is a fox’ is just as good a part. To understand the conceptual relations, both insights are equally necessary. Contingency is as necessary as necessity!...Conditions are in principle knowable from results far more than results from conditions” (ibid., 632).

⁶⁰ In his reply to Hartshorne, Blanshard sticks to his rationalist guns, affirming that “everything is connected by the relation of difference to everything else, and...since this relation is necessary everything is necessarily so connected” (Blanshard 1980: 642). Given that Blanshard chooses to subsume the intuition of irreversible contingency into a pure analytic necessity, Hartshorne’s temporal realism—based on the perceptual asymmetry between the objective indeterminacy of the future and the causal determinants of the past—also goes along with it: “If whatever is is necessary, then at any given time only the actual is possible. To say that what existed a moment ago is the sufficient condition of what is happening now, and yet that what is happening now might have been otherwise, is self-contradictory...Does this mean that the language of ‘may’ and ‘might’ is meaningless? Not at all...But [such a] statement is then about the extent of what we know” (642).

memory are categorically tied to the irreversible and asymmetric temporality of causation: “To *remember* or *perceive* is to depend for one’s experience upon antecedent events, which it is too late to influence” (ibid.: 634). In *practical* terms, all knowledge is *constitutively temporal knowledge*.

Thus, the disagreement between the process philosophers and substantial monists chiefly serves to illustrate an important principle about what we mean when we talk about ‘internal’ and ‘external’ relations: Both concepts are necessary, in some sense, to understand the compresence of unity and diversity, similarity and difference, that irreducibly characterizes the finite discursive knowledge of embodied agents. Practically speaking, we always necessarily experience our own reflexive unity in tandem with some measure of external relatedness—for to live as an embodied being is to experience reality in perpetual unfoldment. Experience is inherently surprising, creative, and unpredictable—not a pre-given monolithic ‘block’ of knowledge given ‘all-at-once.’⁶¹ To the pragmatic extent that the project of philosophy should be held accountable to the finite fact of human experience, one might insist that any comprehensive and compelling metaphysics will require some reference to the objective validity of both internal and external relations. As Hartshorne puts it, “I salute [Blanshard] for his long skillful fight against the atomistic, radically pluralistic view, opposite to his monistic view...[But] discrediting one extreme is far from justifying the opposite one...The golden mean ideal fits immensely more cases than Aristotle realized. Mere pluralism, mere monism; mere contingency; mere necessity; these are not forced options” (ibid: 632).

In more general terms, the categories of unity and diversity need not primarily refer to the necessary similarity among abstract ideas; or the absolute difference between particular bits of matter; but the dialectical tension of nature whereby experience itself evolves and develops

⁶¹ For my own relevant set-theoretical critique of omniscience in the Jain system, see Berger (2022).

through a transcendental circuit of perceptual apprehension and conceptual comprehension.⁶² The process philosophers and pragmatists therefore share the intuition that we misconstrue the relational meaning of ‘unity and diversity’ to the extent these categories are reified as mutually exclusive numerical *properties* of some substantial, fully actualized or determinate existent(s). Concretely speaking, relation refers to the manifest character of phenomenal experience as a *continuous temporal event*—one that moves *from* a diverse manifold of indeterminate cognitions *to* a determinate state of synthetic unity. ‘Relationality’ is therefore neither *purely* general nor *purely* particular, but itself something in-between—a transcendental act of knowledge whose reflexive character testifies to its having mediated between perceptual and conceptual phases of experience. It is not definable in any other terms; it is a *sui generis* form of being. As MacBride affirms, “if the price is right, we should open our minds to the possibility of things which are neither fish nor fowl but vegetables, i.e., neither substances nor attributes but relations” (ibid.).

d. But What Did Bradley Actually Prove?

Despite this convenient narrative of monism vs. pluralism, recent literature (e.g., Candlish: 2006; Heil: 2021) has made it clear that the received interpretation of the Russell/Bradley debate over relations contains many inaccuracies. According to Candlish, this standard historical narrative casts Russell’s ‘doctrine of external relations’ as the definitive victor over Bradley’s idealistic

⁶² This would oppose, say, mechanistic worldviews that describe reality as a mere assemblage of mindless, externally related parts. In his review of Warner Fite’s *Individualism* (1911), George Herbert Meade describes this perspective: “[Fite’s] definition of consciousness is diversity in unity. This is placed over against a definition of the mechanical object. The mechanical object has, as such, no internality. In itself it has no relations...[it] is merely acted upon from the outside. This object has therefore neither diversity nor unity. So far as it falls into a system this relationship with other things exists only for an outside intelligence....Mechanical objects exist only in space and time, occupy isolated points and moments, and in themselves imply neither other places nor other moments. An implication of the ‘there’ in the ‘here,’ of the ‘then’ in the ‘now,’ can exist only in an idea in a mind. Diversity in unity, or unity in diversity, then, can exist only in consciousness, and wherever these are found, they must be found in consciousness” (1911: 423-425).

‘doctrine of internal relations.’⁶³ I don’t know whether this is an accurate portrayal of the reasons for the neglect or disparagement of Bradley’s contributions to the history of logic, but Candlish shows that such a simplistic narrative fails to capture many nuances of a complex and protean debate, where the views of each party sharpened over time against the whetstone of critique and self-clarification. Despite this fact, the literature has often proceeded according to the stereotype that casts Bradley’s monistic idealism as a ‘doctrine of internal relations’ vs. Russell’s pluralistic realism, a ‘doctrine of external relations.’

It is true that Russell explicitly formulated the pluralistic realism of logical atomism in reaction to monistic idealism.⁶⁴ But Candlish shows that Russell held to a popular misunderstanding of Bradley, whom he believed endorsed the doctrine that ‘all relations are internal.’ In the latter 20th century, Bradley came to be uncritically associated with just this sort of ‘doctrine of internal relations’—i.e., one that denies all apparent pluralism through reducing all contingent or external relations to necessary properties of a single divine substance. For instance, Manser writes in his book *Bradley’s Logic* that “[i]t is generally accepted that Bradley believed that all relations were internal. To many recent philosophers this has been enough to show that he was either confused or silly” (1983: 119). However, in a later essay Bradley himself corrects this mistaken impression: “Criticism therefore which assumes me committed to the ultimate truth of internal relations, all or any of them, is based on a mistake” (1914: 239). And, in his posthumous essay “Relations”, he informs us that “the idea...that I myself accept any such

⁶³ Candlish partly infers this stereotypical picture based on analytic philosophy’s mainstream triumph over idealism. He cites different features of this received picture, including the erasure of Bradley from the history of the development of logic, his pejorative association with Hegelianism and metaphysical speculation, and the lionization of Russell as the paragon logician, mathematician, and philosopher of language (6-18). However, he also attributes many of these misconceptions to Russell and Moore themselves based on their own (often flawed) interpretations of Bradley’s arguments. Candlish, who sides with Bradley in the substance of the relational arguments but rejects his monistic conclusions, admits that this was partly due to Bradley’s own unclear expression of his arguments against relations in *Appearance and Reality* (155).

⁶⁴ See Candlish (2007) and Levine (2014) for historical details in this regard, both of whom I draw upon in this section.

doctrine [of internal relations]...seems to myself even ludicrous” (1935: 642). How did such a colossal muddle come about?

In brief, it is due in part to the interpretive biases of Russell and Moore that were uncritically adopted by many contemporary analytic philosophers, but also to the vagueness of Bradley’s own language in *Appearance and Reality*. Most critically, as Mácha (31-2) notes, Russell and Moore’s construal of Bradley’s doctrine—that ‘every relation is grounded in the natures of the related terms’—can be taken to mean that either (a) every relation is *only* internal (i.e., not external) or (b) every relation is internal *to some degree* (i.e., not entirely external). For Russell and Moore, the logical form that relations may assume can only be binary: either relations are internal *or* external. Thus, in their critiques they did not distinguish between (a) and (b), and, in refuting (a), incorrectly believe that they had also refuted (b). In other words, Bradley’s arguments actually only make a case for (b)—Russell’s argument from asymmetry only refutes the idea that relations must be *purely* internal.

To be sure, we have already seen that Bradley attacks both external *and* internal relations, which he ultimately took to entail a doctrine of relational *eliminativism*—i.e., decidedly *not* a ‘doctrine of internal relations.’ Russell’s argument from asymmetry is thus easily accommodated by Bradley in his later writings. If we simply accept that some relations can be partly internal and external, we can account for the asymmetry of a relation by the degree of its externality. As Bradley writes in direct response to Russell:

Asymmetrical relations are said to disprove Monism, because Monism rests on *simple* inherence [sc. predication] as the only way in which there is ultimate reality. The argument, if right, is improperly limited—because *any* relations, *if so*, disprove Monism. But Monism does not rest on simple inherence as the one form of reality. It even (in my case) says that that form is unsatisfactory.... In short, far from admitting that Monism requires that all truths can be interpreted as the predication of qualities of the whole, Monism with me contends that all predication, no matter what, is in the end untrue and in the end unreal (1935: 670-672).

In other words, the elimination of the conceptual relations of predication and inherence as ultimate ontological facts enable Bradley to resist Russell's argument from asymmetry. All relations can be internally related and externally related *to some degree*: "No relation is *merely* intrinsic or external, and every relation is both" and "[e]very relation...has a connection with its terms, not simply internal or external, [but] must in principle be both at once" (1935: 641, 667).

In a relevant note in the Appendix to the 1916 edition of *Appearance and Reality*, Bradley provides a response to Russell and Moore's mereological contention that it is just a matter of common-sense that things like billiard-balls and men are intrinsically unaffected by mere alteration of space—in other words, that external relations must 'objectively' exist. In a passage whose importance bears full quotation, he retorts that his opponent has overlooked a critical distinction:

For a thing may remain unaltered if you identify it with a certain character, while taken otherwise the thing is suffering change. If, that is, you take a billiard-ball and a man in abstraction from place, they will of course—so far as this is maintained—be indifferent to changes of place. But on the other hand neither of them, if regarded so, is a thing which actually exists; each is a more or less valid abstraction. But take them as existing things and take them without mutilation, and you must regard them as determined by their places and qualified by the whole material system into which they enter. And, if you demur to this, I ask you once more of what you are going to predicate the alterations and their results. The billiard-ball, to repeat, if taken apart from its place and its position in the whole, is not an existence but a *character*, and that character can remain unchanged, though the existing thing is altered with its changed existence. Everything other than this identical character may be called relatively external. It may, or it may not, be in comparison unimportant, but absolutely external it cannot be. And if you urge that in any case the relation of the thing's character to its spatial existence is unintelligible, and that *how* the nature of the thing which falls outside our abstraction contributes to the whole system, and *how* that nature is different as it contributes differently, is in the end unknown—I shall not gainsay you. But I prefer to be left with ignorance and with inconsistencies and with insoluble difficulties, difficulties essential to a lower and fragmentary point of view and soluble only by the transcendence of that appearance in a fuller whole, a transcendence which in detail seems for us impossible—I prefer, I say, to be left thus rather than to embrace a worse alternative. I cannot on any terms accept as absolute fact a mere abstraction and a fixed standing inconsistency. And the case surely is made worse when one is forced to admit that, starting from this principle, one sooner or later cannot in the very least explain those results which follow in fact (1916: 598).

What Bradley expresses here is not only central to the rift between his own monism and the atomism associated with the early Russell and Moore, but also the relational mindset of

experiential realists like James and Whitehead. For Bradley's point is not necessarily one that can be adjudicated using any *purely* abstract methods of reasoning; it rather comes down to systemic problems inherent to discourse itself, which question whether we can appeal to the external relations present in the abstract structures of language to prove that those very same relations exist *as wholly external to the very conceptual framework that depends upon and enacts them*. Bradley challenges his opponent to justify the ultimate reliability of the grammatical categories that the common-sense proponent of external relations presupposes in his analysis. For to even postulate a *billiard-ball* and *man* as in principle distinguishable from their spatial relations only reveals that one has entitled oneself to abstract from the total situation, and then assume these abstractions can exhaustively characterize said situation, without any valid philosophical argument. The process of abstraction itself, that is, naturally assumes that some relations will be external to the object abstracted: "The very process of abstraction involved in thinking this way itself relies upon some relations being external to the object, for without such externality, no conception of an object, at all, is possible. As an argument for the externality of some relations, this appeal to common sense is plainly circular" (Candlish: 153-4). Given the inevitable circularity of this argument, Bradley openly settles for a philosophical preference—he would rather 'be left with ignorance' from a fragmentary point of view than 'accept as absolute fact a mere abstraction and a fixed standing inconsistency' that 'cannot in the very least explain those results which follow in fact.' Candlish characterizes the stalemate: "[O]ne side attempts to conduct the argument in terms whose very legitimacy the other side is questioning, while the other side is unable to provide any other terminology in which the question can be framed non-self-defeatingly" (ibid.)

Thus, despite the degree to which Russell and Moore found pluralistic arguments from asymmetry convincing, they betray a fundamental misunderstanding of Bradley—partly because Bradley himself clarified his own views on the matter over time, and only after the first edition of *Appearance and Reality*. Indeed, towards the end of his career, Bradley explicitly appealed to the idea that *no relational judgment* about reality is ‘ultimately’ true, because *all* conceptual distinctions whatsoever necessarily refer only to conventional appearances. Bradley’s dualism therefore allows him to deploy a kind of “two-truths” argument to withstand asymmetrical objections to monism. A certain relation may be pragmatic for such-and-such a purpose—‘relatively’ external/internal—but these are not descriptions of the non-relational Reality: “Mere internal relations, then, like relations that are merely external, are untenable if they make a claim to ultimate and absolute truth. But taken otherwise, and viewed as helpful makeshifts and as useful aids in the pursuit of knowledge, external and internal relations are both admissible and can be relatively real and true” (1924: 645). (Had the terminology been familiar to him, one can imagine Dharmakīrti saying something quite similar.) Bradley recognized, in short, that his arguments actually proved no relation can be *purely* internal or external. Yet, since Bradley assumed that a relation—that is, to be a relation that *actually relates* relata—is only *intelligible* as something either internal or external to its relata; and further, both species of relation are equally incoherent; he naturally inferred that all forms of relation are *mere* conceptual appearances, and thus not ultimately real.

e. The Common Relational Suppositions of Bradley and Russell

Another point that Candlish’s study reveals is that, despite their *prima facie* tensions, Bradley’s relational eliminativism and monistic idealism actually stem from similar metaphysical

commitments that guide Russell and Moore—those that Peirce will characterize below as fundamentally *nominalist* in orientation. Recall, in this regard, that Russell claimed that each of his particulars “stands entirely on its own and is completely self-subsistent...having the sort of self-subsistence that used to belong to substance, [such that] each particular there is in the world does not in any way logically depend upon any other particular” (1918: 179). Candlish notes that there are only two ways to achieve this sort of ontological independence devoid of internal relatedness: “One is Russell’s atomist way: extrude complexity from objects into facts, so that the complex lose their status as objects and the substances are independent in virtue of their simplicity. Another is Bradley’s: absorb complexity so that the eventual sole substance has its independence in virtue of their being nothing else...[The] point is that what systems of both kinds agree on is that internal relations not only are unreal themselves because all relations are, but also undermine the reality of their terms, even if not everyone would like this idealist way of putting it” (160).

For our purposes specifically, the most important take-away from the Bradley vs. Russell affair is their basic theoretical consonance along two axes: 1. The logical form that relations must assume to qualify as real existents is some substantive unity that can potentially function like the categorematic, self-standing terms of a grammatical proposition; and 2. Continuous change, and thus temporality itself, is metaphysically unreal. We have already seen that these two axes are closely co-implicated. Candlish touches upon this when he writes that

[d]espite the fact that Russell’s criticisms of Bradley often missed their target...[t]he point in common is their employment of grammatical criteria for adjudicating the issues of the reality of relations. The question of relations’ reality is the question of their individual substantiality. For Russell this is settled by deciding whether or not relational expressions are eliminable. If they are not eliminable, they must be taken to be names of some kind of objects, and his view (at least prior to his post-Wittgenstein change of mind on the subject) is that they are not eliminable...Despite the importance which both Russell and Bradley accorded to grammar, in both philosophers it is put at the service of underlying metaphysical visions (135-136).

We will see that, for Peirce, what both Russell and Bradley generally took for granted was the basic *nominalist* supposition in which for something to be real is for it to be *a kind of wholly actualized substance*, an adamant, self-characterized ‘unit’ of being with some inviolate, changeless essence. This conforms with the medieval principle of *ens et unum convertuntur*, the interconvertibility of Being and Unity. For Bradley, this meant gesturing towards the singular Reality of the unified Whole; while for an early Russell, quite distinctly, it meant something that could be designated and distinguished from a plurality of objects through its apprehension as a determinate logical subject. And yet, for either one, if *relations* did not correspond to some *particular substantive unity* on their own—that is, independent of their relata—they simply did not, and *could* not, exist in any *ultimate* sense. As Blanshard affirms: “There is only one thing in the world that is quite particular, unique, and individual, namely God, Substance, or the Absolute” (1980: 644).

Thus, while we can gloss these disjunctive metaphysical visions as either monism or pluralism, to do so belies a deeper metaphysical concord: continuous change is fundamentally unreal. One way or another, temporal phenomena represent subjective impositions on a fundamentally changeless and timeless reality. Indeed, despite Russell’s tremendous shift in attitude towards the constitution of ‘substance’ throughout his career, Candlish notes that “amongst the differences between these particulars of 1918 and the terms that are their 1903 ancestors in Russell’s ontology, one thing is very prominent: The former are ultra-temporary, the latter eternal. Both kinds of entity originate in Russell’s sense that nothing can be the persisting subject of change. In this respect, he and Bradley are at one: change is unreal” (140).

The importance that Candlish ascribes to this observation, however, and its impact on the context of the relational debate, is not expounded upon at all.⁶⁵ Perhaps this is because, according to Candlish, a post-Wittgenstein Russell is absolved of his relational blunders when he comes to accept the ultimate *unreality* of *all* relations. Even though Russell, and Candlish for that matter, never endorse the monistic consequences of Bradley's relational eliminativism, I believe he would agree that since reality is timeless and changeless, Russell never felt the need to systematically inquire into the relational forms that constitute the phenomenological experience of continuous change. Both Russell and Bradley assume, in other words, that there can be no theory of 'transcendental' relations because there is no general form of logic that encompasses understanding as it relates directly to intuition—i.e., as a temporal and intrinsically changeful form of reason (cf. Rödl: 2012).

As we will stress below, however, the assumption that *continuous* change is ultimately *unreal*—and thus that no philosophical analysis can or need apply to the logic of temporal events—prevents both Bradley and Russell from recognizing a different possible sense of 'relation', albeit one that nevertheless remains fundamentally unrepresentable in terms of any tokenized propositional judgment. From this perspective, the objective form of relation

⁶⁵ Granted, I obviously would not expect Candlish to be writing *this paper*, or presenting my own views on relations. But it would have sufficed if he at least gestured to pragmatic and processual thinkers in the Anglo-American tradition—contemporaneous and directly preceding Russell and Bradley—that entirely reframed the conversation. In his conclusion, Candlish cites Donald Davidson who said in regard to Bradley's results that "[f]or the most part, though, contemporary philosophers have not even recognized that there is a problem [of relations]" (2005: 94). Candlish adds that analytic philosophers "mostly either ignored [the problem of relations], or, like Strawson, discussed in the slightly disguised form of the subject-predicate distinction" (184). He believes, however, that if analytic philosophers begin to take Bradley's results seriously, "the consequences for metaphysics will be unsettling: no longer will it be possible merely to invoke, as for instance Armstrong does on more than one occasion, Hume's doctrine of distinct existences as though this sufficed to prove a point, and the comfortable pluralism now so often just taken for granted by philosophers will have to be reconsidered" (185). But James, in particular, unfettered the concept of relations from the binary predicative structure taken for granted in the Russell/Bradley debate. Their shared metaphysical assumption that change is unreal does much to inform their equal willingness to completely overlook the possible *reality* of irreducibly complex forms of relatedness. The way Candlish frames the debate—as though Bradley's relational eliminativism should naturally become the dominant trend in analytic philosophy—betrays his own confidence that the binary picture of relations is the only metaphysical conversation about relations worth having.

technically remains inferable or knowable only on a transcendental basis—as a necessary limit on the discursive capacities of practical reason to ever represent knowledge of the objective form of continuity to itself.

3. The Unity of the Proposition and Synthetic Judgment

a. Russell on the Dual-Aspect of the Verbal Noun

As mentioned, Russell took the logic of grammar as a kind of transparent medium that transduces the terms and relations of objective fact into the form of complex propositional unity. Both Moore and Russell adhered to the view that a “proposition is constituted by any number of concepts, together with a specific relation between them” (Moore 1899: 180). And Russell writes, for instance, that “[t]o deny that predication is a relation would...entail very grave difficulties. [I]f there be such judgments, they must, on any possible interpretation, be judgments of relation” (1990: 140-1). According to Russell, then, we can classify subsets of the set of all propositions according to the relations that obtain between such-and-such constituent terms, and the subset of propositional judgments express that a particular relation obtains between a subject and predicate. As per his early theory of real propositional constituents, the subject, predicate, and the relation between them exist as constitutive elements of the propositions themselves. Since the meaning of a judgment is the assertion of a relationship between subject and object, and we must be directly acquainted with all constituents of the proposition, relations must reflect logically primitive forms in the real world that lend unity to a judgment as well.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Russell’s early stance on propositional unity arguably implicated a kind of ‘trope’ theory. His earliest view is recorded in the 1899 manuscript “Do Differences Differ?”, in which he analyzes the relationship of the general notion of ‘difference’ to a *particular* difference. He concludes that “[d]ifference in the abstract relates nothing, but is related to differences as *Point* to points...The doctrine in question may be extended to all relations. Any relation which actually relates two terms must be incapable of relating any others; thus there is only one proposition in which any specified relation relates...Between two relations of the same class there is numerical diversity, as between two

Yet, from the beginning of the analytic tradition, the logical form of the copula and its place in judgment presented a central, and arguably unresolved, issue. This is because the relation of predication implicates the problem of the unity of the proposition; namely, what kind of logical relationship binds together the distinct terms in a propositional judgment such that they say something which can be counted as a *semantic* unity, rather than a mere concatenation of abstract independent terms (e.g., “Romeo loves Juliet” vs. “‘Romeo’, ‘loves’, ‘Juliet’”). Although there is no general consensus in the literature on the scope and significance of the problem, the unity of the proposition, while arguably not *identical* with the problem of the reality of relations, was clearly integral to the debate for both Russell and Bradley.⁶⁷ But, more

points or two colours...(557). Here he adheres to a view that would contemporarily be described as a theory of relational tropes; even though there is a general universal called “relation,” it does not actually function as “relating” in concrete instances of particular propositions. So if “*A* differs from *B*” and “*C* differs from *D*,” there is no general notion of ‘relation’ that functions within each proposition, and thus the difference in each case does not signify the universal ‘relation,’ which does not, in this case, occur as a constituent object of the proposition itself. It appears that he reneges on his earlier view of relational tropism, or the idea that ‘particularized relations’ are distinct from the general term ‘relation’ in *PoM* (see Levine (2014) for a more detailed overview of Russell’s trope theory).

⁶⁷ One might suggest that the problem of the reality of relations and the problem of the unity of the proposition are distinct problems that must be addressed on their own terms: Why does Russell have to entitle himself to this explanation at all? Why must Russell admit that propositions, in addition to being composed of real constituents, are entities themselves? Indeed, within the Russellian tradition, there is no shared consensus on either problem, or the precise nature of their relationship. Candlish (195-6) explores some of these positions, as well as Sainsbury (1996: 140-1), where he differentiates four sub-problems into which he believes the problem of the unity of the proposition decomposes. He argues accordingly in his 1979 study on Russell that the ‘problem’ results from a ‘muddle.’ On the other hand, many contemporary philosophers believe it poses a considerable problem for Russell (cf. for instance, Palmer (1988), Gaskin (1995; 2008), Gibson (2004), and Davidson (2005)). First of all, and most importantly, both Russell and Bradley believed that these problems were related. Insofar as we are tracking their own thinking on these subjects, we will take it for granted that they were not both gravely mistaken. But besides that, we must remember that for the early Russell, anything that can be counted as a unity is a distinct term (*PoM*: § 47). This, I think, conveys the essence of the mathematical influence on Russell’s metaphysical intuitions. (In addition to his adherence to the principle in *PoM*, he also affirms it in a 1910 letter to Bradley quoted in *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell, Volume 6*: 350). For Russell, to be is to be a formal unity, and to be a formal unity means to be able to be *counted* as a distinct unity. Since propositions can be counted and distinguished as formal unities, they must exist in some *ontological* sense. Hence, “in every proposition, some relation is asserted as regards the terms of the proposition. The classification of relations, is, therefore, the classification of the types of propositions” (1990: 145). Relations, in this respect, identify the formal unity of a complex proposition such that it can be distinguished and counted as a particular subset of the class of all possible propositions. In addition to this mathematical commitment, however, for Russell to salvage the correspondence between the structure of language and reality, the logical givenness of predicative unity must likewise transmit a particular *fact* about the solidarity of the plurality of constituents and their external relations *in the real world*. Thus, one’s position on the relationship between these problems lays bare their metaphysical comportment towards relations themselves, rather than any analytical truth about their independence. For the reformed realists, that is, the distinction between the problem of the unity of the proposition (i.e., subjective relations of judgment) and the problem of the reality of abstract relations (i.e., formal

importantly, the problem of the unity of synthetic judgment becomes absolutely paramount for the objective and absolute idealists who view reflexive judgment as the concrete locus of relational action.

Russell explanation of the problem in PoM remains a standard reference for his early views on the matter, as well as the primary target of Bradley's critique. As mentioned, according to Russell's theory of real propositional constituents, relations themselves must be constitutive terms of the proposition. Russell declares that "[t]he capacity for combining terms into a single complex is the defining characteristic of what I call *verbs*" (1911: 108) But if the verb represents a constitutive element *and* the means of propositional unity, then a familiar conceptual ambiguity emerges; there is a dual-aspect of this 'relation' as simultaneously designating *both* an abstract, self-standing categorematic *term* and a *particular verbal action* that unites otherwise independent terms into a distinct propositional complex. Metaphorically speaking, this is like demanding that we simultaneously interpret the mortar between two bricks as both the means of adhesion and as simply another brick in itself.⁶⁸

In PoM, he elaborates on his own solution to the problem when he proposes that verbs have a 'twofold nature': "The twofold nature of the verb, as actual verb and as verbal noun, may be expressed, if all verbs are held to be relations, as the difference between a relation in itself and a relation actually relating" (§ 49). Russell believed that this dual function of the verb allows a verbal relation to act as *both* a distinct propositional constituent *and* the means of propositional unity:

grammatical relations) is precisely what is at issue in an accurate appraisal of the ontological status of *relations themselves*.

⁶⁸ Cf. Linsky's "The Unity of the Proposition" (1992: 243-73), which summarizes Russell's relational dilemma and Frege's own solution to the problem with respect to 'saturated' and 'unsaturated' terms. N.b. this 'glue/brick' quandary will map onto the conceptual problems that beset the theoretical foundations of the *samavāya* relation in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system.

Consider, for example, the proposition “*A* differs from *B*.” The constituents of this proposition, if we analyze it, appear to be only *A*, difference, *B*. Yet these constituents, thus placed side by side, do not reconstitute the proposition. The difference which occurs in the proposition actually relates *A* and *B*, whereas the difference after analysis is a notion which has no connection with *A* and *B*...*A* proposition, in fact, is essentially a unity, and when analysis has destroyed the unity, no enumeration of constituents will restore the proposition. The verb, when used as a verb, embodies the unity of the proposition, and is thus distinguishable from the verb considered as a term, though I do not know how to give a clear account of the distinction (§ 54).

With this theoretical distinction in hand, Russell could now differentiate between two sorts of regress: an unacceptable *semantic* form and a logically benign *implicatory* form: “Wherever the meaning of a proposition is in question, an infinite regress is objectionable, since we never reach a proposition which has a definite meaning....[However, if] *A* be a proposition whose meaning is perfectly definite, and *A* implies *B*, *B* implies *C*, and so on, we have an infinite regress of a quite unobjectionable kind...[In this case] there is no logical necessity, as there was in the previous [objectionable] case, to complete the infinite regress before *A* acquires a meaning” (349). He therefore concludes in the early manuscript ‘Do Differences Differ?’ that in the former semantic case “[w]e shall be led to an endless regress, not...to new propositions implied in previous ones, but to greater and greater complexities in the meaning of our original proposition. And this kind of regress is certainly inadmissible” (556). In other words, Russell argues that a regress of *implication* does not prevent the proposition *A* from instantiating a determinate unity, because the terms within each subsequent implication do not actually figure into its semantic constitution.

Through the stipulation of the dual function of the verbal relation, Russell was convinced he had addressed the problem of propositional unity; if we can reframe the relations of propositions in terms of the unobjectionable regress of implication, then the terms that define the unity of the proposition are still finite, and thus faithfully transmitted through the absolute differences between grammatical forms. Thus, he believed he could account for the determinate unity of propositions without succumbing to Bradley’s regress; the dual-function of the verb

affords the ability of the propositional complex to unify distinct terms while also remaining a constituent categorematic term of the proposition itself. Levin usefully summarizes the upshot of Russell's theory apropos Bradley: "By holding that relations have a 'twofold nature,' Russell in PoM is able to hold what...Bradley [denies]—namely, that *difference* itself, the 'independently real' relation, is a constituent of the proposition '*A* differs from *B*.' And by doing so, he thereby takes himself to vindicate what Bradley calls 'the relational stage of thought'" (253). Although Russell admits above that he does "not know how to give a clear account of the precise nature of the distinction," i.e., between "the verb, when used as a verb" and "the verb considered as term" (§50), to get on with what he considers his primary task in PoM, he decides that he will "leave...certain fundamental difficulties in this view aside as irrelevant to our present purpose" (ibid.).⁶⁹

b. Bradley on the Primary Unity of Feeling

Rational monists like Bradley and Joachim identified intractable problems with Russell's theory of relations when applied to the unity of propositional judgment. They both lambast Russell's proposed 'solution' as a flagrant instance of Russell having his cake and eating it too. As far as Bradley was concerned, Russell simply contradicts himself in the primitive acceptance of complex propositional unity—a notion to which he is not entitled based on the principles of his own atomic pluralism:

⁶⁹ To his credit, Russell was aware of the specific limitations of his theory: When we say, "*A* differs from *B*," we do not need to posit an infinite number of terms to explicate the relation as both a constitutive member of the proposition and the metaphorical 'glue' that holds it together. Given the two-fold nature of the verb, Russell felt that we can validly decompose the proposition into just *three* distinct terms '*A*,' '*difference*,' and '*B*.' Even though Russell admits that we cannot reconstitute a formal unity from just these three terms, it is not because the general notion of relation is not a constituent element of the proposition; rather, it is due to the fact that we mistake the function of the *term* 'difference' with its function of "actually relating" in the unity of the proposition. In other words, *difference* functions differently when listed as a term rather than taken as a unifying element in a proposition—in the list we have "a relation in itself," while in the proposition, it "actually relates." But, as we noted in the citation above, he "does not know how to give a clear account of the distinction."

Mr. Russell's position has remained to myself incomprehensible. On the one side I am led to think that he defends a strict pluralism, for which nothing is admissible beyond simple terms and external relations. On the other side Mr. Russell seems to assert emphatically, and to use throughout, ideas which such a pluralism surely must repudiate. He throughout stands upon unities which are complex and which cannot be analysed into terms and relations. These two positions to my mind are irreconcilable, since the second, as I understand it, contradicts the first flatly. If there are such unities, and, still more, if such unities are fundamental, then pluralism surely is in principle abandoned as false (1910: 179).

For Bradley, the manifest unity of the proposition provided the ground for an irrefutable *reductio* objection to Russell's entire relational scheme, i.e., the idea that a verbal relation could be thought of as *both* a constituent term of the proposition *and the means* of complex unity. As far as Bradley was concerned, this is a clear-cut contradiction: He cannot axiomatically demand a simple atomic pluralism with no *intrinsic* internal connectedness, while simultaneously defending the existence of irreducibly complex unities, bound together through an *ad hoc* conceptual object that just-so-happens to grant precisely the sort of synthetic capacity required for propositional comprehension; he has not actually *explained* the difference between abstract relations and relations in particular.

In Joachim's defense of Bradley, he objects to Russell's theory of complex unity on precisely these grounds, with a terse expression of the monistic critique of the entire logical atomist project:

[Russell's] theory rests its account of the complex facts upon certain assumptions, which are simply and solely statements of the problem to be solved. Thus, it insists that the union of the independent simples is a union by external relations; and 'external relation' is a name for the problem to be solved. The problem is, 'How can elements, each absolutely simple and in itself, coalesce to form a complex in any sense a unity?' And the answer given is 'By being externally related'; i.e. by coalescing to form a unity and yet not ceasing to be independent. Again, 'How can that, which is independent, yet be apprehended and known as independent?' The theory answers: 'In virtue of the unique relation of "experiencing" to the object experienced'; i.e. in virtue of an immediate apprehension which is just of the miraculous nature demanded for the solution of the problem... And finally, there is a problem as to how the simple, eternal, and self-identical can enter as a constituent into complexes, which are changing, different, and many. And the theory answers, 'By being related, in a not further explicable manner, to the different points and moments.' But these inexplicable relations are merely names for the problem. For they are simply formulations of the assertion that the simple, eternal, and self-identical is yet also a constituent of many different complexes, connected with many different places and times (1906: 49-50).

Joachim's rebuke of Russell amounts to an appeal to the givenness of internal unity that necessarily attends the *judgment* of the 'external relatedness' *between* supposedly 'independent' terms. In other words, Russell implicitly helps himself to a notion of internal relatedness in the very sense of *difference* expressed in the propositional complex, but without explaining the *means* of this semantic unity, given the strict ontological independence that obtains between externally related terms.⁷⁰

In opposition to Russell, Bradley averred that to make *any* complex judgment of predication is to already take for granted a transcendental form of experiential unity that underlies this complex diversity of Appearances. He took this to entail that the grammatical form of the proposition can never completely unify subject (which includes the background existential conditions for the assertion) and an abstract predicate, because then the subject would have to be identical with the whole of Reality itself: "If there is to be sheer truth, the condition of the assertion must not fall outside the judgment. The judgment must be thoroughly self-contained. If the predicate is true of the subject only by virtue of something omitted and unknown such a truth is defective" (1914: 252).⁷¹ Epistemically speaking, then, we might say that the 'amount of truth' contained in a predicative judgment is always limited and a matter of degree.

⁷⁰ As Potter notes, "to say, as Russell had done, that [a logical form] is a component of the proposition but not a constituent, is so far only to label the problem not to solve it" (2009: 116). And Candlish, in a similar vein, notes Russell's "tendency to try to solve a philosophical problem by discerning an object of acquaintance...which somehow possesses just the right logical properties for the solution" (205, fn.34). As we will see in the next chapter, this is precisely the sort of *ad hoc* critique of naïve relational realism that extends to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system.

⁷¹ Say I judge "this chair is brown." The relational act depends upon a panoply of causal and situational factors that are not themselves contained within the judgment; e.g., the personal and social significance of its constituent terms, the particular chair referred to, the pragmatic context of the speaker and perhaps even the native language. Let's assume that I want to include all these factors within the proposition itself to make the judgment 'truer.' So, for instance, I begin to write "This chair is brown, and by 'this chair' I mean the chair my grandma got on Wednesday, July 8th, 1976, at 4:03 pm, when she was in Seattle at a shop called 'Hipsters' owned by hippie activists..., and by "brown" I mean the color I associate with the experience of brownies, especially those I ate when I was five that my grandma baked fresh in a brick oven on Sundays after Church...". While this sentence is 'truer' than the previous sentence, any final statement that includes all the conditions of the judgment within itself quickly veers off into an endless bog of ever-greater detail that reflects just the sort of semantic regress that Russell deemed unacceptable. For

As mentioned, scholars now generally acknowledge that Bradley came to appreciate more over time that his arguments actually demonstrate that relations cannot be *purely* internal or external, not that they cannot manifest as *partly* internal and external simply as a matter of appearance. Indeed, what Bradley actually showed is that to even *posit* the existence of any meaningful *internal* relation, there *must* also be some *external* relations that *distinguish* the terms, such that the former could even obtain in the first place. In other words, we have seen that two completely internally related terms are *ipso facto* symmetrically related, while an asymmetrical relation entails some difference (read: external relation) between its terms such that we can account for its irreflexive properties (that is, it is not the same relation one way rather than the reverse). This means that all judgments must be partially internal and external as well—the degree to which may depend on how the object of judgment is evaluated and described.⁷² According to this criteria, no relational judgment is *absolutely* true or false, because propositional content can never be identical with the totality of conditions that provide the substantial basis thereof.

He therefore maintained that we cannot discern the true nature of reality through propositional judgments; the content of every judgment is in fact metaphysically ideal, not the Appearances of terms and their external relations in the form of a linguistic expression. He explains in his *Principles of Logic* that,

Bradley, this process would unravel at its hypothetical limit point into the bare truth of the total situation that gives rise to the particular judgment. But this is simply pure, Absolute Experience, the Whole-of-Reality itself, and thus no longer the *relational* form of predicative judgment, which by its very nature becomes more conditional the more it attempts to include its own conditional factors within itself. Note that a similar conception of propositional judgment gives rise to Peirce's notion of requisite 'collateral experience' on the part of the cognizer, who hypostatistically abstracts the predicate through a transitive form of mentation; in this case, the pre-conditions for propositional judgment are not the *whole* of reality itself, but rather the reflexive mediation of the sign, or its 'thirdness' (more on this below).

⁷² As Candlish notes, this, in fact, is not so different from the views of Ayer (1952). Cf. Mácha (86-93), who also discusses Wittgenstein's observation that certain internal relations can be redescribed as external, and *vice versa*.

we take an ideal content, a complex totality of qualities and relations, and we then introduce divisions and distinctions, and we call these products separate ideas with relations between them. And this is quite unobjectionable. But what is objectionable, is our then proceeding to deny that the whole before our mind is a single idea; and it involves a serious error in principle. *The relations between the ideas are themselves ideal.* They are not the psychical relations of mental facts. They do not exist between the symbols, but hold in the symbolized. They are part of the meaning and not of the existence. And the whole in which they subsist is ideal, and so one idea” (1883: 11 [emphasis mine]).

Here Bradley affirms that the relations between ideas are not directly experienced as they truly are because “they are *themselves* ideal.” In this respect, syncategorematic expressions and logical connectives do not have any corresponding concrete *experiential* content—i.e., ‘feeling’—because the ‘power’ of relational unification is *itself* purely formal or ideal. “In every judgment there is a subject of which the ideal content is asserted...[and] the subject is...always reality” (ibid.:13), so “all judgments predicate their ideal content as an attribute of the real” (ibid.: 50). Accordingly, because the grammatical subject always represents a limited psychic placeholder for the inexpressible totality, we cannot ground our knowledge of true reality on the fragmentary basis of the content and form of predictive judgment alone.

Since the mind’s *modus operandi* is predicated on fragmentariness (and thus illusion for Bradley), the synthetic unity of judgment must not be identified with any abstract formal content, but rather with the affective immediacy of pure experience, or what he calls *feeling*. While the notion of feeling runs throughout *Appearance and Reality*, from what I can gather, Bradley’s clearest statement of its place in his metaphysics comes from his posthumously published essay “Relations”:

The view in main is as follows. Relations are not a way of being or knowing which is ultimate in reality or in knowledge. What comes first in logical order and in time is what may be called immediate experience or Feeling. It is on this that the relational stage of knowledge is superinduced as a remedy made necessary by its defect. And this advance not only is necessary but is fully justified, but on the other hand itself is not ultimate. It is in principle and in the end a self-contradictory makeshift. And it points therefore to an experience beyond both itself and the stage of feeling in which the claims of both are realized fully—though in a way not in detail intelligible. And this experience as called for by and as in principle satisfying every possible claim and as at once consummate understanding and feeling and will, may be called the Absolute Reality (1935: 356).

‘Feeling’ for Bradley expresses the pre-conceptual state of undifferentiated unity that logically precedes intentional knowledge or judgment of diverse appearances: “I use, in brief, immediate experience to stand for that which is comprised wholly within a single state of undivided awareness of feeling....Feeling is immediate experience without distinction or relation in itself” (1914: 194). Knowing and being, subject and object, are one in pure feeling, since the relations that these distinctions depend on are not yet differentiated as Appearances: “Experience in its early form, as a centre of immediate feeling, is not yet either self or not-self. It qualifies the Reality, which of course is present in it; and its own finite content indissolubly connects it with the total universe” (1899: 525). Finite ‘centers of feeling’ are not independent from Reality, but rather reflect something like focal points through which the Real expresses itself.⁷³

While ‘feeling’ is admittedly the closest we can get to the Real, as finite subjects stuck in relational thinking, we do not grasp the Real itself; we cannot comprehend the ‘how’ or ‘why’ with respect to the dispersion of the Real into these relatively existent finite centers of feeling, since this kind of inquiry presupposes the falsity of ‘relational thinking’:

Feeling, on my view (where not simple if it ever is so) combines the two aspects of One and Many so as not to contradict itself nor to be rejected as unintelligible—but this holds only so long and so far as it remains pure and non-relational and non-reflective....I mean that while it is merely itself it makes no claim to be understood. It does not offer itself as intelligible, and so does not at once imply and ignore and admit while in fact refusing to satisfy and frustrating a demand of the intelligence—since there is as yet no question of any How or Why....As soon as you analyze the felt, you so far destroy it as such. And in any attempt to describe it in words, we tend perforce to adopt the attitude of analysis and to surrender ourselves to the necessary form of the discursive understanding and apply in some form the category of Whole and parts (ibid: 362).

Concrete feeling is not, strictly speaking, epistemically accessible at all, insofar as thinking itself depends upon relationality. Bradley admits that the concept of these finite centers of feeling is

⁷³ For similar reasons, temporal relations also reflect mere appearances. That is, finite centers of feeling are not, strictly speaking, temporal, but decidedly *atemporal* qua mere presence, or, as Bradley states, they are “an immediate experience of itself and of the Universe in one....And it has properly no duration through which it lasts. It can contain a lapse and before and after, but these are subordinate. They are partial aspects that fall within the whole, and that, taken otherwise, do not qualify the whole itself. A finite center may indeed be called a duration in the sense of presence. But such a present is not any time which is opposed to past and future. It is temporal in the sense of being itself the positive and concrete negation of time” (1914: 410).

not ‘wholly intelligible’—but he takes them as first-principles in order get to “the nature of that which lies behind objects,” i.e., to elucidate the unity of feeling (ibid: 411). In this sense, a finite center is not an object in the world, but ‘a basis on and from which the world of objects is made.’ Bradley was therefore willing to tolerate certain paradoxes considering the persuasive form of non-dualism that a robust metaphysics of feeling provided.

For our purposes, the vital point is that feeling is non-relational on Bradley’s account. Though feeling can “comprise simply in itself an indefinite amount of difference” (1914: 174), it is *essentially undifferentiated* in its primordial, unreflective state. Bradley (again, much as one might interpret Dharmakīrti) never denies relations can function for the sake of *practical* purposes—but they are not *actually real in the mode whereby they appear as such*: “Relational experience must hence in its very essence be called self-contradictory. Contradiction everywhere is the attempt to take what is plural and diverse as being one and the same, and to take it so (we must add) simply or apart from any ‘how.’ And we have seen that without both diversity and unity the relation experience is lost, while to combine these two aspects it has left to it no possible ‘how’ or way, except one which seems either certainly less or certainly more than what is relational” (1935: 635). If relations were not purely internal or external, Bradley assumed that this simply meant relations didn’t really exist—no binary relational form could account for the experiential unity of feeling. But feeling itself, insofar as it represents the ground of all possible differentiation, must at some level instantiate a real non-relational form of pure being. Epistemically speaking, however, it is noumenally foreclosed to rational investigation and relational judgment.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Much to his credit, Bradley identifies the conceptual keystone without which his entire theoretical edifice crumbles: “To take reality as a relational scheme, no matter whether the relations are ‘external’ or ‘internal,’ seems therefore impossible and perhaps even ridiculous. It would cease to be so *only if the immediacy of feeling could be shown to be merely relational*” (1914: 190 [emphasis mine]). If Bradley had simply taken his core insight that

c. The Force/Content Distinction, Idealism, and Peirce's 'Transitive' Copula

As Russell notes above, there must be some relational copula—a relation that ‘actually relates’ in addition to a relation ‘in itself’—that distinguishes propositional complexes as countable, formal unities from a mere assemblage of disconnected terms. In this manner, the problem of the unity of the proposition directly implicates issues related to the distinction (or lack thereof) between the *force* and *content* of propositional *judgment*. This distinction emerges directly from Frege whose *locus classicus* on the subject reads: “When someone acknowledges something as true, he thus judges...Where there is judging one can always separate out the thought acknowledged as true, and the judging does not belong to this” (1915: 271; cf. (trans. in Travis: 2021)). *Force* therefore signifies the intentional *judgment* or *assertion* that something is true (viz., it is *how* the content is taken by a subject); while *content* represents the propositional *form* of said judgment (viz., it is *what* the proposition is about). The intuition behind the distinction is canonically expressed by Geach, such that it has been dubbed the Frege-Geach Point in the literature on the subject: “A thought may have just the same content whether you assent to its truth or not; a proposition may occur in discourse, now asserted, now unasserted, and yet be recognizably the same proposition” (1965: 449). This means *the exact same* propositional form can occur *unasserted* as the antecedent of a conditional statement (‘if it rains, the road is wet’) and asserted

relations cannot be either purely external or internal at face value, his own theory of ‘feeling’ would have been closer to Peirce or James. Instead, Bradley opts for an uncompromising monism that does not actually follow directly from his own relational conclusions: If the forms of concrete relations are neither internal nor external, *it does not necessarily entail that relations do not exist*. Radical monism *only* follows from this conclusion if one *defines* the sense of relational judgments in terms of a logically binary determination—i.e., *either* strictly internal *or* external. Whether or not this is “certainly less or certainly more than what is relational” depends entirely upon the *kinds* of relations we are willing to admit into a metaphysics of feeling or experience. Indeed, James expresses a similar idea with respect to traditional empiricism: “If empiricism had only been radical and taken everything that comes without disfavor, conjunction as well as separation, each at its face value, the results would have called for no such artificial correction”.

as the minor premise that distinguishes the antecedent within a modus ponens argument (“it is raining. Therefore, the road is wet.”)⁷⁵ In order to avoid an equivocation that would invalidate the validity of modus ponens, in other words, the content must presumably *be the same* when occurring in its forceless context *and* as asserted in a propositional judgment. For Frege, then, the clauses of a conditional are unasserted propositions, and propositions are ‘the forceless contents of forceful acts.’

Frege’s well-known solution to propositional unity in the *Grundgesetze* (1893) invokes the related logical distinction between “saturated” and “unsaturated” expressions. The former refer to determinate formal referents of sentences and singular terms (arguments); they correspond to “complete,” autonomously intelligible logical expressions. Alternatively, predicates are types of entities whose sense is referentially dependent. In this sense, they resemble logically “incomplete” mathematical functions, for they bear the kind of indeterminacy of expressions which take objects as arguments and relate them to a determinate value.⁷⁶ Similarly, propositional unity as achieved through the fundamental indeterminacy of the predicate expression, a conceptual form that necessarily depends upon some ‘saturated’ object to give it a determinate value. On Frege’s account, Russell is incorrect to attribute the means of propositional unity strictly to a categorematic component of sentential *content*, rather than the

⁷⁵ For this reason, Frege believed on practical grounds that the interrogative statements motivating science and mathematics require the force/content distinction: “A judgment is often preceded by questions. A mathematician will formulate a theorem before he can prove it. A physicist will accept a law as a hypothesis in order to test it by experience...Now whatever can be thus posed in a question, we wish to call a content of a possible judgment” (1879-91: 7-8). In other words, for scientific inquiry to proceed, we must be able to think the same thought in two different contexts—first without, and then (after theorems and experimentation) with, assertoric force.

⁷⁶ So, e.g., the grammatical forms “...is a philosopher” and “...admires...” are analogous to the mathematical expression “... \times 5. That is, applying the predicate “... \times 5” to the numeral 3 yields a determinate expression, 15, when the unsaturated expression ‘... \times 5’ becomes a non-relational unity with reference to the determinate object 3. See Klement (2024), Cook (2024), and Bellucci (2014) for an in-depth look at Frege’s theory of ‘saturated’ and ‘unsaturated’ entities, and Shaw (1989) for a relevant comparison with Nyāya.

whole predicate. The upshot is that we cannot determine the sense of a logically dependent referent without the assertoric *force* associated with propositional judgment.

Though the force-content distinction has remained a topic in philosophy of language and mind since the time of Frege, it has recently come under scrutiny in analytic circles (cf. Mras and Schmitz: 2021), in part due to contemporary absolute idealist detractors like Rödl (2018) and Kimhi (2018). These thinkers argue that a proposition cannot bear a determinate truth-value if it is not *unified* through the force of judgment which is an *act* of thought that self-consciously *takes a position vis-à-vis* how things actually *are*. They typically argue that the dualism of the force/content distinction does not, in fact, describe the nature of the transcendental identity between the self-consciousness of judgment and its objective content. Specifically, there are not *two* things judged in ‘*p*’ and ‘*I judge p.*’ Rather, as Rödl gnominically conveys, “the *I judge* is inside what is judged insofar as it is something judged. Or perhaps we should say, the *I judge* pervades what is judged, indicating that there is no possibility of isolating, within what is judged, something that is free from the thought of its being judged. Conversely, as the thought of an act of judgment is nothing other than the judgment, there is no possibility of isolating the act of judgment from what is judged in this act: the thought of a judgment is nothing other than the thought of what is judged in this judgment” (13). In this case, the so-called ‘problem’ of the unity of the proposition dissipates when we recognize that the act that unifies propositional content is not logically distinguishable from the unity of the self-consciousness of the act: propositional content and assertoric force are two sides of a single coin.

On Kimhi’s similar absolute idealist account of cognition, the truth value of a proposition is explained in terms of the *syncategorematic* expressions that convey the modal force of propositional judgment, not its categorematic content. According to Kimhi, syncategorematic

expressions do not actually add anything (i.e., content or form) to the sense of any proposition in which they occur: The assertions “not- p ”, “ a thinks p ”, “ p is true”, and “ p ” itself do not add anything whatsoever to the sense of “ p ”. None of these expressions stands for a real *relation* between force and content, that is, because none of them stands for *anything at all*—they are all syncategorematic expressions whose logical significance is their syntactical transmission of the self-conscious force of judgment.

Accordingly, for Kimhi, the problem with Frege’s ‘partial’ and ‘incomplete’ ‘linguistic turn’ is that “the capacity for engagement with content is supposed to be separable from the capacity for language.” He claims his own form of ‘psycho/logical monism’ (which he also attributes to Wittgenstein) offers a ‘complete’ or ‘full’ linguistic turn’; for here the concrete capacity for intellectual activity cannot be separated from the linguistic self-consciousness of this activity:

In this form of monism, the critical insight—that any unity in consciousness is essentially self-consciousness of that unity—is recognized to coincide with the insight that the consciousness of logical activity is inseparable from the capacity to manifest this activity in language...In other words, the complete linguistic turn lies in a hermeneutic circle: the propositional sign p must be comprehended as negatable, and therefore by reference to the logical unity of the larger whole which consists in the assertions $p, \sim p$; this unity of the whole, in turn, depends on the repeatability of the propositional sign p . The point can be generalized to all logical unities. Monism abolishes the dualist distinction between expressive and logical manifestations through propositional signs in favor of a way of looking at propositional signs in which the logical form itself is, in a sense, expressive...[A] propositional sign display[s], by its syncategorematic form, a way of explicating one’s activity of thinking...From this point of view, we can see propositional signs with different syncategorematic compositions as displaying one act (64-5).

For Kimhi the essence of cognitive activity consists in a reflexive action that metaphorically ‘moves’ between the repeatable content of the propositional sign p and its syncategorematic negation or assertion. The fact that the proposition “ p ” is itself a syncategorematic unity only becomes intelligible once we realize that the sign “ p ” consists in a non-relational ‘fact’ rather than a ‘complex.’ The propositional sign of judgment is only expressive through the reflexive

force of its syncategorematic form: “We can conclude that the logical identity of consciousness is displayed through the syncategorematic form of the propositional sign that assertorically manifests it” (ibid.). But since the syncategorematic form associated with force is not a general concept, “such an explication is not a determination of consciousness through a predicate...The propositional sign displays the logical identity of one’s thinking as a whole, as a unity, without necessarily depicting or mirroring a component of this unity” (ibid.).⁷⁷

The basic relational upshot is that propositional unity is not any sort of objective *relation* between a distinct subject and predicate, but rather given in the logical identity of force and content. In this case, even though “the act of judging *p* is internally related to the use of the propositional sign *p* in not-*p*” (65), this internal ‘relation’ of action to content represents a purely analytic or formal sort in regard to the predicative form of the propositional *sign*: Here “saturation is *not a relation between two relata*, and thus the unity of the proposition cannot be associated with a relation. *Instead, saturation must be described as a formal relation or as a nonrelational nexus*” (137). Accordingly, for Kimhi, the conceptual activity associated judgment makes no appeal to general relational notions of causality or process: “A judgment, as an *activity*...is neither a product nor a process, but is instead the very maintaining of one’s conscious agreement with oneself concerning something. This understanding of judgment as an activity, in the sense of self-maintenance, is said to capture Kant’s notion of judgment as a synthesis, i.e., a combination” (74).

⁷⁷ Accordingly, Kimhi distinguishes between “the literal notion of the syncategorematic” from the familiar “semantic notion of the syncategorematic” (79). The traditional contrast between “categorematic” and “syncategorematic” expressions maps onto Aristotle’s hylomorphic division of form and matter; an expression is syncategorematic if it indicates *how* the proposition is composed rather than *what* enters in its composition (79-80). But the ‘literal’ notion of “syncategorematic” means the expression cannot be a constitutive component of a predicative proposition *at all* (81). This idea is interesting relative to James’s argument below that syncategorematic expressions actually denote concrete feelings, and thus possess concrete referents—albeit ones not specifiable in terms of any determinate propositional expressions.

Like Whitehead, then, Kimhi acknowledges that Kant’s critical insight is that experiential unity represents a kind of *sui generis activity*, or “constructive functioning” (Whitehead 2010 [1929]: 156). However, like the monistic idealists Blanshard and Bradley, he views the internal relations that characterize this activity, not in terms of a temporal *process*, but in the purely reflexive comprehension of signs as a kind of conceptual ‘self-maintenance.’ That is, the internal relation between the self-consciousness of judgment and its objective content can be wholly identified with the surface sign ‘*p*’ itself—at least insofar as we can only reflexively understand and refer to ‘*p*’ in some irreducibly *syncategorematic* context. To the extent that Kimhi identifies the relational factors that provide propositional unity strictly with logical necessity of a purely analytic or *a priori* sort, his project becomes open to familiar *empirical* critiques of radical monism that apparently deny the meaning/existence of external relations or objective intuition altogether; in this absolute idealist scheme, what ultimately determines the appearance of the propositional sign is not anything other than the conceptual and linguistic capacities of the reflexive subject.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ For relevant critiques of Kimhi and Rödl, see Hanna (2018; 2020). Hanna, like Peirce, is concerned about the pure internality of the ‘truth-assessment’ of judgment entailed by the absolute idealism of thinkers like Kimhi and Rödl. According to Hanna, it is true that the reflexive unity of force and content avoids the Bradleyan regress that ensues when, for instance, the truth value of a judgment is established *independently* of the actual *act* of judgment. (Namely, if the assessment of the truth of a judgement were *external* to the act of judging, then the assessment of the truth of any judgement J1 would demand yet *another* judgement J2 to establish J1’s correspondence to the real world; but, by the same reasoning, there would have to be yet another judgement J3 to establish that J2 corresponds to the correspondence between J1 and the real world, and so on). But this solution comes at the cost of a rather solipsistic idealism that potentially denies objective criteria to formally adjudicate the existential status of propositional content independently of the force of subjective judgment. For Hanna, we can easily get out of the vicious regress “simply by positing *an independent source of human cognitive-semantic access to the real world, which is essentially non-conceptual and non-judgement-based*, hence also not based on thinking (believing, etc.), since that activity is essentially conceptual and judgement-based in nature. This independent source is what Kant calls ‘intuition’ (*Anschaung*)—or in contemporary cognitive-semantic terms, direct perception and direct reference” (2018). While the empirical orientation of Peirce would definitely commit him to the reality of Hanna’s non-conceptual intuitions, we will see in Chapter III that Peirce would vehemently deny that these objective intuitions could ever *appear* in judgment without being conceptually mediated in some fashion—they thus do not qualify as ‘direct’ reference or ‘pure’ perception of a mind-independent reality, but must always be *continuous* with the conceptual act of judgment.

Peirce, on the other hand, offers a more processual and empirical solution to the problem of Bradley's regress apropos the unity of the proposition⁷⁹—one that maintains a basic relational realism, but still also finally commits to an idealist position. It involves his notion of a 'continuous predicate', which he expounds in a variety of texts.⁸⁰ According to Peirce, a continuous predicate is what remains after one fully unpacks the semantic content of a predicate through a process of 'hypostatic abstraction.' This cognitive process turns "predicates from being signs that we think or think *through*, into being subjects thought of" (CP 4.549, 1906). In other words, it is the operation by which "a transitive element of thought is made substantive, as in the grammatical change of an adjective into an abstract noun" (CP 2.364, 1902). Hence, the principal innovation of Peirce *vis-à-vis* the unity of the proposition was to recognize the logical form of the copula as a constitutively *transitive* form of mental signification, rather than the mere abstract designation of a categorematic term or general property.

To one familiar with Peirce's semiotic categories, his recourse to the implicate transitive function of the copula speaks to his axiomatic commitment to three basic metaphysical categories.⁸¹ Here is one representative definition from Peirce: "The First is that whose being is simply in itself, not referring to anything nor lying behind anything. The Second is that which is what it is by force of something to which it is second. The Third is that which is what it is owing to things between which it mediates and which it brings into relation to each other" (1887: EP 1:248; CP 1.356). In pragmatic semiotics, 'Firsts' are broadly akin to the Kantian notion of 'intuition' or contemporary notions of external 'sense-data.' For Peirce, they correspond to the

⁷⁹ Peirce states his version of the problem in an unpublished 1906 manuscript: "One of the puzzling questions of logic is how concepts can be combined. If two concepts, A and B, are to be compounded, there must, it would seem, be needed a combining concept C,—a sort of cement joined at once to A and to B. But then the question recurs, How is C to be compounded with A, and how with B?" (R 292:36, c.1906). For a comprehensive account of Peirce's theory of propositional unity and its relation to Frege and Russell, see Bellucci (2014), who I follow closely here.

⁸⁰ Cf. e.g., SS 71–72, 1908; SS 198, 1906; NEM 3:885–6, 1908; R 611:11, 1908; R 339:332r, 1908; CP 8.352, 1908.

⁸¹ Although Peirce's views on many matters changed over time, he adopted a basic triadic metaphysics throughout his career.

vague, non-conceptual, monad of pure immediate feeling—viz., the inexpressible and indefinable ‘object’ of the sign. ‘Seconds’ denote a sign’s acquisition of representational determinacy in binary opposition to everything else. It characterizes linguistic predication, the sequence of cause and effect, as well as the hæcceity of particulars. ‘Thirds’ are the implicate reflexive ‘interpretant’ of the sign; it *takes* Firsts *as* Seconds. Since ‘all thought is in signs’ for Peirce, Thirdness represents the irreducible mediation involved in the practical process of knowledge formation. Here, the empirical appearance of a sign follows the general ‘logic of events’ where immediate feeling progressively attains representational determinacy according to the spontaneous application of laws, or general regularities, which legislate the practical relevance of universal referents—viz., formal continuums—to its own habits of action⁸² (we will discuss this triadic picture of semiosis further in section 5).

Accordingly, the transitive dimension of the predicate denotes the mediation of the propositional sign, whereby it feels itself (‘Firstness’) to have attained explicit conceptual determinacy (‘Secondness’) through an implicit mediation with other signs (‘Thirdness’). In this sense, Peirce agrees with Frege that propositional signs attain conceptual determinacy—and thus truth values—through some assertoric ‘force’ of mental action. Unlike Frege, though, the subject and predicate are both classified as types of signs, and thus both are initially felt as indeterminate, ‘unsaturated’ objects with a mutually determinative structure: “There is but one general way in which their Composition can possibly take place; namely, each component must be indeterminate in some respect or another; and in their composition each determines the other”

⁸² Since the lawfulness of a predicative concept pertains to the behavior of an object into the indefinite future, Thirdness implies a temporal realism *vis-à-vis* general indeterminacy that a pure trope theory of qualities does not address: “The first is a positive qualitative possibility, in itself nothing more. The second is an existent thing without any mode of being less than existence, but determined by that first. A third has a mode of being which consists in the Secondnesses that it determines, the mode of being of a law, or concept. Do not confound this with the ideal being of a quality in itself. A quality is something capable of being completely embodied. A law never can be embodied in its character as a law except by determining a habit. A quality is how something may or might have been. A law is how an endless future must continue to be” (1903: CP 1.536-537).

(CP 4.572, 1906).⁸³ On the other hand, Peirce also agreed with the early Russell that every proposition is comprised of a relation, a subject, and a predicate. Furthermore, we must actually *comprehend* each component of the proposition as a *possible* logical subject to determine the semantic content of the proposition.

According to Peirce, “the proper way in logic is to take as the subject whatever there is of which sufficient knowledge cannot be conveyed in the proposition itself, but collateral experience on the part of its interpreter is requisite” (1908: NEM 3:885). As he explains, “the statement, ‘Cain killed Abel’ cannot be fully understood by a person who has no further acquaintance with Cain and Abel than that which the proposition itself gives. Of course, Abel is as much a subject as Cain. But further, the statement cannot be understood by a person who has no collateral acquaintance with killing. Therefore, Cain, Abel, and the relation of killing are the subjects of this proposition” (SS 70). When everything that is possibly given in the mediation of collateral experience has been removed from the predicate, we eventually wind up with a pure logical form whose relational properties are analogous to those of a formal continuum—that is, something infinitely divisible. So, e.g., using Peirce’s own example (SS 70), “Cain kills Abel” becomes “Cain is to Abel in the relation of killing” which, in turn, becomes “Cain is to Abel in relation to the relation of killing,” and so on. But the latter predicate is clearly redundant, insofar as “__ is to __ in relation to __ of __” simply means “__ is to __ in relation to __.” Thus, when we attempt to render the transitive form of the predicate itself into a self-standing logical subject,

⁸³ Technically, according to Peirce’s semiotic scheme, these are different kinds of signs: a subject represents an ‘index,’ while a predicate represents an ‘icon’ (CP 2.309–322: 1903): “Indefiniteness is of two kinds, indefiniteness as to what is the Object of the Sign, and indefiniteness as to its Interpretant, or indefiniteness in Breadth and in Depth” (CP 4.543: 1906). These details need not concern us; the point is that both are initially given as conceptually indefinite or ‘unsaturated’ to some degree. We will see in that this semiotic framework goes along with Peirce’s argument against the ‘intuition’ of nominalists; we have no ‘direct’ unmediated ‘acquaintance’ with perceptual objects or logical subjects, because all thought is in signs, and all signs are mediated.

there comes a point where it inevitably results in practically identical semantic content—i.e., the general fact of ‘being related to.’

Given the infinitely divisible property of the predicate, Peirce intends to make a formal analogy with the Cantorian properties of a continuous line.⁸⁴ In particular, every extended ‘part’ of a continuous line is itself continuous, and each extensive part of those parts is equally a continuous line, *ad infinitum*. Bellucci explains that “a continuous predicate is analyzable only into parts that are homogeneous with the whole, so that in the logical analysis of a propositional sign there is a point beyond which nothing new is reached but redundancy...[A]lthough we may “fancy” to hypostatically abstract a continuous predicate, we see that it enters intact into the components into which we believe that we have analyzed it” (2014: 211).⁸⁵ Thus, while Russell’s ‘relation’ must play two inconsistent roles in the proposition (viz., brick and mortar), Peirce argues that when a verbal relation is ‘hypostatically abstracted’ into a logical subject, this does not prevent it from *remaining* the source of propositional unity, for no matter how many times we try to remove the relation from the predicate, it “continues in the predicate just the same” (SS 71, 1908). Russell was therefore correct to insist that we must comprehend all constituents of a

⁸⁴ Peirce’s views on the nature of continuity shifted over the course of his career: During his earlier Cantorian phase, Peirce believed that this property was identical to the property of having parts all of which have parts of the same kind; for any segment of continuous line is itself continuous in the same fashion. He later abandoned this view and came to believe only the property of infinite divisibility defines real continuity (Potter and Shields: 1977; 6.168 PM 138: 1903). This also likely dovetailed with Peirce’s later abandonment of mathematical analysis of the nature of continuity and turn to more phenomenological and semiotic approaches (Ochs 1981: 253; 1998: ch.7; cf. Arnold 2021: 83).

⁸⁵ See Gaskin (2008) for a comprehensive treatment of the problem in Frege and Russell and a similarly Peircean solution. He argues that Bradley’s regress, though it attends any attempt to supply propositional unity, is *itself* “ultimately constitutive of that unity” (353). According to Gaskin, the unity of proposition equates to asking: What remains when we omit all constituent expressions of a sentence and leaves the feature of the sentence that distinguishes it from a mere list? Gaskin argues we are left with a ‘logical copula’ whose logical role essentially involves having a referent. But since all propositional constituents “have equal referential rights,” we are led to a familiar regress. Gaskin’s solution is to bite the bullet and admit that the referent of the logical copula is an infinite—but determinate—structure implied in its own referential function. This infinite structure progressively unfolds as we follow Bradley’s regress down each step of its bottomless well. “It follows now that far from being vicious, it is exactly the generation of Bradley’s regress that guarantees our ability to say anything at all. Bradley’s regress emerges not as an embarrassment, something to be circumvented by careful legislation, but as the metaphysical ground of the unity of the proposition” (345). Interestingly, Peirce comes to a similar conclusion apropos the problem of the unity of the proposition in the theory of the “continuous predicate.”

proposition through some form of direct ‘acquaintance’; but, given the Thirdness of all signs, no acquaintance with objects is ‘direct’ for Peirce. The determinate phase of a sign always represents the outcome of an interpretive activity on the part of the sign itself. The unity of the propositional sign does not come about through the supposedly ‘dual-nature’ of the verbal *noun*, but the implicit continuity of the semiotic process, whereby the meaning of a sign just *consists in* the reflexive ‘thinking through’ an implicit background of experiential notions—viz., those which are not explicitly represented *in* the propositional sign, but whose comprehension is still required to determine its semantic content.

If the reflexive comprehension of propositional unity requires some intuitive acquaintance with the continuity of thirdness, though, Peirce would take issue with Kimhi’s and Rödl’s steadfast affirmation of the pure rational identity of force and content; that is, the logical copula still refers to a real *relation* between two categorically different modes of being (i.e., Firsts and Seconds) and thus cannot be considered a purely formal identity, or a ‘non-relational nexus.’ For Peirce, propositional assertion “is not a pure act of signification [but] an exhibition of fact that one subjects oneself to the penalties visited on a liar if the proposition asserted is not true” (SS 34). In other words, signification takes into account a temporal landscape of future action such that the reflexive nature of a sign can never simply *coextend* with the ‘horizontal’ surface of the propositional sign itself; it requires an implicate temporal, or ‘vertical’ depth of collateral experience, concepts, and beliefs whereby the interpreter can reflexively *take normative responsibility* for the content of judgment with respect to their own actions moving forward into the indefinite future.⁸⁶ Misak puts it thusly: “[H]ard on the heels of the thought that

⁸⁶ Misak, summarizing Peirce’s view of truth, writes (2016: 28): “Once we see that truth and assertion are intimately connected—once we see that to assert that *p* is true is to assert *p*—we can look to our practices of assertion to see what commitments they entail.” Compare Brandom’s characteristically *normative* interpretation of judgment in Kant: “*Spontaneity*, in Kant’s usage, is the capacity to deploy concepts. Deploying concepts is making judgments

truth is internally related to assertion comes the thought that truth is also internally related to inquiry, reasons, evidence, and standards of good belief. If we unpack the commitments we incur when we assert, we find that we have imported all these notions” (2016: 28).

In sum, Peirce would agree that ‘truth’ only has meaning indexed to particular propositional judgments; viz., the truth-value of a propositional sign is not autonomously intelligible independently of its reflexive or assertoric force. But the radical ‘psycho/logical monism’ or ‘absolute idealism’ endorsed by Rödl and Kimhi hinges on a logical form of internal relatedness, or strict identity, between the objective mode of being and the subjective mode of reflexive judgment. The appearance of syncategorematic expressions associated with the modal force of propositional unity do not *merely* signify the reflexive self-consciousness of the sign, then, but also evince the signs own active, temporal determination *through* an implicit ‘space of reasons.’ Peirce would hence urge that *all signs*—not merely propositional signs associated with determinate truth values—appear in virtue of a *continuous* form of mental activity that mediates between empirical perception and conceptual judgment. In this respect, there is nothing *metaphysically* special about the conceptual unity of the propositional sign; for the process that unifies perceptions into terms, and terms into sentences, and sentences into inferences, and inferences into syllogisms, etc., is reflexively experienced as a continuous temporal movement of a total semiotic event.

4. James and Radical Empiricism

and endorsing practical maxims. Doing that, we have seen, is *committing* oneself, undertaking a distinctive sort of discursive *responsibility*. The positive freedom exhibited by exercises of our spontaneity is just this normative ability: the ability to commit ourselves, to become responsible. It can be thought of as a kind of *authority*: the authority to bind oneself by conceptual norms. That it is the authority to *bind* oneself means that it involves a correlative kind of *responsibility* [...] It is the responsibility to integrate the commitment one has undertaken with others that serve as *reasons* for or against it” (2009: 59). We discuss Brandom’s own pragmatic semantics, and its relationship to freedom, in more detail in the concluding chapter.

a. The Transitive and Substantive Phases of Experience

Unlike Bradley and Russell, James's relational metaphysics is rooted in his empirical training as a doctor and keen phenomenological analysis of the temporal structure of lived, embodied experience.⁸⁷ Indeed, this focus on relations *as experienced* arguably represents the main throughline from his early work in the *Principles of Psychology* to his writings on radical empiricism. In his later writings we find a version of relational realism inspired by Bergson that is, in principle, hostile to the rationalist endeavor to describe the continuity of concrete experience with recourse to any logical abstractions. While Peirce's triadic metaphysics therefore represents a broadly categorical approach to philosophy, James goes in the other direction, where the experience of transitive modes of consciousness casts the entire rationalist project into doubt. If the synthetic unity of experience is regarded as logically intelligible in terms of anything like a static symbolic sign or representational 'picture', philosophy has failed to describe the continuous nature of relationality as *phenomenally* given—viz., not, strictly speaking, as *epistemically* given in the conceptual determinacy of perceptual judgment.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ On placing James's view on relations in the context of theories of British empiricists and German experimental psychologists, see Madden and Madden (1978).

⁸⁸ This insistence on phenomenological givenness should be distinguished from the kind of epistemic givenness that represents the object of Sellars's influential critique. For Sellars aimed at nominalist empiricists who had to theoretically bridge the intelligibility gulf between the sort of determinate intentional content relevant in the logical space of reasons—viz., something that could stand in inferential relations and thereby provide intelligible evidence or justification for some belief—with the kinds of causal particulars that possess the immediacy of a '*sense datum*' (Marion 2012: 29). In other words, the internal relations of inference between abstract concepts and the externally related datum of sense perception. But James is concerned not with first objects given as 'epistemologically valid atoms of evidence,' but rather the concrete relations of *feeling* that intrinsically structure the modal appearance of phenomenal *events*. Hence the relevant sense of intentional 'givenness' for James does not have any unique claim to the kinds of intersubjective disclosure that could provide evidence for one state of affairs over another. Accordingly, Delwin Brown remarks that, while "radical empiricism does lead us to the important supposition that there is a 'givenness'...[it] has no special utility with respect to the adjudication of competing truth claims. In the assessment of competing knowledge claims, the radical empiricist is no more able than anyone else to appeal to an experiential given undefiled by an interpretive framework that includes in particular the grid imposed by linguistic conventions" (1994: 170, fn.103). In summarizing the upshot of these characterizations of givenness in radical empiricism for James, Arnold (2021: 71) concludes that "[p]henomenological considerations do not figure in James's radical empiricism by way of answering epistemological questions; his point, indeed, is precisely to refuse the priority of

We can begin with his well-known chapter on “The Stream of Thought” in his *Principles of Psychology*, where he commences by saying that his approach adheres to the characteristically phenomenological commitment to “study the mind from within.” Following this methodology, among the primary properties of mind he identifies is its ever-changing and continuous structure; although consciousness is in constant change and “no state once gone can recur and be identical with what it was before...[it] does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as ‘chain’ or ‘train’ do not describe it fitly as it presents itself in the first instance. It is nothing jointed; it flows” (230-39). Here we can see that James’s phenomenological stance towards mental life distinguishes his empiricism from that of Hume, who regarded the mind as constituted wholly by distinct and disconnected “perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity” (1739: 252-3).⁸⁹ For similar reasons, James strongly rebukes the sensationalist empiricism of Locke, who assumed that ‘simple innate ideas’ correspond to the discrete building blocks of mind and experience. According to James, even the ‘simple sensations’ of the traditional empiricists emerge in the context of “discriminative attention, pushed often to a very high degree,” which are abstracted from the “teeming multiplicity of objects and relations” that constitute the metaphorical ‘stream’ of consciousness (224).

In an exemplary passage from the *Principles*, James contends that the felt continuity between a series of experiences must be granted the same degree of experiential validity as the determinate impressions that supply the substantive terms in this series. Or, in other words, the

such questions.” See also, in this regard, Alston’s (2002) phenomenological critique of Sellars, where he argues that the myth of the given does not repudiate “cognitive components of perception that [are] non-conceptual” (73).

⁸⁹ Based on this idea, James often argues that Hume is a paradigmatic relational eliminativist with respect to *ontological* relations. Some have claimed, e.g., that Hume’s theories about causality are independent of his relational psychologism (cf. Church: 1941). But Hume did, in fact, reduce the *impression* of causal *relations* to more primitive psychological notions. Alan Hausman writes, “Hume’s point is that there is no primitive relation of causality in *rerum natura*...Hume does not claim that the causal relation is ‘nothing.’ He calls it a philosophical relation. *As a relation* among objects it is *not primitive*. To put the point linguistically, ‘cause’ is defined in terms of the relational predicates ‘contiguous to,’ ‘immediately prior to’ and...‘resemblance.’ That is all there is to the relation of cause as a philosophical relation” (1967: 266). To this extent, Hume agrees with Dharmakīrti.

contrastive *relations* of temporal experience are *felt* to be just as ‘substantial’ *within* experience as the objective nature of the *terms*:

Into the awareness of the thunder itself the awareness of the previous silence creeps and continues; for what we hear when the thunder crashes is not thunder pure, but thunder-breaking-upon-silence-and-contrasting-with-it. Our feeling of the same objective thunder, coming in this way, is quite different from what it would be were the thunder a continuation of previous thunder. The thunder itself we believe to abolish and exclude the silence; but the *feeling* of the thunder is also a feeling of the silence as just gone; and it would be difficult to find in the actual concrete consciousness of man a feeling so limited to the present as not to have an inkling of anything that went before (241).

In other words, the clear-and-distinct parts of experience—i.e., those theoretically amenable to propositional forms of reflexive judgment—always already practically appear *as indexed to* particular sub-intentional cognitions that outstrip the very representational form they help constitute. Accordingly, James argues that the abstract nature of thought and language inevitably imposes a certain structure onto experience that obscures these internal relations of felt continuity *between* perception and language; “[L]anguage works against our perception of the truth. We name our thoughts simply, each after its thing, as if each knew its own thing and nothing else. What each really knows is clearly the thing it is named for, with dimly perhaps a thousand other things. It ought to be named after all of them, but it never is” (ibid.).⁹⁰

In explicating the constructive role of relations in experience, James distinguishes between two phenomenal states in the stream of consciousness: the ‘substantive parts’ of experience that consist of clear-and-distinct perceptions amenable to predicative judgment, and the ‘transitive parts’ that indicate the vague and inchoate feelings of relation between these substantive parts (243-4). Transitive parts are ‘difficult to discern for what they really are’ because the essentially *felt* nature of the continuity of these relations *ipso facto* escapes the

⁹⁰ Among the dimly perceived ‘thousand other things’ is the ever-changing condition, attitude, and position of the body. James’s focus on the embodiment of mind is a primary reason that perception cannot consist of a disconnected succession of ‘simple sensations,’ or that mental content could be reduced to a discrete assortment of ‘simple ideas’—it ignores the active function of the body and the continuity of feeling in perception, which is intrinsically structured by futural purpose and its mediated valuation relative to the actual world.

contentful states of reflexive cognition; to take their transitivity seriously as *given* is precisely to foreclose a determinate analysis of their nature, much like the floaters in one's eye that move as one tries to vainly focus upon them. It is this inherent conceptual evasiveness of transitive experience, according to James, that has led traditional empiricist and rationalists alike (or 'Sensationalists and Intellectualists' in this chapter) to deny that relations correspond to real percepts or feelings.⁹¹ For James, the philosophically misguided attempts to *explain* knowledge of continuity on the basis of abstract ideas alone is due to superficial forms of introspection that automatically dismiss the transitive dimension of reflexive experience.⁹²

James incisively points out that this characteristic philosophical withdrawal from the transitive dynamics of concrete experience is even apparent in our dismissive ontological treatment of the logical connectives and the syncategorematic expressions of language. For classical empiricists typically regard the intrinsic semantic dependence of conjunctive expressions like 'and' as a sign of their *objective* meaninglessness—they have no corresponding concrete referent because they cannot be represented as a self-standing categorematic determination. But the concrete semantic significance of transitive relations is self-evident,

⁹¹ In particular, while the empiricists simply "deny the reality of relations" because they can find nothing nameable that corresponds to these transitive parts, the rationalists withhold relation from sensible feeling, and attribute the capacity for relation to something "utterly superior to any fact of sensibility whatever" (e.g., the transcendental ego of Kant or the Absolute of the idealists) (*ibid.*). This is evocative of the atomism and monistic idealism of Russell and Bradley, respectively.

⁹² In contemporary philosophy, thinkers of a behaviorist and functionalist stripe, like Daniel Dennett (1991: 356) and Marvin Minsky (1985: 257), still epitomize this tendency to neglect the transitive parts of experience and thus relegate real continuity to illusion or *mere* appearance. This is the upshot of Dennett's 'intentional stance,' wherein behaviors are predicted by treating agents *as though* they harbored contentful states like beliefs, desires, etc., but such intentional states merely reflect physical/brain states that have no genuine experiential counterpart: "You seem to think there's a difference between thinking (judging, deciding, being of the heart-felt opinion) that something seems pink to you and something *really seeming* pink to you. But there is no difference. There is no such phenomenon as really seeming over and above the phenomenon of judging in one way or another that something is the case" (Dennett: 364). From this perspective, the apparent continuity of experience is not an intrinsic feature of consciousness, let alone "one of its most striking features" (365). Chalmers describes this functionalist account of consciousness as a method that replaces the phenomenological *seeming* of things with "a psychological sense of 'seem' in which for things to seem a certain way is for us to be disposed to judge that they are that way" (1996: 190). But, as he continues to argue, such an approach concerns itself with judgments *about* phenomena rather than with the nature of experiences themselves as phenomenally given—a line of argument with which James would doubtless concur.

James suggests, precisely in the synthetic *feelings* that attend our practical *use* of such expressions:

There is not a conjunction or a preposition, and hardly an adverbial phrase, syntactic form, or inflection of voice, in human speech, that does not express some shading or other of relation which we at some moment actually feel to exist between the larger objects of our thought. We ought to say a feeling of *and*, a feeling of *if*, a feeling of *but*, and a feeling of *by*, quite as readily as we say a feeling of *blue* or a feeling of *cold*. Yet we do not: so inveterate has our habit become of recognizing the existence of the substantive parts alone, that language almost refuses to lend itself to any other use (ibid: 245-6).

Somewhat like Kimhi, then, James suggests that syncategorematic expressions (like prepositions and logical connectives) are not syntactically empty signs, devoid of any corresponding experiential content, but convey *concrete information* with respect to *how* consciousness is reflexively apprehending the world. But James emphasizes that such expressions can only obtain a meaningful sense in the transitive (viz., continuous) context of embodied discursive practices—not just through some purely formal identity with the syncategorematic expression of a *proposition*.⁹³ “The truth is that large tracts of human speech are nothing but *signs of direction* in

⁹³ This description of some relational forms as intrinsic to a way of life—rather than exhaustively capturable in propositional terms—represents one way to interpret the movement from the early to later Wittgenstein. In the Wittgenstein of the *Tractatus*, for instance, it is clear that the purely formal, or timeless nature, of internal relations reduce to the ontological ‘terms’ of propositions-*qua*-pictorial facts. As for the latter Wittgenstein, the situation is more complicated. Mácha expresses this ambiguity when he ultimately finishes his own book with a nod to Wittgenstein’s ideal logical world where philosophers recognize the false reifications of internal relations, and always seek to redescribe them in *non*-relational terms. He believes that this reduction would ‘make the language-game more plausible’, where *plausible* here basically means ‘in accord with the true unreality of internal relations.’ Yet, he also admits in an earlier chapter that internal relations, in particular for the Wittgenstein of *On Certainty*, come to be associated with behaviors not strictly confined to the expressive capacities of any given language-game—rather, these relations are expressed in the behavioral conditions *necessary for the possibility of any language-game*: “Internal relations are embodied in the rules of our language. We can look at internal relations from the inner perspective and conceive of them as a system or rather as systems. Complex algebraic structures like lattices, rings, monoids, groups, groupoids, loops, or categories are examples of such systems where the inner perspective is more important... Internal relations are, however, also constituted by human practices. Shared human practices are models or vehicles for conveying internal relations... The tendency in Wittgenstein’s thinking to view internal relations as consisted by our praxis culminates in his final writings [*On Certainty*]... At least some internal relations are rooted not in this or that language-game; they are rooted deeper in our pre-linguistic behavior such ‘that a language-game is based on it, that it is the prototype of a way of thinking and not the result of thought’” (139). Mácha concludes that “internal relations may be expressions of our human form of life, of general facts about our human nature” (ibid). If such internal relations genuinely *exist*, they cannot be ‘straightened out’ into any intransitive case—they refer to an embodied framework of activity that logically precedes the emergence of any language-game, i.e., any system that could in principle hash out the denotational properties of grammatical relations. We could, then, interpret the latter Wittgenstein as having a view of internal relations more hospitable to James’s

thought, of which direction we nevertheless have an acutely discriminate sense, though no definite sensorial image plays any part in it whatsoever” (252-3). Since we manifestly possess the reflexive capacity to recognize the semantic content of syncategorematic expressions—though no categorematic constituents of the proposition could possibly denote our awareness of these transitive feelings—James is effectively suggesting that our reflexive capacity to judge propositional signs depends upon direct first-personal acquaintance with transitive states of pre-conceptual awareness. In other words, the ‘vertical’ depth of the particular feelings that coalesce into the ‘horizontal’ signs of propositional content can never be positively indicated in the substantive phases experience, though consciousness must implicitly recognize their constitutive function in the assertoric force of its own intentional content.

I imagine this attitude is among the reasons that, for James, the problem of the unity of the proposition shouldn’t be the point of departure for relational philosophy, or the attempt to explicate the nature of the unity-in-diversity of concrete experience. For it is still *particular feelings of experience*—not immediate acquaintance with verbal nouns, syncategorematic expressions, a transcendental self, or even triadic signs—that spontaneously bind together the constituents of reflexive judgment. From this perspective, the rational unity of apperception always signifies the *temporal* result of the reflexive application of general concepts to a pluralistic manifold of feelings, which facilitates a phenomenological movement *from* the nascent fringes of indeterminate perception *towards* the clear focus of determinate intentional content. Since a judgment of semantic content is itself always reflexively apprehended *as continuous with* the manifold of embodied perceptions that factor therein, logical empiricists like

‘reformed’ conception of the transcendental status of relational experience. This would not even necessarily be surprising, as James was one of the few philosophers that directly influenced Wittgenstein (cf. Goodman (2007) for an informative history of Wittgenstein’s indebtedness to James.) In any case, the prevailing supposition that Wittgenstein reduced all forms internal relatedness to unreality is by no means a clear-cut issue, particularly in his later work.

Russell, and even Peirce, will only ever describe relations in the tokenized or ‘spatialized’ context of language, which necessarily abstracts *post hoc* from the durational flow of concrete experience. In a more Bergsonian spirit than Peirce, then, James does not present formal arguments in a systematic or categorical fashion to establish a transcendental principle of continuity.⁹⁴ Instead, his work attempts to express—often in poetic and metaphorical terms—the irreducible feeling of ‘transitive’ consciousness from a first-person perspective.

b. Diachronic Unity

James focus on the felt continuity of experience naturally informs his psychological treatment of time in the *Principles*; specifically, between the abstract notion of instantaneous time vs. the lived fact of temporal duration (although he owes much to Bergson in this regard). For if we accept the claim that ‘transitive parts’ are felt *as continuous* with the ‘substantive parts’ of the stream of experience, then the spatialized terms we use to represent reality as a mere succession of externally related parts are always already conceptual late comers onto a constitutively temporal phenomenological scene. In this sense, we are never entitled to separate reflexive

⁹⁴ James, on several occasions, acknowledges his indebtedness to Bergson: “If I had not read Bergson, I should probably still be blackening endless pages of paper privately...the essential contribution of Bergson to philosophy is his criticism of intellectualism. In my opinion he has killed intellectualism definitively and without hope of recovery. I don’t see how it can ever revive again in its ancient Platonizing role of claiming to be the most authentic, intimate, and exhaustive definer of the nature of reality.” According to James, while Bradley and Bergson both “destroy” the notion that *conception* (contra feeling) is essentially a unifying process, Bradley, unlike Bergson, held onto the rationalistic bias that “crude unmediated feelings shall never form a part of ‘truth’” (1910: 30). For further historical details of the relationship between James and Bergson, see Perry (1948: 599-636). Additionally, see Dunham (2022) for an illuminating comparison of James and Bergson on the temporal nature of mental synthesis. Although there are interesting connections between their philosophies, given the mysticism or anti-intellectualism associated with Bergson, Peirce predictably complained that “it is not very grateful to my feelings to be classed along with a Bergson who seems to be doing his prettiest to muddle all distinctions” (Perry: 438). However, the present reception of Bergsonism on contemporary philosophy owes much to its reinvigoration by Deleuze, who set about “aligning Bergson’s sensory-motor schema [from *Matter and Memory*] with the semiosis of Charles Sanders Peirce from *Pragmatism and Pragmaticism* (1903)” (Deamer 2014: 79).

consciousness from temporal action on practical grounds; relational feelings enter wholesale into the intentional awareness of embodied events.⁹⁵

Accordingly, the feeling of diachronic unity cannot be deduced *a priori* from logical principles that operate *post hoc* with respect to a mere succession of discrete causal impressions:

Even though we *were* to conceive the outer successions as forces stamping their image on the brain, and the brain's successions as forces stamping their image on the mind, still, between the mind's own changes *being* successive, and *knowing their own succession*, lies as broad a chasm as between the object and subject of any case of cognition in the world. *A succession of feelings, in and of itself, is not a feeling of succession. And since, to our successive feelings, a feeling of their own succession is added, that must be treated as an additional fact requiring its own special elucidation*, which this talk about outer time-relations stamping copies of themselves within, leaves all untouched (629-30).

These 'outer time-relations' represent the historical tendency to interpret the intelligibility of the temporality of conscious states strictly in terms of external relations between a succession of discrete causal impressions and their inner cognitive representation. But James insists, like Alexander, that this is a manifest fallacy; we will never be able to reconstruct the sensed continuity of concrete experience from an externally related succession of discontinuous causal impressions. For a bare sequence of intrinsically *discontinuous* atomic percepts can never provide the rational basis for a second-order reflexive act to emerge that takes them together *as a* continuous succession.⁹⁶ Hence, the concrete feeling of succession cannot correspond to a fact

⁹⁵ Pred summarizes James's view of the relation between practical action and consciousness as such: "Consciousness functions paradigmatically in experience when we advance toward a goal in activity-situations. For James, consciousness is a function: it is the actual or virtual knowing involved in or capable of being involved in movements from thought to action to feeling to thought. It can guide and accompany action, enabling us to be effective in our worlds, which can only appear to us in accord with our socialized, perceptuo-cognitive capacities and our valuative patterns of interest, needs, and habits of attention" (53). The greater philosophical context for this discussion resides in Kant's observation that thinking and judging are themselves forms of practical action. Therefore, here philosophers like Blackburn (1997) and Korsgaard (1989) are relevant, as they exemplify attempts to leverage this Kantian distinction—viz., between 'thought' as a unified form of action in practical reason and 'thought' as the kind of categorical content amenable to the inferential structures of theoretical reason—to critique reductionist theories of mind on practical grounds (e.g., Parfit (1984)). For these thinkers, "the deliverances of theoretical reasoning are built on a foundation that they are ill-equipped to represent adequately" (Siderits 2015: 89). When put in these terms, James can be regarded as a strong proponent of this characteristically Kantian line of critique.

⁹⁶ This line of argument echoes the well-known Kantian critique of Hume: "Without consciousness that that which we think is the very same as what we thought a moment before, all reproduction in the series of representations would be in vain" (1999: A103). For Kant, Hume's contention that one can break apart consciousness into a

derivable from a mere succession of externally related impressions. At the very least, it is hard to see what a satisfactory explanation of this sort would *look like* in propositional terms without explaining away the experiential nature of the continuity under consideration. For James, this means we cannot reduce knowledge of temporal feelings to autonomously intelligible representations of intrinsically disconnected perceptual data.

As James goes on to explain, the formal distinction between a feeling of succession vs. a mere succession of feelings also entails that empirical experience bears an irreducibly durational structure, for “it is only as parts of this duration-block that the relation of succession of one end to the other is perceived.” The flow of concrete experience does not come in discrete packets, wherein the feeling of temporal passage equates to a *post hoc conceptual inference* based on a successive unfolding of autonomously intelligible perceptions. Instead, durational experience “is from the outset a synthetic datum, not a simple one; and to sensible perception its elements are inseparable, although attention looking back may easily decompose the experience, and distinguish its beginning from its end” (ibid.: 574). We could not recognize the flow of time as a continuous event, in other words, if the *experience* of duration consisted merely in abstract inferences whose grammatical forms presuppose the *post hoc* rendering of this implicit holism into an explicit series of externally related parts.⁹⁷ Thus Bradley, in his strictly *a priori* treatment of relational forms, mistakenly chooses to prioritize an abstract criterion of rational consistency

succession of autonomously intelligible impressions does not entitle one, on that basis, to infer a recognition of their togetherness *as a succession*.

⁹⁷ Husserl’s canonical example of the coherence of melody perhaps best expresses this intuition: We could not *hear* melodies if our present experience did not somehow enfold data from the past and anticipate possibilities for the future. Each new note would be heard completely independently of past notes, which would no longer *exist* at the time that any present note was heard. But they clearly *do exist* as a matter of phenomenological fact, otherwise we could not experience the aesthetic dimension of melody—synchronic harmony perhaps, but not the diachronic harmony of melody (see, in particular, Husserl: 1991).

over the manifest flux of experience without any ‘empirical’ justification.⁹⁸ For a substantive criterion of real relations—i.e., as sorts of universal ‘go-betweens’ or objective referents in their own right—simply does not, and cannot, do explanatory justice to the kinds of *dynamic* relations that *constitute* lived experience.⁹⁹

c. The ‘Multiplicity-in-Union’ of Pure Experience

Although the temporal construction of psychological experience is first articulated in the *Principles*, it clearly continues to inform his later writings on radical empiricism. Indeed, one can characterize the ‘reformed’ realism of James’s later writings as the speculative extension of the phenomenological and temporal analysis of the mind in his *Principles*. For example, in his later metaphysics of pure experience, James describes intentional awareness itself as the culmination of an extensive temporal process whose pure experiential nature is neither wholly subjective nor objective: “Knowledge of sensible realities thus comes to life inside the tissue of experience. It is *made*; and made by relations that unroll themselves in time. Whenever certain intermediaries are given, such that, as they develop towards their terminus, there is experience from point to point

⁹⁸ It is important to note that James does not deny the localized truth of conceptual thinking, much less its manifest utility. But he agrees with Bergson that conceptual thinking, by its very nature, is limited to describing the empirical world in terms of external relationships, as a disjunction of independent, self-subsisting parts. Lamberth remarks that for James, “relations of both continuity and discontinuity factually can in principle be both internal and external to pure experience. By its defining character, then, conceptual thinking is fundamentally unable fully to express this ‘manyness-at-once,’ this saturated complexity that James finds characteristic of the flux of experience as it comes in human life” (181).

⁹⁹ In his writings on radical empiricism, James tells us (likely in reference to someone like Bradley): “Conceptual treatment of perceptual reality makes it seem paradoxical and incomprehensible; and when radically and consistently carried out, it leads to the opinion that perceptual experience is not reality at all, but an appearance or illusion. Briefly, this is a consequence of two facts: First, that when we substitute concepts for percepts, we substitute their relations also. But since the relations of concepts are of static comparison only, it is impossible to substitute them for the dynamic relations with which the perceptual flux is filled. Secondly, the conceptual scheme, consisting as it does of discontinuous terms, can only cover the perceptual flux in spots and incompletely. The one is no full measure of the other, essential features of the flux escaping whenever we put concepts in its place” (1979: 46).

of one direction followed, and finally of one process fulfilled, the result is that their starting point thereby becomes a knower and their terminus an object meant or known” (1904: 57).¹⁰⁰

In the essay that perhaps best encapsulates this non-dualistic position, “A World of Pure Experience”, James presents the doctrine of radical empiricism as a phenomenological and metaphysical claim about relations, respectively: “*the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as ‘real’ as anything else in the system*” (1987: 1160). Elaborating on these claims, he identifies a pragmatic ‘postulate,’ a phenomenological ‘fact,’ and a metaphysical ‘conclusion’:

The postulate is that the only things that shall be debatable among philosophers shall be things definable in terms drawn from experience...The statement of fact is that the relations between things, conjunctive as well as disjunctive, are just as much matters of direct particular experience, neither more so nor less so, than the things themselves. The generalized conclusion is that therefore the parts of experience hold together from next to next by relations that are themselves parts of experience. The directly apprehended universe needs, in short, no extraneous trans-empirical connective support, but possesses in its own right a concatenated or continuous structure (ibid).

This *locus classicus* of radical empiricism communicates something of the innovation that James contributed to relational discourse—specifically, away from a binary conception of abstract relations to an admittance of a complex forms of relation-*qua*-the irreducible unity of temporal feelings (akin to Bergson’s ‘qualitative multiplicity’). James’s focus on the felt continuity between transitive and substantive states, and the associated diachronic unity of temporal experience, becomes the basis for his own relational metaphysics. In this sense, radical

¹⁰⁰ Whether the temporal ‘data’ of experience is *itself* experiential—that is, whether the parts of experience are themselves experiential parts—remains one of the unresolved problems of the unity of consciousness (Brook and Raymond: 2021). In the *Principles*, James rejects the ‘mind-stuff’ thesis according to which “our mental states are composite in structure, made up of smaller states conjoined” (145). For James, inspired by Bergson, this spatialized mereological approach to consciousness does not make sense of the particular unity of diachronic experiences; “we cannot mix feelings as such, though we may mix the objects we feel, and from *their* mixture get new feelings” (157). So, say we have two successive experiences, *a* and *b*, which represent feelings constitutive of experience *c*. For James, *a* and *b*, are superseded wholly by *c*, rather than somehow included as *distinct experiences* within *c*. In the *Pluralistic Universe*, he analogizes; “It is safer...to treat the consciousness of the alphabet as a twenty-seventh fact, the substitute and not the sum of the twenty-six simpler consciousnesses” (1909: 189). Chalmers proposes that we can still describe a conscious state as composed of, or subsumed into, other phenomenal states, without lapsing into simplistic mereological thinking, which should only act as an “aid to intuition rather than a serious ontological proposal” (2003: 40).

empiricism is a metaphysical claim about empirical experience that follows from its durational structure—namely, that it provides no *a priori* grounds to support the notion that *grammatical criteria* can exhaustively express the logical form of every relational form concretely *experienced*, or rather, tokens of relational judgments do not exhaust its objective or general purchase. In doing so, James effectively claims that a nominalist-empiricist theory of radical momentariness is not only psychologically or phenomenologically incoherent, but also empirically unwarranted.¹⁰¹

Yet, what really distinguishes James’s approach is that he does not want to privilege the explanatory ultimacy of *any kind of relations*—he admits the real coordination of both conjunction and disjunction in immediate experience: “Every examiner of the sensible life *in concreto* must see that relations of every sort, of time, space, difference, likeness, change, rate, cause, or what not, are just as integral members of the sensational flux as terms are, and that conjunctive relations are just as true members of the flux as disjunctive relations are” (ibid: 757). This is just to say that James takes all relations, both internal and external, as well as their corresponding relata, at ‘radical’ face value; they are neither more nor less real than the manner in which they appear in the flux. In this sense, we should not deprive ontology of *any kinds* of relational experiences, but insist on ‘radical empirical’ grounds that *it take them all as ‘real’ in precisely the manner they are given*.

The far-ranging implications of this methodological principle are most evident for James when brought to bear on the conjunctive relation of the ‘co-conscious transition,’ wherein “one

¹⁰¹ Whitehead, echoing James and Bergson, suggests that the idea of the point instant is the result of a complex abstract process whereby we attempt to designate durational properties of *nature* with abstract notions for conventional purposes: “Instantaneousness is a complex logical concept of a procedure in thought by which constructed logical entities are produced for the sake of the simple expression in thought of properties of nature. Instantaneousness is the concept of all nature at an instant, where an instant is conceived as deprived of all temporal extension...There is no such thing as nature at an instant posited by sense-awareness. What sense-awareness delivers over for knowledge is nature through a period” (1920: 57).

experience passes into another when both belong to the same self.” This internal relation of continuity is singled out by James, no doubt, because it is the most intimately known relation of all—that is, our spontaneous capacity to recognize the diversity of our own moment-to-moment experience as coming under a unified reflexive description. According to the dictum of radical empiricism, the experience of co-conscious transition means that “change itself” is among the forms of relation immediately experienced; and, by the same dictum, *that* relational fact *must itself* be “taken at its face value, neither less nor more.” This means, namely, to take it “just as we feel it, and not to confuse ourselves with abstract talk about it, involving words that drive us to invent secondary conceptions in order to neutralize their suggestions and to make our actual experience again seem rationally possible” (ibid: 1162-3).

We can gather that this affirmation of irreducibly complex relational forms amounts to an empirical repudiation of the rationalistic premises that justify Bradley and Russell’s shared inference to the effect that change must be metaphysically unreal. The ‘radical’ stance of James’s empiricism, in contrast, would have us come to appreciate that in the concrete embodied phenomenon of co-consciousness, we have a perfectly intelligible sense of continuous change explained away on purely *a priori* grounds. Recall here that Bradley viewed feeling as constitutively *non*-relational because no concrete reality can rationally exemplify both unity and diversity.¹⁰² As Stern summarizes Bradley’s position: When we attempt to understand the unity

¹⁰² Cf. a relevant quote of Bradley in *Appearance and Reality*: “We have seen that the various aspects of experience imply one another, and that all point to a unity which comprehends and perfects them. And I would urge next that the unity of these aspects is unknown. By this I certainly do not mean to deny that it essentially is experience, but it is an experience of which, as such, we have no direct knowledge. We never have, or are, a state which is the perfect unity of all aspects; and we must admit that in their special natures they remain inexplicable. An explanation would be a reduction of their plurality to unity, in such a way that the relation between the unity and the variety was understood. And everywhere an explanation of this kind in the end is beyond us” (414-5). Bradley, in other words, believed that it was precisely due to the *a priori* incompatibility of unity and diversity that philosophy demanded a trans-relational Absolute *beyond* the empirical realm of the finite subject—one where the relational experience of diversity finally resolves into complete unreality in the light of perfect metaphysical unity. Since the Appearance of relations is contradictory upon analysis within the binary relational scheme of general logic, *they cannot be real*.

that we find in our original experience of pre-conceptual feeling, “we conceptualize and analyze the world into different elements, which we can then never re-integrate into the kind of unified picture with which we began, and which then becomes unintelligible to us.” Therefore, we are left with a perspective on the world that “appears contradictory to our intellect, for we can never comprehend how it is that apparently diverse aspects of our experience constitute a unity, due to the limited and oppositional nature of our concepts and modes of thought” (1993: 202-3).

The misguided desire to treat the continuity of experience exhaustively in conceptual terms spurs Bradley’s “desperate trans-conceptual leap,” in which he “assumes beyond the whole ideal perspective an ultimate ‘suprarelational’ and trans-conceptual reality in which somehow the wholeness and certainty and unity of feeling, which we turned our backs on forever when we committed ourselves to the leading of ideas, are supposed to be resurgent in transfigured form; and shows us as the only authentic object of philosophy, with its ‘way of ideas,’ an absolute which ‘can be’ and ‘must be’ and therefore ‘is’” (1910: 31).¹⁰³ Bradley therefore refuses to take seriously the relational unity of concrete experience for the sake of a non-empirical *ideal* of rational unity. In contrast, James favors Bergson, who “turn[s] back towards perception with its transparent multiplicity-in-union, and takes its data integrally up into philosophy, as a kind of material which nothing else can replace” (ibid.: 30). Here the relational unity that characterizes the activity of practical experience demands a relative plurality *at least as real as the unity itself*.¹⁰⁴ Rather than a theoretical aporia to be rationally vanquished, the concrete experience of ‘multiplicity-in-union’ represents the transcendental object of empirical metaphysics.

¹⁰³ Bradley and James had a direct correspondence on their disagreements in a series of letters (cf. Kenna: 1966) This quote from a 1910 essay on Bergson is a fleshing-out of a persistent theme in these letters. As far as I can tell, Bradley’s letters are not published or extant.

¹⁰⁴ Bradley objected: “If relations are fully co-ordinate parts of experience, they are substantial entities, and one still has to show how they do the job of relating” (McHenry: 81). In other words, if relations are as equally valid as the terms themselves—i.e., they have the same basic ontological status—they would have the same dual-nature as relations and terms, and thus would need their own relations, *ad infinitum*. Bradley thus felt his dilemma is still not

5. Peirce on Nominalism and Idealism

a. Against Intuition

As with all systematic thinkers, getting a foothold in Peirce's 'architectonic' system can be difficult, for it encompasses an array of issues in logic, philosophy of science, metaphysics, semiotics, ethics, and even aesthetics.¹⁰⁵ I obviously do not intend to give a comprehensive account of Peirce's systematic philosophy; I will limit myself to those topics I deem most relevant for the present study, while also anticipating a comparison with Pratyabhijñā in the 5th and 6th chapters. Still, despite his sophisticated and protean views on many issues, it is nevertheless fair to say that Peirce viewed the realism vs. nominalism debate of medieval scholasticism as the centerpiece of philosophical disputation throughout his career.¹⁰⁶ For Peirce, most other issues are ultimately nitpicking affairs that run downstream from the divergence over whether, and how, abstract concepts are 'real.' He even dramatically pathologizes nominalism in various writings, e.g., as a 'disease' 'disgraceful,' 'philistine,' 'monstrous,' 'a deadly poison to

adequately met. But this argument misses the most critical insight of James, which is a distinction between relations as merely "external go-betweens," or logical connectives that join substantial terms *A* to *B* as some third independent term *R*, and *particular feelings* of continuity where relations themselves are *constitutive of the 'terms.'* In other words, for James, the fundamental question that leads to Bradley's regress ("how do relations relate?") presupposes a category error, in which predicative relations are understood in the same abstract sense as the supposedly substantive terms. Bradley overlooks the possibility of simply taking the relational constitution of experience as 'real' *in precisely the manner given*. Despite his purported commitment to feeling, then, Bradley falsely imagines that experienced moments are akin to substantial *objects* with secondary properties that inevitably require a *further kind* of unification, or common ground, through some abstract rational principle.

¹⁰⁵ This situation is only exacerbated by his lamentable inability to publish a systematic statement of his own system in the form of a monograph. The literature on Peirce therefore often involves reference to temporally distinct manuscripts and bits of unpublished work that piece together his thinking-through a given subject, which invariably involves intervals of time during which his position on other matters may have shifted more-or-less drastically. Peirce might take comfort, however, in knowing that trying to piece together his worldview based on the fragmented articles he left behind becomes a fantastic exercise in the hermeneutic circle of 'Thirdness' itself!

¹⁰⁶ Most recently, Forster (2011) published a monograph that convincingly argued Peirce's vehement antipathy for nominalism is the proverbial 'rug' the ties his whole systematic 'room' together. His work informs much of this section, although he does not focus much on semiotics, which is a core feature of the absolute idealist significance of his system and its attendant affinity with Pratyabhijñā. It should be noted that the literature indicates Peirce was initially more hospitable to nominalism than Forster's thesis might *prima facie* suggest. For instance, he wrote that "everybody ought to be a nominalist at first, and to continue...until he is driven out of it by the *force majeure* of irreconcilable facts" (CP 4.1). (See Roberts (1970) and Fisch (1967) for details apropos Peirce's development from nominalism to realism.)

any living reasoning’—and even ‘of the Devil, if devil there be’ (Forster: 2). He accordingly pooh-poohs many diverse philosophical systems as mere ‘daughters of nominalism’ (e.g., Berkeley’s idealism, as well as ‘sensationalism, phenomenalism, individualism, and materialism’). Among my points in this project, of course, is that Peirce and Hochberg would both hypothetically characterize Dharmakīrti’s philosophy a prime case in point—its nominalist premises wind up in just the sort of skeptical idealism that Peirce so abhorred.¹⁰⁷

For simplicity, I am going to limit my conversation to Peirce’s influential ‘cognition series’ of 1868, starting with “Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for Man” [QCF]. Here he takes aim at the nominalist premises of Cartesian philosophy through doubting the existence of our capacity to reliably discern ‘intuitions’—that is, the existence of “a cognition not determined by a previous cognition of the same object, and therefore so determined by something out of the consciousness.” An ‘intuition’ here is therefore a wholly *unmediated* cognition, determined by something wholly extrinsic to the conceptual or inferential process. Intuitions manifest content by means of their direct ‘contact’ with the external object they represent, not *via* any conceptual relations (cf. Gava: 342). Peirce questions “whether by the simple contemplation of a cognition, independently of any previous knowledge and without reasoning from signs, we are enabled rightly to judge whether that cognition has been determined by a previous cognition or whether it refers immediately to its object.” In other

¹⁰⁷ The hyperbole—if not a window into his own severe temperament—illustrates what he took to be the stakes of this metaphysical debate, which encompass all manner of human understanding and activity; not only, that is, theoretical issues apropos the validity of scientific and empirical knowledge; or the metaphysical adjudication of objective reason vs. skeptical dualism; but also social, political, and economic domains. This is partly because, according to Peirce, the ontological denial of general entities includes the rational grounds for communal and normative ideals that extend beyond a mere rugged, hedonistic individualism. As Peirce concludes his 1871 review of Berkeley: “The question of whether the *genus homo* has any existence except as individuals is the question of whether there is anything of any more dignity, worth, and importance than individual happiness, individual aspirations, and individual life. Whether men really have anything in common, so that the community is to be considered as an end in itself, and if so, what the relative value of the two factors is, is the most fundamental practical question in regard to every public institution the constitution of which we have it in our power to influence.”

words, can those cognitions that are intuitions be immediately (read: intuitively) distinguished from those that are not? (cf. Prendergast: 289) Since intuitions bear no determinative relations to other previous cognitions, Peirce claims it would be like a ‘premiss that is not itself a conclusion’: “the only difference being that premisses and conclusions are judgments, whereas an intuition may, as far as its definition states, be any kind of cognition whatever. But just as a conclusion (good or bad) is determined in the mind of the reasoner by its premiss, so cognitions not judgments may be determined by previous cognitions; and a cognition not so determined, and therefore determined directly by the transcendental object, is to be termed an intuition.”¹⁰⁸

Peirce proceeds to throw cold water on the idea that we possess this natural capacity to distinguish intuitions from other forms of cognition. Specifically, he claims that we have no evidence for such an intuitive capacity other than a vague ‘feeling’ that we have it: “It is plainly one thing to have an intuition, and another to know intuitively that it is an intuition...the question is whether the two things, distinguishable in thought, are...invariably connected, so that we can always intuitively distinguish between [them].” The problem is that a mere invocation of the latter sort of ‘feeling’ cannot settle the matter of whether this cognition is *itself* intuited or mediated, since to claim that the feeling of being able to distinguish between these two kinds of cognitions is itself *intuitive* simply *begs the very question at issue*—viz., whether we do indeed have the immediate capacity to *interpret* an intuition *as such*. Alternatively, Peirce explains, one can simply claim that the feeling is *infallible*, but, in that case, the person secures belief through what he would elsewhere call the ‘method of tenacity’—they are “evidence proof,” and no empirical data will change their mind.

¹⁰⁸ In the Buddhist case, these sorts of intuitions correspond, more-or-less, to the perceptual cognition that reflexively takes a *svalakṣaṇa* as its object. Much like Buddhist notion of *pratyakṣa*, an ‘intuition’ is defined as a mode of apprehensive cognition whose object remains constitutively independent from the conceptual relations that define the conventional activity of discursive linguistic practices.

Assuming the reader is not such a dogmatic person, Peirce proceeds to marshal several empirical arguments to show that we should not presume we can distinguish ‘intuitions’ from cognitions that are the result of intellectual activity. Although he gives several examples,¹⁰⁹ his favorite is the case of the blind-spot, where the optic nerve passes through the optic disc into the visual cortex: normally we consider the spatial ‘data’ we receive from the visual field continuous. But when we close one eye and render the blind spot inferable from its absence — i.e., since we don’t really perceive *anything at all* in the blind spot—, we discover that the visual field is really a ring with an absence in its center. Peirce’s point is that if we merely bring attention to the absence, we could not determine whether it’s filling up is the result of inferential activity or not; the intuitive *impression* of a continuous field *is the result of an inferential process*—one whose conceptual providence we do not differentiate from the perceptual ‘data’ of the field itself. Peirce concludes, “what more striking example could be desired of the impossibility of distinguishing intellectual results from intuitional data, by mere contemplation” (CP 5.220). His argument appears to be that, since we think we can falsely recognize all optical cognitions *as* immediate intuitions—but, in truth, these perceptions often result from inferential processes—we have strong reasons to doubt that we have the immediate capacity to distinguish intuitions in general from mediated cognitions.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Another concerns the difficulty of distinguishing what is *seen* and *inferred* with respect to the ‘Chinese ring’ magic trick: Here the magician presents two solid rings linked together in a manner that deceives the audience into thinking they are actually separate, and thereupon pretends to put them together into a single ring. The audience professes that they saw two rings being put back together, but of course they ‘saw’ *no such thing*. Rather, they *inferred* it from the thought that they were already initially separate. The only way to determine that the linking of the rings was not *seen* but *inferred* is through the additional knowledge that some slight-of-hand had occurred (CP 5.127).

¹¹⁰ The next three questions dispense with several other suspicious Cartesian notions of ‘intuition,’ or various supposed unmediated ‘powers’ that include ‘self-consciousness’ a ‘power of introspection,’ and ‘the intuitive capacity of distinguishing between the subjective elements of different cognitions’ (EP 19-21). Peirce invokes both developmental and inferential considerations to refute these ideas: Young children, for instance, do not seem to possess egoic forms of self-consciousness, appearing instead to gradually form a conception of selfhood by inference from a process of inquiry into the external world around them. In contrast, the intuitive ability to distinguish cognitions of dreams, imagination, and waking life can also be made without recourse to some special

Peirce also claims on *a priori* grounds, though, that even the *idea* of something inherently *incognizable* (viz., the purported ‘intuitive object’ with no intrinsic relation to the *general* character of mind) is itself contradictory (EP 25). He emphasizes this point succinctly in another short essay that year, “Potentia ex Impotentia,”: When we say ‘incognizable’ we can only mean ‘other than cognition,’ which is a notion that arises “by abstraction, from the various particular cognized others; consequently *other* must mean with us *cognizable other* and therefore ‘other than the cognizable’, can only consistently mean one cognizable other than another cognizable, for the incognizable other would be the incognizable cognizable” (W 2.190-1). In short, since anything *other* than something being ‘cognizable’ can only *practically* mean some *cognizable other*, whatever is differentiated from the realm of the cognizable must itself, *ipso facto*, be cognizable.¹¹¹ However, this is precisely what the notion of ‘incognizable’ supposedly *denies*. Hence, it is self-contradictory.¹¹² Alternatively, if we argue based on inference from observed

immediate capacity, for the apparent character of the cognitions themselves differ substantially from each other. Again, without rehashing his arguments in detail, we can infer that he refutes all these capacities to illustrate that we have no practical reasons to suppose we could tell the difference between unmediated intuitions and mediated signs.

¹¹¹ Interestingly, he writes in QCF that “if it be said that the incognizable is a concept compounded of the concept *not* and *cognizable*, it may be replied that *not* is a mere syncategorematic term and not a concept by itself” (EP 25). Although Kimhi does not mention Peirce, his basic argument (2018) for absolute idealism involves construing negation as a syncategorematic function (a way of taking content through interpretive force) rather than its own categorematic referent, which would affirm a positive state of nonbeing (where cognizability and being are transcendently coextensive.) This whole conversation has great implications for the debate over metaphysical vs. epistemic idealisms in the Indian context, as part of the Pratyabhijñā charge against the Sautrāntika Buddhists is the incoherent notion that something could manifest external to reflexive consciousness—i.e., that ‘nonexistence’ could somehow ‘exist’ in a completely unmanifest state.

¹¹² It is on this basis that Lane (3.1-3.3) distinguishes between Peirce’s ‘basic idealism’ and his purported ‘objective idealism’—a distinction, he claims, that other Peirce scholars often inappropriately run together (e.g., Hausman 1993: 147-50). The former stipulates that anything that exists must be *cognizable*—but not necessarily actually cognized!—while the latter is identified with Peirce’s later metaphysical claims that “matter is effete mind,” which arguably betokens some form ‘panpsychism.’ These two idealisms, Lane points out, are logically independent: objective idealism need not necessarily entail a basic idealism (“it is possible for matter to be “effete” mind/feeling, and yet for some real things to be incognizable... That ‘matter is effete mind’ does not imply that everything real is cognizable by individual minds”). And, contrariwise, basic idealism does not entail objective idealism (“for it is possible for any real thing to be a possible object of thought without matter being mind/feeling that is law-governed to a relatively high degree” (ibid. 77-8)). While I don’t have the space to go into the distinction in detail, I believe that even though Peirce identified ‘objective idealism’ with the (potentially) panpsychist idea that ‘matter is effete mind,’ I think he also considers himself an ‘objective idealist’ in the sense of MS 956; that “as far as the process of nature is intelligible, so far is the process of nature identical with the process of reason; the law of being and the law of thought must be practically assumed to be one” (cf. Tiercelin (1998) on this notion as part of Peirce’s conception

facts to the nominalist thesis, Peirce claims that to explain a cognition with reference to something inexpressible or inconceivable is just a roundabout way of saying that cognition cannot be explained at all. For “the only possible justification for a hypothesis is that it explains the facts, and to say that they are explained and at the same time to suppose them inexplicable is self-contradictory” (ibid.) In short, the nominalist conception of a pure ‘intuitive cognition’ is practically incoherent.

b. Temporal Signs vs. Static Images

As briefly mentioned, Peirce argues that the practical impossibility of recognizing intuitions supports the theory that all cognitions are mediated cognitions, or ‘signs’¹¹³: “The only thought, then, which can possibly be cognized is thought in signs. But thought which cannot be cognized does not exist. All thought, therefore, must necessarily be in signs” (EP 24). In the next companion article in the series, “Some Consequences of Four Incapacities”, Peirce categorically defines the triadic nature of the cognitive sign: “When we think...we ourselves, as we are at that moment, appear as a sign. Now a sign has, as such, three references: 1st, it is a sign *to* some thought which interprets it; 2d, it is a sign *for* some object to which in that thought it is equivalent; 3d, it is a sign, *in* some respect or quality, which brings it into connection with its object.”¹¹⁴ Or, in other words, when anything appears in cognition (a ‘first’ object), it must appear *as* a such and such (‘second’ representamen) *to* some perspective (‘third’ interpretant).

of ‘objective idealism’). Consider further his dictum: “That thought to which we struggle to have our thoughts coincide, is the reality” (W 3: 47, 1872). As I see it, the distinction between ‘objective idealism’ and ‘panpsychism’, appropriately, comes down to an emphasis on either the one or the many: in Peirce’s case, whether the *rational unity* of a logic of events takes *ontological* precedence over the pluralism of your prototypical ‘panpsychist.’ These sorts of issues also speak to my critique of Ferrante’s (2020b) interpretation of *Pratyabhijñā* as a form of ‘panpsychism’—which, as Lane himself points out, does not necessarily entail the ‘basic idealism’ that Pratyabhijñā itself endorses.

¹¹³ One apparent problem with this theory is the infinite regress that ensues if every cognition is mediated by another, which Peirce addresses in several places and generally held to be benign (cf. Atkin 2016: 132–135).

¹¹⁴ In another place he writes that “anything which is so determined by something else, called its Object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its interpretant, that the later is thereby mediately determined by the former” (SS 80-81).

The process of signification thus entails an irreducible triadic relation between representation, object, and interpretant; each sign presents itself as constrained by a given object, and the reflexive interpretant that establishes the representational form of this determination must in turn constrain the burgeoning structure of some further sign. In this way, the reflexive interpretant of the sign—being itself a continuous action that brings two distinct modes of cognition into relation—naturally results in the appearance of a novel sign with its own triadic structure, and so on and so forth. Peirce thus uses the term ‘sign’ to refer to the practical *act* of thinking, as well as the representational *form* of conceptual content.¹¹⁵

While all signs are therefore *constrained* by the givenness of their objects to some degree, each sign also enjoys a certain irreducible freedom of indeterminacy in virtue of the necessary conceptual or inferential mediation of its interpretant. Thus, no sign, in virtue of being conceptually mediated, can be perfectly ‘isomorphic’ with its constitutive causes in every and all respects—since not all its ‘causes’ refer to *actual* individuals. This practically means that any single term, or subject of a proposition, can always be further specified in the semiotic process in a continual fashion: For instance ‘C.S. Peirce’ can be logically divided (e.g., a ‘post-1900’ or ‘pre-1900’ Peirce); and further divided (‘the post-1900 Peirce during Harvard lectures’); and so on (Peirce during the Harvard Lectures on the morning of March 21st, 1903); and so on, such that “you do not get down to anything completely determinate till you specify an indivisible instant of time” (1877: W 3: 235). However, any sign that exists does so through some continual duration of time, and thus “will undergo some change in its relations” (W 2: 3.93, 1; 391, 8: 1870). More generally, for anything x that endures through some continuous period of time d (no

¹¹⁵ In this sense, the *processual* nature of the manifestation of the sign bears a strong resemblance to Bhartṛhari’s notion of *sphoṭa* we will explore in Chapter V; here, conceptual or linguistic knowledge practically manifests in a three-fold process, whereby a psychic ‘root’ of holistic semantic ‘intuition’ (‘First’) progressively manifest into more determinate syntactical forms (‘Third’), until it finally blossoms into an explicit linguistic judgment (‘Second’). Cf. Peirce [in QCF] “The point here insisted on is merely that cognition arises by a *process* of beginning, as any other change comes to pass” (EP 27).

matter how brief), there will be some property F such that x only possesses F during a part of d . In this case, x is logically divisible into an x that is F and an x that is not F (Lane: 124). Thus, nothing that exists in time can be semiotically recognized as a fully determinate entity in this *discontinuous* sense of not being further logically divisible.

Accordingly, Peirce found it necessary to distinguish between “an individual in the sense of that which has no generality [i.e., ‘strict’] and which here appears as a mere ideal boundary of cognition, and an individual in the far wider sense of that which can only be in one place at one time [i.e., ‘concrete’]...To the former I have denied all immediate reality” (W 2: 180). Since such a hypothetical, maximally-specified individual would have no indeterminacy, it would also lack all *generality*. But this would contradict what Lane calls Peirce’s ‘basic idealism,’ i.e., the above-mentioned notion that to be real is to be cognizable: for “everything that can be represented by any sort of sign has some degree of indeterminacy/generality. And since everything real is capable of being represented, every aspect of reality is general to some degree” (Lane: 125).¹¹⁶

The basic temporal upshot here is that no cognition can exist instantaneously because no sign can reflexively signify some fully determinate object; the *signification* of any explicit sign, by its very nature, requires a real reflexive acquaintance with formal *continuums* of possible states whose self-intelligible relevance for action necessarily abides in the ‘contracted’ or ‘implicit’ modes of phenomenal experience (i.e., its ‘transitive’ dimension). Since it makes no practical sense to signify the character of an individual instant devoid of these general properties, the reflexive logic of the semiotic process must govern a constitutively durational event: “From

¹¹⁶ Peirce tells us that “every cognition we are in possession of is a judgment both whose subject and predicate are general terms” (W 2: 180, 1868). In this respect, even the empirical referent in a dyadic judgment is not a *strict individual*, i.e., one “absolutely determinate in all respects” (1868: 5.299; W 2: 233). The same argument holds, *mutatis mutandis*, for the Buddhist conception of the *svalakṣaṇa*, which arguably reflects a causal interpretation of just this sort of ‘strict’ individual—a self-defined moment of existence devoid of all general conceptual indeterminacy through mutual exclusive opposition to every other real existent.

the proposition that every thought is a sign, it follows that every thought must address itself to some other, must determine some other, since that is the essence of a sign....To say, therefore, that thought cannot happen in an instant, but requires a time, is but another way of saying that every thought must be interpreted in another, or that all thought is in signs” (EP 24). The durational form of time and the interpretive flow of signs are therefore inextricably entwined (cf. De Tienne: 2015).

In a relevant section of SCF, Peirce points out that since all thought consists in a flow of signs, to construe the process of cognitive representation as the impression of any sort of fully determine ‘image’—one, we might say, whose actual properties are perfectly ‘isomorphic’ to the nature of its extrinsic, constitutively non-cognitive *causes*—cannot actually describe the conceptual mechanics of triadic and temporal mediation that signs undergo in practice:

When an image is said to be singular, it is meant that it is absolutely determinate in all respects.¹¹⁷ Every possible character, or the negative thereof, must be true of such an image....it is apparent that no man has a *true* image of the road to his office, or of any other real thing. Indeed he has no image of it at all unless he can not only recognize it, but imagines it (truly or falsely) in all its infinite details. This being the case, it becomes very doubtful whether we ever have any such thing as an image in our imagination (CP 5.300).

The conceptual signs of imagination and recollection, for Peirce, are not in the business of trading in determinate ‘pictures.’ For one thing, it is apparent to anyone that even the simplest aspect of the empirical world has virtually infinite features that elude explicit conceptual signification. But while it may be obvious that we do not have infinite details in mnemonic abstraction of sensory objects, Peirce argues that the same basically holds for the judgment of actual percepts. In the case of vision, for instance, he cites the discrete ‘needlepoints’ of ocular nerve endings and their distance from the minimum visibility of the object—as well as invokes

¹¹⁷ In 1868, Peirce defined ‘determinate’ as “fixed to be *this* (or *thus*), in contradistinction to being *this*, *that*, or the other (or in some way or other). See Lane (123-4) and Short (2007: 168, n.9) for Peirce on the meaning of ‘determinate.’ Note that in his later work in the 1900’s, Peirce distinguished between two species of semiotic indeterminacy, *generality* and *vagueness* (cf. Lane (6.1-3)).

the ‘blind spot’ again—to empirically establish that we can never consider the infinite details of a fully determinate representational ‘picture’ perceptually *present*, like a ‘pain[ting] on the nerves of the retina.’ Indeed, he proclaims that if such a ‘picture’ actually existed in the mind, we would have in the perceptual judgment of an object just as much, if not more, information about its infinite minute details as, say, its general outline and significance: “But the conclusive argument against our having any images, or absolutely determinate representations in perception, is that in that case we have the materials in each such representation for an infinite amount of conscious cognition, which we yet never become aware of.” In accord with his previous assertion that something intrinsically incognizable is incoherent, “now there is no meaning in saying that we have something in our minds which never has the least effect on what we are conscious of knowing” (CP 5.305).

I would like to point out that while some scholars consider James himself a dyed-in-the-wool nominalist, in the end, Peirce agrees with James that intentional experience does not consist in the perceptual judgment of a representational ‘image’—viz., a cognition whose formal structure is internally *fixed* relative to the absolute determinacy of its respective ‘external’ causes. Rather, intentional human experience itself is comprised of a constructive *process* that reflexively *takes* a manifold of indeterminate cognitions and thereby also spontaneously *gives* them in the concrete form of practical judgment. The relational ‘unity’ of this synthetic action simply cannot be anything like the isomorphic perceptual ‘image’ of the nominalist, for it ultimately consists in nothing other than the *subjective* self-consciousness of this unity (which naturally includes an awareness or memory of general forms as they pertain to the ever-incipient, radically heterogeneous reality of particular experience).

In the coming chapters, we will see that Peirce’s semiotic critique of intuition and its representational counterpart—the reified ‘image’—presents a substantial challenge to Buddhist Sautrāntika-Yogācārins like Dharmakīrti, who view the causal ‘process’ of cognitive representation in very similar nominalist terms. For Peirce, an imagistic theory of cognition puts the proverbial cart before the horse, because it reifies a cognitive *activity* that, practically speaking, *constitutes* the determinative power of the semiotic intellect. From this perspective, the ‘spiritual’ philosophy of Cartesian dualism—and, as we will see below, Berkeley’s idealism—are *just as skeptically disastrous as the nihilistic materialism of their atheist opponents*; for insofar as the ‘image’ that God supposedly ‘impresses on the mind’ in veridical cognition corresponds to a fully determinate, eternal, and unchanging form, ultimate reality is rendered fundamentally *unrecognizable* from the practical, finite perspective of the semiotic flow (and thus *a priori inaccessible* for the community of finite inquirers). To overcome the skeptical dualism that the nominalist vision entails, Peirce argued that the ‘reality’ of the sensory causes that factor into the objective content of finite cognition cannot be fundamentally discontinuous with the rational *activity* that governs the manifestation of the event itself.¹¹⁸ I take it that Utpaladeva, through a metaphysical construal of *śakti*, leverages a very similar argument to refute the Buddhist nominalism of Dharmakīrti and the naïve realism of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika.

c. Relational Realism and Objective Idealism

¹¹⁸ As Peirce explains, the general form of cognition is not the ‘clear and distinct image’ of some pure perceptual cognition, but merely the nature of ‘cognition’ *simpliciter*: “If I think ‘white,’ I will not go so far as Berkeley and say that I think of a person seeing, but I will say that what I think is of the nature of a cognition, and so of anything else which can be experienced. Consequently, the highest concept which can be reached by abstractions from judgments from experience—and therefore, the highest concept which can be reached at all—is the concept of something of the nature of a cognition” (W 2.208).

A touchstone essay for Peirce's views on the nominalist/realist debate is his 1871 review of Fraser's *The Works of George Berkeley*. Here, he uses the review format to cast Berkeley's supposed 'idealism' as a case study to articulate what he considers the enduring and pernicious influence of Ockham's nominalism on modern philosophy. As we will see, for Peirce, the question that often frames the realist-nominalist debate—are universals 'real'?—does not capture the true grounds of the dispute. "The real issue", as de Waal observes, "is not that nominalists and realists answer the question...differently, but that both sides have a different conception of reality; and this the question does not touch. On the contrary, it takes for granted that both parties mean the same thing when they use the term 'real'" (1996: 425). In this respect, I take it that Peirce's constructive claim is that when the pragmatic semantics of 'reality' is brought into view—and ultimately acknowledged as the only notion that *makes any sense* for a finite temporal intellect—the non-relational ontology of nominalism and its intellectual heirs becomes self-refuting and incoherent. For metaphysics to progress, it must develop a logically consistent and empirically adequate form of 'objective idealism' in light of the irreducible reality of Thirdness.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ See Pape (1997) on the relationship between Peirce's expansive view of logic and how it impacted his idealism. Peirce has been called various strains of idealism in the secondary literature, but he labels himself an 'objective idealist' explicitly at several points in his writings. Pape argues that, despite this fact, it is better to consider him a 'logical idealist,' which he defines as such: "That mind is an emergent process that creates an irreducible identity, i.e. triadic identity, and has an ontological priority over matter is equivalent with the thesis and that there is a mathematico-logical formalism for the logic of mental processes which comprises the logic of all forms of valid argumentation and inference describing physical reality and the irreducible identity of mind as a process" (159). Peirce's idea that reality consists in a 'logic of events,' for Pape, may or may not involve objective idealism or absolute idealism on his own account, and he argues that other related characterizations of Peirce—including, that is, a relevant 'transcendental' reading—are mistaken because they "misidentify arguments and theses of some of Peirce's unfortunate formulations of his logical or objective idealism." Whether that is right, there can be no doubt that Peirce conceived of the cognitive processes that establish the rational intelligibility of events as coextensive with the laws that govern being itself—and, *precisely to this extent*, I would claim, I should be considered an 'objective' idealist in the Pratyabhijñā vein. I also think one can argue (as Pape himself concedes (160)) that Peirce would not necessarily want to 'collapse his metaphysics completely into logic' via some naïve rationalist conception of a wholly impersonal, unified, pre-established 'mathematico-logical formalism'; this, at least in my opinion, does not take the transcendental nature of the creativity of 'Thirdness' seriously enough. Cf. Peirce himself on this point (CP 6.218): "It is true that the whole universe and every feature of it must be regarded as rational, that is as brought about by the logic of events. But it does not follow that it is *constrained* to be as it is by the logic of events; for the

After some historical remarks, he begins his critical exposition with an inquiry into the meaning of ‘real,’ which more-or less tracks a conventional understanding of the matter: “Objects are divided into figments, dreams, etc., on the one hand, and realities on the other. The former are those which exist only inasmuch as you or I or some man imagines them; the latter are those which have an existence independent of your mind or mine or that of any number of persons. The real is that which is not whatever we happen to think it, but is unaffected by what we may think of it.” We use the term ‘real’ when we speak of that which is independent of the individual mind. As Lane pithily puts it, ‘real’ “*just means* that which is independent of what anyone thinks about it.” (45). This ‘reality’ accounts for the common-sense distinction between the purely subjective content of dreams, figments of imagination, etc., vs. objects or circumstances that exist irrespective of the contingent state of the individual. Up till this point, the nominalist and realist actually *agree*. They diverge, however, in what they *mean* when they speak of ‘what exists independent of the mind.’

As we have seen, the nominalist construes perceptual constraints that exist independently of the mind to mean something “influences our thoughts and is not created by them... This thing out of the mind, which directly influences sensation, and through sensation thought, because it *is* out of the mind, is independent of how we think it, and is, in short, the real.”¹²⁰ Since the mind

logic of evolution and of life need not be supposed to be of that wooden kind that absolutely constrains a given conclusion. The logic may be that of the inductive or hypothetic inference.”

¹²⁰ Note that Peirce states these are “*the* real.” He does not consider a softer version of nominalism which considers these mind-independent entities ‘*real*’, but not, perhaps, *exclusively*. de Waal accordingly notes that “it is not clear... whether the nominalist is indeed forced, on his own terms, to take this latter more radical step; if not, Peirce’s radical distinction between nominalism and realism might turn out to be a false dichotomy” (427). This observation is all the more interesting when we consider this ‘radical’ form of nominalism in light of Dharmakīrti’s sophisticated elaboration of the Sautrāntika theory of perception in later chapters. For defenders of Dharmakīrti might insist that one can be a *nominalist* and still consider perception itself constitutively ‘intentional’ through the purely *causal* mechanics of the isomorphic conceptual image (*ākāra*). In this case, one can maintain nominalism but not maintain that everything exclusively external to cognition is ‘real.’ This reflects the sort of phenomenological interpretation of Buddhist theories of perception that, say, Coseru (2012) propounds. On the other hand, Peirce would claim Buddhist thinkers like Dharmakīrti are trying to have their intentional cake and eat it too, because ‘intentional’

apprehends the elements of reality in terms of common, relational properties, the ‘objective’ constrains on perceptual content must boil down to intrinsically non-relational individuals that lack said properties. The nominalist denial of *universals*, then, represents a particular interpretation of what it means to exist independent of the mind—i.e., as incognizable entities that directly *cause* sensation, and thereupon generate a cognitive representation thereof, but are not themselves constitutively cognitive or representational in their essential nature. As mentioned, according to Peirce, this position has disastrous skeptical consequences that kneecap the pursuit of knowledge and hinders progress in philosophy and science. For the most we can ever ultimately say about reality is that it must ‘exist,’ but we have no means whatsoever of knowing anything about its essential nature.¹²¹

To combat this unreasonable situation, Peirce argues again (as did Berkeley himself) that the casual transition between the non-cognitive entity to a cognition is not intelligible in these nominalist terms. For, as we just discussed, nominalists are essentially claiming that certain forms of cognition are ‘intuitions’ not determined by previous cognitions—or, rather, are determined by entities that are constitutively *non-cognitive*. But Peirce has already shown that we have no practical or theoretical grounds to posit the existence of a capacity that could in principle *recognize* whether any given cognition is determined by something non-cognitive; for this very act “depends on presupposing the very matter testified to.” That is to say, the practical meaning of recognitive ‘determination’ entails using cognitions to render other cognitions intelligible. In this case, the capacity to *immediately* re-cognize some ‘cognition’ *as* constitutively *incognizable* is just patently absurd.

judgment in semiotic terms is constitutively processual and mediated—i.e., not what we would contemporarily dub a ‘representational’ theory of cognition.

¹²¹ The prototypical example of this skeptical calamity for Peirce is Locke’s nominalist empiricism (cf. his Essay II.xxiii.3, where he discusses the unknowability of substance).

Peirce fleshes out his alternative ‘Scotistic realism’ in terms of his own pragmatic semantics, according to which the contentful meaning of any given concept (viz., a cognitive sign) coextends with our conception of its respective practical effects.¹²² Essentially, instead of defining universal content in purely abstract terms, Peirce asks us to inquire into *what we are actually doing* when we employ general terms in our discursive practices. Using his own example, to be ‘hard’ in this case *just means* to be ‘resistant to scratches from other substances under such and such circumstances.’¹²³ The same goes for all general concepts. As Forster succinctly puts it, “every application of a concept to an object expresses a law or habit and there is nothing to the meaning of a concept other than what is implied by its application” (77). Hence, we can interpret the practical meaning of a concept as identical with the statement of an implied rule, law, or regularity of the general form: ‘If act *A* were conducted under conditions *C*, result *R* would occur.’

We can see this pragmatic theory of semantic content preemptively at work in the Berkeley essay¹²⁴, when Peirce subjects the notion of ‘reality’ to basically the same treatment:

All human thought and opinion contains an arbitrary, accidental element, dependent on the limitations in circumstances, power, and bent of the individual; an element of error, in short. But human opinion

¹²² One well-known statement of this principle is captured in the well-known ‘pragmatic maxim’ of his later 1878 essay, “How to Make Our Ideas Clear”: “Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object.” I am not going to go into all the details of his theory of meaning—which, among other things, helps show how Peirce arguably thought through the *realist* implications of pragmatism more accurately than James (see, e.g., Misak 1991: 4.6)

¹²³ Misak (57-60) articulates that James and Peirce primarily diverged on the nature of the pragmatic maxim—for while James construed it as a theory of ‘*truth*’, Peirce viewed it as a theory of *meaning*. Although James would often deny this charge (while also acknowledging the ‘slipshod’ language of some of his essays on pragmatic truth (1909 [1975: 99])), his interpretation of pragmatism was often taken to entail a potential subjectification or epistemologization of ‘truth’ in a manner Peirce (and many other philosophers at the time) found highly problematic—if not downright silly (cf. especially Russell (1992)). It was for this reason that Peirce sought to distance his own theory from James. Misak (60) comments that the “difference between the ‘truth’ as a product of the individual as opposed to truth as a product of the community over time is at the heart of the dispute between James and Peirce.”

¹²⁴ It is important to note that a simplistic application of the pragmatic maxim to the Berkeley review is anachronistic, because Peirce formulated his pragmatic maxim of HTM in 1878, while his review of Fraser’s Berkeley was in 1871. It is clear, though, that Peirce frames the problems around the definition of ‘reality’ in terms of pragmatic semantics in his Berkeley review.

universally tends in the long run to a definite form, which is the truth. Let any human being have enough information and exert enough thought upon any question, and the result will be that he will arrive at a certain definite conclusion, which is the same that any other mind will reach under sufficiently favorable circumstances... This final opinion, then, is independent, not indeed of thought in general, but of all that is arbitrary and individual in thought; is quite independent of how you, or I, or any number of men think. Everything, therefore, which will be thought to exist in the final opinion is real, and nothing else.¹²⁵

From the perspective of practical reason, Peirce contends that the meaning of ‘reality’ consists in an ideal telos of inquiry upon which all sapient beings will inevitably converge given enough (perhaps virtually infinite) time and energy. The ‘truth’ of a qualified judgment therefore means the conference upon its content the property that the constitutively general law *presently* ascribed to it *will also obtain into the indefinite future*. According to Peirce, then, a *temporal* understanding of ‘meaning’ is presupposed in the intelligibility of the truth of all practical judgments, which partake in the semiotic process through the implicit conference of a constitutively general rule to the cognition of the immediate percept.¹²⁶ Hence “the meaning of every proposition lies in the future” (CP 5.411-37, 1905).

Importantly, the necessary modality of his verb “will” (‘everything which *will* be thought to exist...’) belies a theoretical error that Peirce himself only later came to appreciate in his early formulation of pragmatic semantics: The rules or regularities that factor into semantic content implicitly express a *subjunctive* sense of the indeterminate, and thus the ‘reality’ of the general concepts that factor into ‘true’ propositions must encompass virtual possibilities that may never, in fact, be actualized (cf. Lane: 143).¹²⁷ Accordingly, in a later essay, Peirce expands his own

¹²⁵ Peirce doesn’t seem to differentiate ‘truth’ from ‘reality’ here, but keep in mind that for Peirce, the notions of ‘truth’ and ‘falsity’ are strictly properties of certain special sorts of signs, i.e., *propositions*: “It is propositions alone that are either true or false” (EP 2: 224, 1903; cf. also 5.553 EP 2: 379, 1906).

¹²⁶ In his own ‘inferentialist’ theory of pragmatic semantics, Brandom defines such a rule as “a notion of primitive correctness of performance implicit in practice that precede and are presupposed by their explicit formulation in rules and principles” (1994: 21).

¹²⁷ He articulates this point in an exemplary passage in a 1907 essay: “Intellectual concepts...essentially carry some implication concerning the general behaviour either of some conscious being or of some inanimate object, and so convey more, not merely than any feeling, but more, too, than any existential fact, namely, the ‘would-acts’ of habitual behaviour; and no agglomeration of actual happenings can ever completely fill up the meaning of a ‘would-

definition of ‘true’ to encompass this intrinsically subjunctive sense of propositional content: “if Truth consists in satisfaction, it cannot be any *actual* satisfaction, but must be the satisfaction which *would* ultimately be found if the inquiry were pushed to its ultimate and indefeasible issue.”¹²⁸ For the mature Peirce, then, the ‘truth’ of a propositional judgment only makes sense with reference to its conditional or counterfactual implications for the future conduct and behavior of the subject of predication; in other words, with reference to a domain of conceptual *possibilities* that are decidedly *not* actualized or determinate relative to the empirical percept. Since the semantic properties of any propositional sign are never fully determinate, the ‘truth’ of any belief can likewise never be fully accurate—although, like the asymptotic approximation of π , it may infinitely diminish in the course of investigation.¹²⁹

be.’ But that the total meaning of the predication of an intellectual concept consists in affirming that, under all conceivable circumstances of a given kind, the subject of the predication would (or would not) behave in a certain way...—that proposition I take to be the kernel of pragmatism. More simply stated, the whole meaning of an intellectual predicate is that certain kinds of events would happen, once in so often, in the course of experience, under certain kinds of existential circumstances” (EP 2:401-2).

¹²⁸ On the *realist* significance of the subjunctive sense of truth here, see Misak (35-7). Wiggins (2002: 318) likewise takes this sort of formulation to signify that the “[elucidation of] truth in its relations with the notion of inquiry...need not...represent any concession at all to the idea that truth is *itself* an ‘epistemic notion.’” Notably, in his recent study on Peirce’s theory of the relationship realism and idealism, Lane (2018: 14) argues that Misak and Hookway are mistaken that Peirce in HTM intended to elaborate a pragmatic theory of *truth*—that is, “a theory of truth that results from applying his pragmatic maxim to the idea of truth.” Instead, Lane argues that Peirce regarded HTM as an application of the pragmatic maxim, not to the idea of ‘*truth*,’ but rather to *reality*. Therefore, in this text, and the earlier companion text FOB, Lane opines that Peirce adheres to a ‘dual-aspect account of ‘truth’ (14-37) with both an investigative and representational component. According to Lane, many Peirce scholars do not appreciate this representational aspect of ‘truth,’ according to which a true belief is one that “would be permanently established by the methods of science, and the success of that method is due in part to the fact that it attempts to arrive at beliefs that represent how the world is apart from how it is believed to be, i.e., it attempts to arrive at beliefs that represent the real.” In this sense, ‘truth’ represents a property of a propositional judgment comprised of an awareness of the ideal investigative limit of an ‘external’ referent along with the necessary representational form this correspondence assumes in the semiotic process.

¹²⁹ The full quote reads “Truth is a character which attaches to an abstract proposition, such as a person might utter. It essentially depends upon that proposition’s not professing to be exactly true. But we hope that in the progress of science its error will indefinitely diminish, just as the error of 3.14159, the value given for π , will indefinitely diminish as the calculation is carried to more and more places of decimals. What we call π is an ideal limit to which no numerical expression can be perfectly true...Truth is that concordance of an abstract statement with the ideal limit towards which endless investigation would tend to bring scientific belief, which concordance the abstract statement may possess by virtue of the confession of its inaccuracy and one sidedness, and this confession is an essential ingredient of truth” (1902: 5.565).

Though he formalizes this pragmatic semantics explicitly only later, it is implicit even in the earlier Berkeley review. Here Peirce points out that when we redefine the ‘externalist’ terms of the nominalist from within a wholly pragmatic framework, we uncover the constitutively *temporal* significance of the meanings of ‘reality’ and ‘truth’ already unwittingly in play. As Peirce (rather inelegantly) questions,

is the present existence of a power anything in the world but a regularity in future events relating to a certain thing regarded as an element which is to be taken account of beforehand, in the conception of that thing? If not, to assert that there are external things which can be known only as exerting a power on our sense, is nothing different from asserting that there is a general *drift* in the history of human thought which will lead it to one general agreement, one catholic consent. And any truth more perfect than this destined conclusion, any reality more absolute than what is thought in it, is a fiction of metaphysics (EP 89-90).

Accordingly, when a nominalist adduces a supposed causal ‘power’ of external things to affect the senses, they are essentially just referring to an anticipated regularity governing *future* events that implicitly relates to the conceptual appraisal of the practical signification of the immediate percept. In other words, for Peirce, when we speak of the ‘reality’ of a propositional judgment, we are referring to an implicitly recognized ‘drift’ *in the pure form of (practical) reason itself*—one which tends, *over time*, toward intersubjectively fixed belief among the entire community of inquirers.

This conception of ‘reality’ clearly does not refer to anything *absolutely extrinsic* to the general cognitive process, but is rather baked into the constitutively *teleological* structure of practical inquiry; that is to say—to commandeer a more dignified phrase—*the arc of inquiry is long, but it bends towards the truth of universal consensus*. The real cause of cognitive representation thus cannot be exported to an ‘incognizable ground’ whose efficacy lies solely in the past and present, but rather *only makes sense* relative to an act of signification that judges each present appearance in terms of its projected significance for activity moving into the indeterminate *future*. Peirce thus philosophizes in the spirit of Kant’s second *Critique*, for he

believes that when we undertake *any* finite, practical activity, we thereupon enact a pure form of practical reason that bears a constitutively teleological—and thus *temporal*—structure.¹³⁰ We are led to construe Peirce’s critique of nominalism as a conflation of the ‘real’ and the ‘actual’ (cf. Arnold 2021a: 98).

To bring this whole conversation back to *relations*: I am interpreting Peirce in his review of Berkeley as insisting that this conflation unwittingly distorts the nominalist’s understanding of what the ‘reality’ of a *universal actually is* apropos the dynamic and temporal nature of the GLFR; or rather (to be a bit more careful) what we call ‘universals’ are not practically *meaningful* in virtue of being the kind of referent that abides as either *wholly* singular *or* distributed in their functional capacity in the process of mentation. As Peirce sees it, “universality is a relation of a predicate to the subjects of which it is predicated. That can exist only in the mind, wherein alone the coupling of subject and predicate takes place. But the word universal is also used to denote what are named by such terms as a man or a horse...The whole difficulty is with the indeterminate universal, that which not only is not necessarily this, but which, being one single object of thought, is predicable of many things” (EP 92).¹³¹ Thus the

¹³⁰ See, most pressingly, the section of the second *Critique*, “On the primacy of pure practical reason in its connection with speculative reason” (5:119–121) where Kant writes that “[a]ll interest is ultimately practical and even that of speculative reason is only conditional and is complete in practical use alone...But if pure reason of itself can be and really is practical, as the consciousness of the moral law proves it to be, it is still only one and the same reason which, whether from a theoretical or a practical perspective, judges according to *a priori* principles; it is then clear that, even if from the first [theoretical] perspective its capacity does not extend to establishing certain propositions [e.g., the existence of freedom or God] affirmatively, although they do not contradict it, as soon as these same propositions belong inseparably to the practical interest of pure reason it [theoretical reason] must accept them” (5:121). In this vein, Arnold views the temporal dimensions of Peirce’s pragmatics as an extrapolation of Kant’s articulation of the transcendental form of practical reason, in which the present is experienced not merely as an *effect*, but as calling for a future-directed *decision*—and this “is just to describe responsiveness to reasons in its temporal aspect” (2021: 97) (cf. Otto-Apel (1980), who likewise construes Peirce’s pragmatism as a transcendental argument in the Kantian tradition, and Burch (2024) for a nifty summary of Peirce’s own assessment of his work in light of German idealism more broadly.)

¹³¹ If each universal has this two-fold nature with respect to predication, the sign of the universal itself must also have an ‘impredicative’ definition. An ‘impredicative’ definition generalizes over a set to which the very entity being defined belongs. Since Peirce defined the content of any given sign in terms of a general rule for a set that includes the sign itself as a single member, one might consider all of Peirce’s signs ‘impredicative’ in this self-referential sense (cf. Fernández: 2008). Note the similarity of this problem to the reflexive problem of the general

concepts that factor into practical judgment cannot be ‘real’ in the sense of mapping one-to-one onto an external ‘state of affairs’ whose causal elements are fully determinate individuals. Rather, in accord with his pragmatic semantics, to admit the practical reality of general concepts is just to grant that we have the reflexive capacity to recognize one and the same nature as either a single term in the oppositional contrast of predicative judgment *or* a virtual continuum of implicit relations that comprise its concrete intentional content.¹³²

To explain this multifaceted nature of the universal, he invokes the Scotistic notion that ideas can abide in the mind in two ways: *actualiter* and *habitualiter*. The former refers to something as conceived in the mind at the very moment it is actually envisioned; the latter refers to the virtual, associative dimension of mind, whereby a notion “directly produce[s] a conception.”¹³³ Thus, while an idea ‘*actualiter*’ refers to the explicit form of the universal as it appears in judgment (i.e., as a categorematic predicate of a single subject), an idea ‘*habitualiter*’

form of relation, where a whole becomes internally related to its parts such that a paradoxical self-referential form of determination results. Russell and Poincaré argued that these forms of definition are circular and thus should be avoided, with Russell’s famous paradox representing a prime case in point. But, interestingly, in a commentary on Russell’s philosophy of mathematics, Gödel (1944) held that impredicative definitions are legitimate “provided one holds a realist view of the entities in question” (Linnebo 1995)—a view that Peirce would likely find quite agreeable.

¹³² Peirce argued that each general concept, instead of designating a fully determinate term, roughly equates to a formal continuum. As Peirce states elsewhere, “every general is a continuum vaguely defined” (NEM 3. 929). As, Forster explains, “just as a true continuum is defined by a description that delimits a space of possible elements, so a general concept is defined by a characteristic that delimits a space of possible objects.” Thus a universal is not a mere *commonality* among a collection of nominal individuals, but a real continuum. In Peirce’s words, “true generality is...nothing but a rudimentary form of true continuity. Continuity is nothing but perfect generality of a law of relationship” (CP 6.172).

¹³³ See Esposito’s (2014) short entry in the Peirce encyclopedia on his notion of virtuality: “A virtual X is not a potential X because a potential X is ‘without actual efficiency.’ However, a virtual X is a potential X in a universe that empowers potential Xs to become actual Xs. Without such empowerment it is merely potential in an abstract and less philosophically interesting sense. So, to speak of virtuality in Peirce’s sense is to be concerned with certain very fundamental metaphysical properties about the universe at large and not exclusively with the world of human constructs and conventions” (available at <http://www.digitalpeirce.fee.unicamp.br/virtuality.htm>). This notion of virtuality seems particularly relevant *vis-à-vis* the reality of *śakti*, which does not merely involve the abstract knowledge of *possibility*, but also the capacity to *manifest possibilities* in terms of space and time—that is, *as actual particulars*.

represents the implicit functional network of inferential relations that establishes its semantic content.¹³⁴ Accordingly, for the realist,

any such nature [i.e., the general concept] is to be regarded as something which is of itself neither universal nor singular, but is universal in the mind, singular in things out of the mind...It is the very same nature which in the mind is universal and *in re* is singular; for if it were not, in knowing anything of a universal we should be knowing nothing of things, but only of our own thoughts, and our opinion would not be converted from true to false by a change in things. This nature is actually indeterminate only so far as it is in the mind. But to say that an object is in the mind is only a metaphorical way of saying that it stands to the intellect in the relation of known to knower. The truth is, therefore, that the real nature which exists *in re*, apart from all action of the intellect, though in itself, apart from its relations, it be singular, yet is actually universal as it exists in relation to the mind. But this universal only differs from the singular in the manner of its being conceived (*formaliter*), but not in the manner of its existence (*realiter*) (ibid.).

On my reading, this is precisely the point where Peirce—much like the Pratyabhijñā authors will in the coming chapters—reverses the order of explanation with respect to the nominalist construal of ‘relation’ in terms of *universal properties*. That is, ‘relation’ does not come on the phenomenal scene only as a dyadic token or trope (i.e., ‘Second’) to qualify the subject of propositional judgment. Instead, the apparent meaning of any common property always already betrays an implicate awareness of its constitutively relational identity—i.e., as the very sort of indeterminate nature that can denote a virtual continuum of particular occurrences. The clear and distinct properties that appear in perceptual judgment are therefore not a cognitive reconstruction of a non-relational reality—one that is subsequently related to other things only through post-hoc

¹³⁴ In Brandom’s (1994) version of pragmatic semantics, he explicitly defines singular referents as a set of rules that govern its implicate inferential relations. Specifically, for Brandom, the semantic content of factual propositions is provided by the *material inferences* that follow or do not follow therefrom. The key point here is that a grammatical item is a *singular term* iff the *substitution inferences* in which that item is materially involved are *symmetric*. A *substitution inference* with reference to a term *t* is an inference from a sentence with *t* to a sentence that replaces all occurrences of *t* with some other term of the same grammatical type; further, a term is *materially involved* in an inference if it cannot be replaced without altering the material status of the inference. Without going into the details here, the gist is that the semantic content of *t* equates to the praxis that if we *were* we to replace the term *t* in a *different* propositional context with something of the same grammatical form, the inferences that result therefrom should be symmetric (where an inference from *A* to *B* is *symmetric* iff whenever that inference is valid, so too is the converse relation *B* to *A* (1994: 4.II)). The singular nature of grammatical terms thus corresponds to a certain *symmetry* of conceived material inferential relations that we implicitly confer in the deployment of the singular term itself: like all semantic content for Brandom, it bears no meaning outside of this implicit context of the rules of material inference that underlie the explicit discourse of normative linguistic practices.

conceptualization. Rather, the cognitive determination of practical reason is a semiotic event (Atkin: 131-2) whereby the appearance of any ‘sign’ *actualiter* is the result of the active translation of an implied set of conceptual and inferential relations that abide in the mind *habitualiter*. In this way, universals do not act as qualifiers in virtue of the psychic ‘addition’ of a separately existent entity (i.e., a ‘relation’) to a substantial subject, but are precisely the kinds of things that can be practically *recognized* due to being ‘relational’ through and through—i.e., they always simultaneously function as ‘unified’ *and* ‘diverse.’¹³⁵

Peirce’s 1868 rejection of the nominalist theory of intuition therefore also underlies his critique of Berkeley’s idealism in his 1871 review. For Berkeley implicitly relies upon the same misguided notion—that the unity of universal concepts ultimately consists in the fully-actualized intuition of an eternal or unchanging ‘image’ in the mind of God. This effectively renders his purportedly theological idealism just another ‘demonic’ offspring of nominalism in disguise. For cognition does not practically consist in this ‘clear and distinct’ Cartesian or Lockean *image*, one whose intrinsic nature is both completely determined and autonomously intelligible in the manner of pure intuition (which, in Berkeley’s case, can only logically hold from the perspective of the infinite and omniscient mind of God, not any finite cognitive person).¹³⁶ Rather, for Peirce, an implicit logic of relations constitutes the temporal form of intentional events—and so,

¹³⁵ Note the similarity of this dual-theory of the universal to Russell’s own theory of the verbal noun, which functions as both the means of predicative unity and a self-standing categorematic term in the proposition. Where they part ways, however, is basically the same point where Peirce and the ‘idealist’ Berkeley diverge, namely, in thinking that the intensional apprehension of a ‘universal’ property is exhausted in the predicative ascription of some fully determinate categorematic term. In this sense, then, the appearance of any general ‘sign’ can never be said to be intrinsically ‘relational’ or ‘non-relational,’ because the capacity to appear in either form is a condition for the possibility of the practical intelligibility thereof.

¹³⁶ It is noteworthy how strongly these practical considerations resonate with the misplaced dichotomy James articulated between Russell and Bradley on the nature of relations (i.e., between pluralistic realism and idealistic monism, respectively); while they superficially debated each other, both implicitly invoke a static or unchanging ‘view from nowhere’ in which an intrinsically non-relational, unchanging actuality serves to undermine the ultimate ‘reality’ of finite phenomenal appearances that necessarily involve temporal indeterminacy and the cognitive dimension of practical judgment.

practically speaking, ‘relationality’ must itself be considered as ‘objectively real’ as any term or relata that practically appear therein.

He concludes that his philosophy is ‘inevitably realistic,’ as it is “instantly fatal to the idea of a thing in itself,—a thing existing independently of all relation to the mind’s conception of it” (ibid: 123). Since “there must be some kind of correspondence between reason and reality, we must admit that that which cannot be conceptualized in any way cannot exist.” In this case, although empirical appearances are still to be regarded as representational signs of ‘external’ objects, the realities which they represent “would not be the unknowable cause of sensation, but *noumena*, or intelligible conceptions which are the last products of the mental action which is set in motion by sensation” (ibid: 124).¹³⁷ Hence concepts are ‘real’ because ideal possibilities are integral to what we *mean* when we refer to the *objective content* of a propositional judgment: “General conceptions enter into all judgments, and therefore into true opinions. Consequently, a thing in the general is as real as in the concrete” (ibid). So Peirce’s form of ‘realism’ consists in taking the ideal element of sensory experience quite seriously—that is, as essentially *continuous* with concrete feeling itself. There is thus no meaning to any independent reality ‘outside’ of what shows up in the process of inquiry, i.e., something wholly extrinsic to *how it appears* to the general community of cognizers engaged in the practice of making sense of the world.

Finally, I want to stress that, despite the rift between James and Peirce on the nature of truth and the place of abstract logic in philosophy, from this vantage point they both develop what I consider the foundational insight of ‘reformed’ relational realism—namely, ‘a thing in the general is as real as in the concrete.’ The substantial difference between the two is that they

¹³⁷ See Arnold (2010: 368-9), who notes that it is “because he is already (and on other grounds) committed to the view that ‘thoughts’ can only consist in momentary particulars that Dharmakīrti may be limited to making only an epistemological case for the kind of idealism he upholds, and indeed, that the epistemological case he makes may itself be threatened by a more genuinely transcendental argument that is not constrained by a prior commitment to causal explanation.” Although he makes this claim with respect to Watson’s (2006) study of Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha, I take it that the same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the transcendental critiques of Peirce and Utpala as well.

pursue this insight from different starting points, with distinct philosophical approaches and rhetorical emphases. As we saw, James's pragmatism starts from the concrete, arguing primarily on the basis of psychological and phenomenological observations that the transitive parts of experience are just as 'real' as the substantive parts; that is, the manifold of indeterminate feelings that connect 'clear and distinct' appearances must be deemed as constitutive of the empirical content of conceptual experience as the intentional determinacy thereof. Peirce, alternatively, proceeds from the abstract, and maintains that the pure form of practical reason must ultimately be intelligible to itself in some rational sense; in which case, the nature of particular, concrete perceptions is necessarily continuous with the general logical form of the semiotic process. But for both authors, the pragmatic continuity of experience is the basic fact to which any philosophy worth its salt must be held accountable.¹³⁸

Conclusion: Substantival Unity vs. Relational Unity

In this chapter I reconstructed the 19th-20th century debate over relations in terms of three philosophical approaches and their corresponding explanations of the synthetic unity of propositional judgment: Bradley represented the relational eliminativist who seeks to reduce relations to non-existence, affirming instead one undifferentiated Reality 'behind' the realm of relational Appearances. For Bradley, the unity of the proposition owes itself to the metaphysical unity of feeling—a non-conceptual and non-relational form of undifferentiated being that

¹³⁸ This is perhaps why, despite famously distancing himself from James's theory of truth with the ungainly term 'pragmaticism,' Peirce views James' radical empirical project more favorably, as "substantially answer[ing] to [Peirce's] own definition of pragmatism, albeit with a certain difference in the point of view" (1905: 165). We should also mention that Peirce never considered his own triadic system the definitive or exclusive categorical framework to rationally apprehend all reality (cf. MS 296.16). See Rosenthal (1997) on this point, who offers insight into the 'experimental' dimension of Peirce's pragmatism. According to her, a pluralistic tolerance for alternative sets of categories is built right into his own pragmatic methodology: "Peirce can claim *both* that his set of categories is probably *the most* adequate, and also that not only are alternatives series of categories possible, but that 'at every step' features are met with which do not fit his categories...for his set does not 'comprise all.'...Even the most adequate set of categories will not rule out the possibility of grasping the phenomenon in different ways which work in grasping features which overflow the bounds of that set of categorical distinctions" (127).

precedes the multiplicity of propositional terms. Russell and Moore, by contrast, present a mereological atomism that defines all ontological relations as external. According to this tradition, internal relations may have conceptual utility and formal validity, but they do not apply to the real world of simple particulars—i.e., self-enclosed, substantive entities whose intrinsic natures or essential properties can be exhaustively individuated according to the external relations they bear to all other such particulars. Here propositional unity is not achieved through subjective judgment, but through the nature of the verbal form itself. Lastly, Peirce and James represent a ‘reformed’ approach to relational realism in which the transitive states of temporal experience are constitutive of propositional knowledge. Although distinct in their approaches, both agree that the concrete relations of practical experience cannot be regarded as mere grammatical properties of determinate or static substances but refer to the irreducible unity-in-diversity that characterizes the extensive temporal concretion of intentional experience; namely, as a continuous form of transitive action that moves *from* a manifold of indeterminate feelings *to* the determinate terminus of conceptual unity.

Now we can discern that the metaphysical rift between Peirce/James vs. Bradley/Russell basically boils down to two competing visions of the intuitive correspondence between ‘unity’ and ‘reality’—a situation that, as we will see, strongly resembles the Pratyabhijñā idealists in opposition to the Buddhist nominalists and Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika naïve realists. Specifically, to be truly *unified* for Bradley and Russell means to be a kind of *substantial* existent—viz., an internally undifferentiated, inactive state of autonomously intelligible being. For Russell, this meant to be a particular atomic unit that could be counted *as pluralistically distinct* from others; while, for Bradley, this meant that relational experience belies a single substantial Real, which

provides a unifying rational ground for the diversity of external Appearances but remains fundamentally transcendent in its essential nature.

Yet, for Peirce and James, the continuous temporal action constitutive of intentional life exhibits the only form of unity that could ever really *mean anything at all* in a finite, concrete, practical sense. Bradley and Russell's shared rationalistic bias—i.e., that unity and diversity were incompatible *attributes* of some ontologically simple being, and thus that the co-extensiveness of continuity and discontinuity was not meaningful for philosophical consideration—*was simply to ignore the form of relational unity that is concretely given for the sake of an ideal form of substantival unity that is a mere static abstraction.*¹³⁹ In other words, without any empirical justification, Bradley ignores the manifest *reality* of unity—as a form of transcendental action that necessarily synthesizes a plurality—for an ideal *conception* of unity as some trans-experiential substance that trades only in atemporal 'knowledge.' And although his theory of feeling signified a valiant effort to overcome the Kantian dichotomy between a noumenal Reality and phenomenal Appearance, ultimately, it still does not adequately account for the transcendental unity-in-diversity that characterizes the continuous change of temporal experience and the phenomenon of diachronic synthesis.

The reformed relational realism of James and Peirce therefore underscores that Bradley and Russell equally foreclose a transcendental account of relational philosophy without any 'radical' empirical justification. Instead, they insist that the concrete experience of irreducibly complex temporal relations should not be ontologically explained away merely for the sake of determinate grammatical forms and functions. To this extent, the way forward for transcendental

¹³⁹ As James elegantly puts it: "Bradley, in short, repeats the fable of the dog, the bone, and its image in the water. With a world of particulars, given in loveliest union, in conjunction definitely various, and variously definite, the 'how' of which you 'understand' as soon as you see the fact of them, for there is no 'how' except the constitution of the fact as given; with all this given him, I say, in pure experience, he asks for some ineffable union in the abstract instead, which, if he gained it, would only be a duplicate of what he has already in his full possession" (1919: 120).

philosophy does not lie in recourse to idealized conceptions of unity that replace wholesale the temporal flux of sensible life. Rather, James insists that since in practical experience “reality reveals the manyness-in-oneness of its constitution in so convincing a way,” the pursuit of truth necessarily requires forcing “our sympathetic imaginations to enlarge their bounds” (1919: 123). In any case, for James and Peirce, the irreducible reality of ‘unity-in-diversity’ is quite far from an incoherent idea—indeed, it is simply the way things manifestly *are* when the intrinsic continuity of temporal experience is kept in ‘radical’ view.

Here I have sought to portray ‘reformed’ relational realism as a *via media* between the disjunctive extremes of realistic pluralism and idealistic monism: The paradoxical compresence of diversity and unity is necessarily *real* as a condition for the determination of all objective knowledge, but, for that very reason, the objective character of ‘relation’ can never be fully represented thereby. Even though the GLFR is foreclosed as determinate conceptual or objective content, the reflexive unity of temporal action testifies to its ineliminable metaphysical presence. In virtue of the complex internal relations of practical judgment, we must possess a pre-theoretical experience of a continuous mode of action that logically precedes the representational domain of conventional discursive practices. As mentioned, in Part Three, we will find a similar *via media* on offer from the Pratyabhijñā idealists. First, however, we must introduce the pluralistic realism Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school, who propound a doctrine of naïve relational realism comparable to the early atomism of Russell and Moore.

CHAPTER II

THE NAÏVE RELATIONAL REALISM OF NYĀYA-VAIŚEŚIKA

The reality [of inherence] is explained by Being (bhāva).

-Kaṇāda (VS: 246)

Introduction

In this chapter, we turn to the Indian context and its relational philosophies, beginning with the realist¹ schools of Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, often jointly referred to as the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika tradition (although, technically speaking, we will be concerned primarily with the ontology of Vaiśeṣika rather than the logic of Nyāya.)² In accord with our guiding analogy, below I attempt to distill the core relational principles that, as I see it, render these Indian schools relational bedfellows with the 20th century logical atomists in the previous chapter. More explicitly, I argue that their shared commitment to a naïve grammatical realism—a view that posits the formal structures of language faithfully transmit the pluralistic features of a mind-independent world and their

¹ *Realism* here denotes a metaphysical position that posits facts about the world have truth values completely independent of their epistemic status. The best analogue in Sanskrit would be the term *bāhyārthavāda*, or the doctrine that the upholds the reality of the external world, but even this only applies anachronistically to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. A more apt distinction in the Indian context is perhaps that between *non-dualism* and *pluralism*. In any case, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, like the Western realists, hold that whether some fact is or isn't the case is not a matter that depends at all upon finite knowledge of such a fact. We can in this respect counter it with idealism, but recall that Peirce explicitly contrasted 'nominalism' and 'realism'.

² The Nyāya (Logic) and Vaiśeṣika (Atomist) schools reflect distinct but parallel developments in classical Indian thought, with overlapping realist proclivities but different philosophical methodologies (types of *samānatantra*). To begin with, the schools take their nominal bearings from two different *sūtras*: the *Nyāya-Sūtra* by Akṣapāda Gautama (~6th century BCE) and the *Vaiśeṣika-Sūtra* by Kaṇāda (~6th century BCE). Their most pronounced difference is the epistemological orientation of the Nyāya vs. the ontological taxonomy of the Vaiśeṣika; Gautama was concerned with proper methods of reasoning (*pramāṇa*) while Kaṇāda was a systematic thinker explicating the basic categories (*padārtha*) of existence. Both, however, share certain foundational principles that make them natural allies, most notably: a pluralistic ontology based on a common-sense realism; a belief that the world is constituted by material atoms; a general defense of theism; and a theory of causation wherein novel effects are produced by causes, and do not merely reflect manifestations of the cause (A. Chatterjee: 2011). Since both are firmly committed to a pluralistic realism and the distinct existence of universals, they share a staunch rejection of Buddhist and Advaita strands of idealism. They thus became fused into one overarching system in later Indian philosophy, even though there are important and nuanced distinctions between their systems. (Mishra (37-50) describes nineteen areas of difference between these schools, with varying degrees of import).

corresponding external relations of absolute difference—leads the Vaiśeṣika theorists into similar *ad hoc* problems that beset Russell’s dual-theory of the verbal noun.

In Section 1, I outline the philosophy of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and their descriptions of universals and relations. Like the logical atomists, they were committed to a basic pluralistic realism defined in terms of mutually exclusive, irreducible objective referents. In Peircean terms, this reflects a shared commitment to the ontological priority of Secondness, insofar as the only form of ‘relation’ that can be said to exist in this case is ultimately the relation that characterizes the oppositional determination of mutually exclusive referents. However, unlike the more empirical orientation of the Russell and Moore, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika were more explicitly categorical in their ontological approach; they believed in six mind-independent categories of objective reality. Following Ganeri (2010; 2016), we find that Nyāya was arguably committed to several forms of realism, not merely an atomic pluralism. Part of my aim here is to show that this commitment to a common-sense, scientific, and property realism renders their practical explanation of relationality *ad hoc* or incoherent. Simply put, one cannot be rationally committed to the dependent relations of a common-sense empirical realism and simultaneously maintain a cogent knowledge of ‘relation’ as a fully independent ontological category.

In Section 2, I explore the canonical definitions of *samavāya*, the categorical relation of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system. Most basically, this relation binds together the other ontological categories (*padārtha*) in concrete experience, a sort of dependence or ‘intimacy’ characteristically exemplified in the ascription of attributes-to-substances, but also extends to the relation of effect-to-causes, and whole-to-parts. Yet, despite the fact that the appearance of dependent empirical conditions itself depends upon the action of inherence, inherence *itself* is still nevertheless construed as an eternal, singular, and necessary category of objective reality

(unlike, say, the dependent relational *quality (guṇa)* of ‘*saṃyoga*,’ or conjunction, which only obtains contingently between spatially independent things.) I submit that we can thus reasonably construe *samavāya* as akin to Russell’s conception of the verbal noun; it is a relation ‘in the abstract’ that is endowed with a ‘two-fold’ capacity to (a) ‘actually relate’ as the logical copula of every judgement, and (b) denote a categorematic ‘relation in itself,’ viz., one that can meaningfully function as a self-standing logical subject of a proposition in virtue of the discursive mind’s direct objective ‘acquaintance’ therewith.

In Section 3, I show how this ambiguous logical form of *samavāya*—as *internal* and *dependent* at the level of common-sense realism, but *external* and *independent* at the level of property and scientific realism—contributed to unresolved disagreement amongst the two schools apropos its empirical form: Nyāya held that *samavāya* is cognized through perception (*pratyakṣa*), in that we directly intuit the objective relation of inherence *along with* the secondary properties of the particular substance; the Vaiśeṣika, on the other hand, believed that *samavāya* was inferable (*anumāna*), but not directly perceivable. I review some of the intractable problems that attend each of these theories, along with the primary *ad hoc* theoretical maneuver later Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers deployed to tackle these relational aporias—i.e., through the introduction of a reflexive, self-linking relation (*svarūpa sambandha*) that ‘assists’ the categorical nature of *samavāya* but remains a qualitatively *dependent* form of relation in and of itself.³

³ Most of these theoretical maneuvers are spelled out explicitly in Gaṅgeśa’s detailed discussion of *samavāya* in the *Tattvacintamāni* [TC]. Although a significantly later thinker (14th century) than our other interlocutors, Gaṅgeśa’s systematic attempt to render consistent the logical form of *samavāya* through the reflexive relational property of *svarūpa* arguably represents the most thorough analysis of the problem within the history of the Nyāya tradition. He serves as a particularly noteworthy interlocutor for our purposes because he believed, as a Naiyāyika, that inherence is directly perceived along with its relata. Thus, he defended the categorical reality of *samavāya* while also remaining true to a naïve, common-sense level of description—an approach that, I wager, can never be successful. Cf. Phillips (1995: 222-268), who includes a complete translation and commentary on this detailed portion of the TC.

The conclusion summarizes the rock and hard place of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika realism(s): Insofar as the school purports to simultaneously place an *a posteriori* common-sense realism on equal epistemic footing with an *a priori* categorical realism, they will not be able to formulate a consistent theory of *relational* realism. For a common-sense realism about empirical objects requires positing *dependent* or *internal* relations that function in accord with the perceptual judgment of everyday compounded objects (*avayavin*). In tension with this requirement is the naïve realist stipulation that *samavāya* is *itself* an irreducible categorematic referent with a singular identity common to all instances of predication. For this very formulation entails, *ipso facto*, that it must itself remain thoroughly independent of the relational dependence that characterizes practical judgments about common-sense empirical objects.⁴ In one way or another, then, our direct linguistic acquaintance with the necessary, eternal, and all-pervasive objective category of *samavāya* must somehow transform into a practical judgment of innumerable dependent, unobservable tokens of relatedness—ones that presumably remain ontologically *distinct* from the former, and thus not explicable thereby (at least without contradiction or regress). In short, Bradley’s thorn remains: How does one derive a complex unity of internal relations—as manifest in the intentional content of a particular judgement—from a world constituted solely by a pluralistic aggregate of externally related terms?

1. The Realism of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika

⁴ In the coming chapters, we will find that Dharmakīrti and Utpaladeva both indirectly exploit this core tension that characterizes the naïve realist view; namely, the tension between an internal description of *samavāya* at the level of common-sense realism, and its wholly external characterization as a self-standing categorematic object or referent. At the same time, they enlist these arguments in the service of drastically distinct philosophical agendas: The eliminativist Buddhist seeks to prove that naïve Naiyāyika realists cannot bequeath *samavāya* with a consistent logical form on pains of contradiction and regress, and thus conceptual relations cannot objectively exist. The ‘reformed’ Śāivite, however, attempts to formulate a realism that explains the objective form of relation in terms of the synthetic power (*śakti*) of judgement (*vimarśa*), rather than a categorematic term with a well-defined range of semantic and/or propositional referents.

a. Three Types of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Realisms

The relational views of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school stem from the early grammarians, who believed in the external status of meaning and reference *qua* an eternal signifier-signified relation (*vācyavācakabhāva sambandha*).⁵ This sort of reasoning paved the way for orthodox (*āstika*) schools to speculate about the objective existence of other kinds of ontological categories, or *padārtha* (literally, ‘the referent of a word’) and their relations (*sambandha*). Kaṇāda (~200-600 BCE), the founder of the Vaiśeṣika school, introduces his *Vaiśeṣika-Sūtra* with six exhaustive ontological categories; *dravya* (substance), *guṇa* (quality), *karma* (action), *sāmānya* (universal), *viśeṣa* (particularity), and *samavāya* (inherence).⁶ Praśastapāda (~600 CE), his most important commentator, adds that “all six categories possess reality (*asti*), nameability (*abhidheya*), and

⁵ Although we will focus on the Nyāya realists in this chapter (since they are the primary target of Dharmakīrti in the SP) both the Mīmāṃsā and Nyāya grammatical realists viewed ‘relation’ in objective terms; that is, as eternal kinds of changeless, atemporal referents that represent *additional reals* over and above the relata, and thus provided knowledge of the eternal link between word and meaning. As Jaimini tells us: “The original relationship between speech and object [signified] is the cause (*nimitta*) [of our knowledge] of Dharma defined as *agnihotra*, etc., [Dharma which is] not known to us by [valid means of knowledge] such as perception.” *autpattikaḥ śabdasya arthena sambandhas tasya agnihotrādīlakṣaṇasya dharmasya nimittam pratyakṣādibhir anavagatasya* (MSB: F24, 5-6. trans. from the French by Eltschinger 2007: 120). Kumārila notes in the ŚV (*sāp*, 140-141) that “through perception, [the person who learns speech] grasps (*paśyati*) [first] the speech, the adults and the [thing] to be expressed; by inference from the action (*ceṣṭā*) [following the speech, this person grasps] then (*ca*) that the listener has understood [the thing] to be expressed. Since [the fact would remain] otherwise inexplicable, he can know [then] the capacity which is based on both [the word and the object: it is indeed] by presumption [that] one apprehends [directly] the relation, which requires [in all] three means of valid knowledge [in order to be known].” *śabdāvṛddhābhideyāṃś ca pratyakṣeṅātra paśyati / śrotuś ca pratipannatvam anumānena ceṣṭayā // anyathānupapattyā ca budhyec chaktim dvayāśritām / arthāpattyānubudhyante sambandham tripamāṇakam* (ibid.: 128 f.59). Eltschinger summarizes: “in the *sambandhākṣepavāda* (*sā*) Kumārila establishes the existence (*sattā*) or reality (*sadbhāva*) of a linguistic relationship; in the *sambandhākṣepaparihāra* he establishes its permanence (*nityatā*). Between these two sections, there are several foundational chapters for the relation...where Kumārila establishes respectively the real permanence (*kūṣasthanityatā*) of the two correlates, linguistic (*śabda* as *varṇa*) and extralinguistic (*artha* as *ākṛti/jāti*): the real permanence of the correlates ensures the practical permanence (*anādinityatā*, *vyavahāranityatā*) of the relation, and hence of linguistic exchanges (*vyavahāra*). And according to ŚV *sā* 3, it is by relying (*āśritya*) on permanent relations between speech and meaning that the Bhāṣyakāra established the intrinsic validity of the Veda” (2007: 3.2.2). Hence, while these orthodox schools had different views as to whether a relation was ultimately directly perceived or merely inferred, on all realist accounts, a relation represents an independently existent, eternal kind of *thing* that is the ultimate cause of a determinate cognition. (Note that in Chapter 5 we discuss Bharṭṛhari (~5th century CE), a grammarian who offers a kind of monistic ‘idealism of the word’ that rejects the realist supposition that discrete individuals, autonomously intelligible independent of the power of speech, represent the referents of propositional expressions (cf. Phillips (37), and Houben (1995a)).

⁶ *dharmaviśeṣa prasūtāt dravyaguṇakarmasāmānya viśeṣasamavāyānām padārthhānām sādharmyavaidharmyābhyām tattvajñānānniḥśreyasam* (VS: 1.1.4).

knowability (*jñeya*)” (PB: 11).⁷ Hence, their realism extended not only to the categories of nominal and atomic particulars as the substantival bearers of independent universals, but also the relation between these distinct categories.⁸ The distinguishing characteristic of the naïve aspect of the school is this robust form of systematic or categorical realism, sometimes called “extreme” or “radical” realism,⁹ which arguably represents the most comprehensive and sophisticated form ever devised in the Indian milieu.

The general methodology behind Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika realism is that anything that appears as a singular term or relation in thought or speech denotes an irreducible kind of real existent, in theory exhaustively explained with reference to one of these fundamental objective categories. For the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, a total reflective compliance obtains between the distinguishable contents of cognition and the extra-mental order of the external world. Just as Russell believed, we know the objective existence of pluralistic reals directly in virtue of our immediate acquaintance with reality through language. As Śaṅkara Mīśra affirms in a well-known passage of his *Upaskāra*, “only divine [i.e., linguistic] consciousness is our resource in the apprehension of things.”¹⁰ A conceptualization (*pratīti*) and its verbal designation (*vyavahāra*) must therefore find their corresponding ground in some distinctions in the real world, and therefore any determinate appearance in consciousness is considered evidence of the objectivity of that form. Faithfully transmitting the determinate structures of a mind-independent world in the distinctive forms of language, cognition discloses not only changeless substances along with their protean

⁷ Note that the criterion of knowability does not necessarily threaten Nyāya realism, particularly if we are willing to accept divine knowledge. As Ganeri puts it, “[c]ertainly, what realism demands is only that there *could be* verification-transcendent truths, not that there actually *are* any” (2014: chap. 7 [emphasis mine]).

⁸ Halbfass notes that although Praśastapāda does not articulate the relationship of the basic *padārtha* to the grammatical categories of nouns, adjective, and verb, etc., and does not argue that they are linguistically derived, one can—as many modern and traditional thinkers have—discern the likely influence of the grammarians on early Vaiśeṣika realism (78).

⁹ See, for instance, Dravid, R. R. (chap. II) and Dalvi, R., (112).

¹⁰ *saṃvid eva hi bhagavatī vastūpagame naḥ śaraṇam* (VS 7.2.26).

motions and universal qualities, but also the empirical wholes that obtain over and above their atomic constituents.¹¹

In his outline of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system, Ganeri (2010; 2016) suggests that they were committed to three distinct models of realism: The first is a *scientific realism* that affirms the existence of unobservable entities as postulated by its categorical system; the second is a *common-sense realism*—or what I would also call a form of *perceptual realism*—that upholds the independent existence of composite wholes (*avayavin*) as encountered in everyday experience; and the third is a *property realism* that extends to monadic universals and their dyadic relations.

With respect to their ‘scientific’ realism, the Vaiśeṣikas believed in several non-composite, unobservable and changeless substances¹²: these comprise the atomic (*paramanu*) elements (earth, water, fire, and air), souls (*ātman*), aether (*ākāśa*), space, time, and the mental organs (*manas*).¹³ The elemental atoms are innumerable, indestructible, invisible, and irreducible substances whose aggregation constitutes observable entities. Alternatively, the indestructible substances of space, time, and the aether are all-pervasive and unitary. And, interestingly, although souls are also eternal and omnipresent, the mental organs (*manas*) have an atomic structure, in that they have no extension; they are unobservable and infinitely small (Halbfass: 71).

¹¹ The Buddhists, on the other hand, argued that the admission that wholes can be decomposed into parts is simply incompatible with a common-sense realism about the concepts that designate wholes themselves (see Matilal 1971: 50–55).

¹² The definition of ‘substance’ in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika is no less fraught and complex than in Western philosophy. Kaṇāda claims that “the mark of substance is the possession of quality or action, and being the material or inherent cause” *kriyāguṇavat samavāyikāraṇamiti dravyalakṣaṇam* (VS 1.1.15). In any case, the idea of substance as the changeless bearer of accidental properties, ones that can be represented as universal objects in consciousness, has close affinities with Aristotelian categories and their dependent kinds of relational properties.

¹³ *prthivyāpastejo vāyurākāśaṃ kālo digātmā mana iti dravyāni* (VS. 1.1.5).

Their ‘extreme’ realism is therefore evident in their acceptance of the independent existence of (i) composite, observable wholes; (ii) the universals used to designate them and their independent properties; and (iii) the inherence relation (*samavāya*) that functions to unite all of these diverse categories in a concrete experience. This is what Ganeri means when he characterizes the Naiyāyikas as trying to wed a common-sense perceptual realism with a property and scientific realism. As Halbfass further explains,

whereas the Vaiśeṣika considers the noneternal substances to be effects of, and derived from, the eternal substances, it does not regard them as less real. They, too, are real substrates of real qualities and other attributes. They have their irreducible identity and reality as long as they last. The Vaiśeṣika tries to explain and defend their precarious ontological status in its peculiar and controversial theory of the ‘whole’ (*avayavin*) as an entity over and above its constituent parts (*avayava*)...The reality of the *avayavin* is required by its identity in thought and speech. But this does not mean that it can be reduced to a merely cognitive or semantic identity. It is, according to the Vaiśeṣika, reality in the fullest, that is, physical and cosmological, sense (94).

Given this Vaiśeṣika commitment to the reality of *avayavins* over-and-above their *avayavas*, the principle of the supervenience of the properties of wholes onto their constituent elements does not ontologically obtain. For the realist school of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, the objects we perceive in daily life actually exist ‘out-there’ in the precise manner in which we observe them—that is, as distinct wholes that bear a plurality of distinct, universal qualities. Although the material that comprises these wholes can theoretically decompose into distinct, imperceptible atomic unities, compositional wholes abide as independently real entities; so, e.g., an abstract quality of a whole cloth (its ‘clothness’) does not reflect a mere *epistemic* notion due to a lack of perceptual resolution of the distinct material substrate (its individual threads).

This realist approach conveys the Vaiśeṣika’s diametrical opposition to both Buddhist Abhidharmic reductionism and Yogācāra/Advaita idealism; not only were non-composite entities ‘real’ in terms of possessing an irreducible ontological status independent of finite cognition, but the composite wholes of gross perception, and the universals that designate them, *also* denote

fundamental, objective categories (although, we should add, not necessarily of equal ontological status).¹⁴ To some degree, then, it makes sense that one would chalk up some of this unregenerate categorical realism as a reaction against the deconstructive and idealistic challenges of Buddhism and Advaita—although I would refrain from reducing the philosophical developments of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika to a mere sociological explanation.

b. Universals and Relations in the Vaiśeṣika System

The term ‘universal’ roughly corresponds to the Sanskrit *sāmānya* for the Vaiśeṣika, while the Nyāya philosophers prefer the similar term *jāti*, often translated as ‘natural kind.’ Although Kaṇāda does not offer a precise definition of *sāmānya*,¹⁵ Annambhaṭṭa’s *Tarkasamgraha* articulates the basic Nyāya perspective: “A universal is eternal, singular, and resides in a plurality of things (*anekānugata*); it occurs in substance, quality and action.”¹⁶ In comparison, Praśastapāda encapsulates the Vaiśeṣika concept of *sāmānya* with this series of glosses: “There are two kinds of universals; ultimate (*sattā*) and non-ultimate. They are instantiated by all objects of their respective domain, residing in many without a division of their essential unity. In [this] undivided identity, they operate continuously in the substrates of many forms, and produce

¹⁴ The Nyāya thinkers make a distinction between *sattā* and *bhāvatva*, or ‘existence’ and ‘being’ that is somewhat analogous to Russell’s distinction between ‘existence’ and ‘subsistence’. While particulars, for instance, have both existence and being, universals only have ‘being’—they depend upon particulars for their instantiation, as a dent depends upon the surface for its appearance. Thus, although both universals and particulars are ‘real’, they are so in different ways (though what, precisely, this distinction entails is not necessarily clear (cf. Chakrabarti 1975: 366).

¹⁵ We should note that Kaṇāda does gloss *sāmānya*, along with the particularizing term *viśeṣa*, as ‘relative to the understanding’ (*sāmānyaviśeṣa iti buddhyapekṣam* (VS 1.2.3)), which could suggest a ‘conceptualism’ about the reality of universals wherein they do not reflect ontological categories, but rather only logical or notional categories. But as Halbfass notes (116-117), none of Kaṇādas commentators adopt this angle; all of them, including Praśastapāda, assume a thoroughgoing realism with respect to *sāmānya*.

¹⁶ *nityam ekam anekāgunataṃ sāmānyam / dravya-guṇa-karma-vṛtti* (TS v. 82).

cognitions of repetition and conformation.”¹⁷ In this regard, we can discern that the Vaiśeṣika theory of universals shares much with Platonism; universals are the timeless and singular classes that refer to the ideal constituents of distinct empirical substances.¹⁸ They are irreducible conceptual unities that—despite their ever-shifting instantiation in a plurality of objects—are mutually differentiated, forever unchanging, and transmitted through the grammatical structures of language. However, unlike Platonism, universals have the capacity to directly cause, or produce, corresponding mental cognitions (*pratyayakāraṇa*)—they are not wholly distinct from their physical instantiation.

This causal potency of universals, particularly in Praśastapāda’s work, is extended to thinking about relational forms as well. The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school believed that successful action, and thus liberation, depends upon determinate cognitions (*savikalpaka-jñāna*) of an explicitly external (i.e., mind-independent) world.¹⁹ In this respect, all determinate cognitions involve at least three independently existent referents: a determinans/qualifier (*viśeṣaṇa*), a determinandum/qualified (*viśeṣya*), and their respective relationship (*saṃsarga*). Since each empirical cognition discloses the relation of qualifier-qualified, the relation between these must itself represent an external and objective reality. So, for instance, in the proposition ‘this

¹⁷ *sāmānyam dvividham param aparam ca / svaviśayasarvagatam abhinnātmakam anekavṛtti ekadvibahuṣv ātmasvarūpānugamapratyayakāri svarūpābhedenādhāreṣu prabandhena vartamānam anuvṛttipratyayakāraṇam* (PS 311.14).

¹⁸ The Nyāya view also differs from Plato in two critical respects: Firstly, Plato and Nyāya disagree about the ontological status of particulars; while Plato holds that a timeless Realm of Forms represents the ‘true’ eternal reality behind the appearances of imperfect particulars, in the Nyāya view universals and particulars each bear ontological weight—both categories are disclosed in cognition and thus have objective validity (Bhattacharya: 15). Thus, as Chakrabarti rightly affirms, the Nyāya actually align with Aristotle here in the sense that no unobservable, perfect ‘cowness’ exists independently of each cow that makes them what they are, but an identical ‘cowness’ necessarily relates to all cows and is instantiated by each particular. More importantly, though, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika portray universals as *empirical entities* that actually *cause* the corresponding content of a cognition; insofar as they are causally implicated in the objective world, they are not strictly transcendental in any Platonic sense.

¹⁹ Gaṅgeśa, for instance, will define a relation as that which causes a determinate or ‘qualificatory’ cognition (*viśiṣṭadhīniyāmaka*) as distinguished from a ‘non-qualificatory cognition’ (*aviśiṣṭadhīniyāmaka*): *sambandhaścāviśiṣṭavyāvṛttaviśiṣṭadhīniyāmakah* (TC: 652). Here, ‘non-qualificatory’ cognition reflects a *nirvikalpa* status. Matilal discusses the possibility that Gaṅgeśa held that even a single cognitive state can be both qualificatory and non-qualificatory (1990: 212-13).

table is brown’, (i) the particular table, (ii) the universal predicate brownness, and (iii) the relation between them—denoted in English by the copula ‘is’, but with no comparable referent in Sanskrit—all exist as distinct objective realities. Hence the fact that qualified cognitions bear the mark of relation entails that a corresponding *ontological category* actually *causes* the predicative form of this cognition. And like a universal, although ‘inherence’ manifests in a diversity of objects and directly contributes as a causal factor to the production of qualified cognitions, it retains an inviolable status as a singular and eternal categorematic referent.²⁰

In contrast to the categories of Aristotle and Kant, though, ‘relation’ (*sambandha*) is not actually a separate fundamental category (*padārtha*) in Nyāya. Instead, different types of *sambandha* fall into different categories; there is thus technically no general form of relation-as-such. So, for instance, while Kaṇāda presents the *sambandha* of inherence (*samavāya*) as its own *padārtha*, he classifies the *sambandha* of contact, or conjunction (*saṃyoga*) as a type of quality (*guṇa*). Further, the early Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika only accepted these two as relations. But, as we discuss below, with the later addition of *absence* (*abhava*) as a topic of analytic scrutiny, the Navya-Nyāya movement developed the notion of *svarūpa sambandha*, or the ‘self-linking’ relation, as a necessary additional factor to explain qualified cognitions of negative objects. On the whole, though, *samavāya* is far and away the most important ontological relation in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system, and certainly the one over which the most ink has been spilt.

²⁰ See Bhattacharya (8-14) and Gupta (26-7) for discussions on the basic Nyāya view of relations following the innovations of Gaṅgeśa.

2. The *Samavāya Sambandha*

a. Canonical Definitions of *Samavāya*

We can broadly conceive of *samavāya* in the Vaiśeṣika system as that which creates ontological solidarity amongst the distinct categories of objective reality such that they appear co-extensive within experience or qualified judgment. It stems from the verbal root *i* ('to go to/towards') + the prefixes *sam* ('together/with/junction') and *ava* (a general directional prefix that connotes 'off, from, out, away,' etc.), which conveys the sense of a whole being constituted in virtue of its parts 'moving together.' For this reason, *samavāya* often referred to as the metaphysical 'glue' that binds the distinct categories of reality together in judgment.²¹ In this sense, *samavāya* explains the concrete unity of the categories after their abstract decomposition (Halbfass: 147). Unsurprisingly, then, establishing the reality of *samavāya* was a chief concern of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosophers, who sought to exhaustively capture and express the primitive structures of the world in categorical terms.

Let's start with Kaṇāda, who first defines *samavāya* as "that which produces the cognition 'this is here' [or 'this subsists in this'] with respect to a cause and its effect."²² This definition relays the most important and persistent characteristic of *samavāya*—the fact that it causes the form of a qualified cognition that apprehends some universal attribute as localized within a certain perceptual area of consciousness. In this sense, Kaṇāda defines *samavāya* from the common-sense perspective; it causes the perception that a whole object is the 'container' for a set of diverse characteristics 'contained' within its own extensive form.²³ A canonical example

²¹ See, e.g., and Phillips (1995), Oetke (2012), Ganeri (2016), and Gupta (1984).

²² *ihedam iti yataḥ kāryakāraṇayoḥ sa samavāyaḥ* (VS 7.2.26).

²³ Jayanta Bhaṭṭa writes "there is a division due to the distinction of apprehensions (*pratīti*), but a division in space is not acknowledged. Hence, it is declared that inherence occurs in this case."*pratītibhedādbhedo'sti deśabhedastu neṣyate / tenātra kalpyate vṛttiḥ samavāyaḥ sa ucyate* (NM: 35). Very similar arguments are given by Vācaspati

is the perception of a cloth that inheres in its threads; in this case, according to Kaṇāda, we actually really cognize two distinct entities in the exact same location—the universal ‘clothness’ (*qua* superstratum) inheres in the material threads (*qua* substratum). Since we validly cognize *both* the whole *and* the parts as *independent* referents (albeit experienced co-extensively), Kaṇāda reasons that we must also posit a distinct relational referent to do this connective work.²⁴

Praśastapāda’s influential expansion of Kaṇāda’s definition arguably represents the most cited interpretation of inherence: “Inherence is that which obtains between inseparables (*ayutasiddha*) that stand in a container-contained [or perhaps substratum-superstratum] relation (*ādhāryādhārabhāva*) [and] is the cause of the cognition ‘this subsists here.’”²⁵ He later expands that *samavāya*: obtains between substances, qualities, actions, universals, and particulars; is known known in terms of cause and effect (and *vice versa*); it applies to instances of substratum-superstratum in which the terms are inseparably united; it causes the cognition “this is here”; and it accounts for the dependence of distinct entities of limited extension.²⁶ In total, then, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas came to believe that *samavāya* obtains between five types of relata: 1. The whole and the part. 2. The quality and the qualified. 3. The motion and the moved. 4. Particularity and eternal substance. 4. The generic character and the individual manifestation.²⁷ Note that these definitions now include both a common-sense perceptual realism that portrays *samavāya* as

Miśra and Śrīdhara (Gupta: 17). In this respect, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas also took *samavāya* as a constitutively spatial relation (albeit *internal*), one that enables a subject to identify the presence of a universal in *the exact same place* as a particular substrate, despite the fact that we can discern their independent existence in a *post hoc* analysis of the immediate cognition.

²⁴ Kaṇāda’s association of *samavāya* with a general cause and effect (*kārya-kāraṇayoḥ*) is perhaps misleading, as the later Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas distinguish between three types of causation: *samavāyikāraṇa* (i.e. the inherent cause); *asamavāyikāraṇa* (i.e. the non-inherent cause), and *nimittakāraṇa* (i.e. the efficient or instrumental cause). Despite the name of the “non-inherent” cause, *samavāya* acts as an indirect factor in its categorization. As one can infer, then, the third type is not actually explained in virtue of the *samavāya* relation.

²⁵ *ayutasiddhānām ādhāryādhārabhūtānām yaḥ sambandha ihapratyayahetuḥ sa samavāyaḥ* (PS: 14).

²⁶ *dravyaguṇakarmasāmānyaviśeṣānām kāryākāraṇabhūtānām akaryākāraṇabhūtānām va ayuta-siddhānāmādhāryādhārabhāvenāvasthitānāmihedam iti buddhīyato bhavati, yataścā sarvagatānām adhigatānytvānāmaviṣvabhāvaḥ sa samavāyākhyāḥ saṃbandhaḥ* (ibid: 773-74).

²⁷ *avayavāyavavinor jātiviyaktor guṇaguṇinoḥ kriyākriyāvator nityadravyaviśeṣayośca yaḥ saṃbandhaḥ sa samavāyaḥ* (NSM: 6).

obtaining between a regional whole and its constitutive parts (“this is here” qualified cognitions), as well as the property and scientific levels of description that include the relations between distinct universals and unobservable substances.²⁸

Although Kaṇāda does not give a detailed account of the *ontological* properties of *samavāya*, he proclaims that “the reality [of *samavāya*] is explained by *bhāva* [being].”²⁹ In other words, the metaphysical distinctness of *samavāya*, or the idea that every instance of *samavāya* reflects a singular type of eternal relation, is justified through an analogy with the abstract property ‘existence’ (since everything that exists is, *ipso facto*, instantiating that singular universal notion). Śāṅkara Mīśra’s *Upaskāra* on this verse clarifies the point:

Its reality, i.e., its unity, is to be explained by existence, i.e., by being. Just as one ‘existence’ in all cases generates the cognition of the existent [thing], so too does only one ‘inherence’ generate the cognition of inherence, since there is no particular mark, and no distinct self-marking [of instances of *samavāya*]. For we recognize no particular mark of *samavāya* by which we could apprehend a variety. Therefore, just like existence, *samavāya* is eternal, because impermanence is not applicable to an undifferentiated existent even when there is a division of time, space, etc.³⁰

Here we see the intuitive scholastic principle of *ens et unum convertuntur* at work the Indian relational realist context; the gloss of the reality (*tattvam*) of inherence is just its metaphysical *unity* (*ekatvam*), which is the same sort of unity that characterizes the nature of being (*bhāva*). Just as ‘being’ represents a single categorical notion that inheres in all existents without internal differentiation, so too does inherence itself retain a fundamentally *undivided* nature while participating in diffuse particular circumstances. Taking their bearings from Kaṇāda’s analogy

²⁸ Cf. Tachikawa (2020: 25-7) for Udayana’s elaboration of *samavāya* in terms of a *dharma-dharmin* relationship of material causation.

²⁹ *tattvam bhāvena* (VS: 7.2.28).

³⁰ *tattvam ekatvam bhāvena sattayā vyākhyātam. yathaika sattā sarvatra sadbuddhi-pravartikā tathaika eva samavāyah sarvatra samavetabuddhi-pravartakaḥ svaliṅgāviśeṣād viśeṣaliṅgābhāvāc ca, na hi samavāyasya viśeṣaliṅgam bhedakaṃ liṅgamākalayāmo yena nānātvam abhyupagacchāmaḥ. ate-eva nityakālādibhede 'py abhinnaṣya sattāvadevānityatvāyogāt* (VSU: 246).

with *bhāva*, later Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas came to agree that *samavāya* acts much like an abstract universal category: it is one, unchanging and eternal.³¹

b. Samavāya vs. Saṃyoga

One way to grasp the logical form of *samavāya* is through its contrast with *saṃyoga*, or conjunction. Viśvanātha describes the latter as the “coming together of two or more [objects] that were previously separated from one another.”³² *Saṃyoga* thus corresponds to an empirical principle of physical contiguity between discontinuous substances. When objects are directly in contact, and appear with no empty space between them, they become terms in this relation. For instance, in ‘the pot is on the table,’ the table represents the substratum (*anuyogī*) and the pot is the dependent term (*pratiyogī*). The objects in the *saṃyoga* relation thus occur between substances that exist as such *prior to* the conjunctive relation. Further, for the causal relationship in conjunction, either or both terms may bring about the relation—viz., the conjunction of *A* and *B* can emerge through the motion of *A* and/or the motion of *B*, which is why the capacity for *saṃyoga*, as a type of *guṇa*, can be considered adjectival to each relatum taken independently. Inherence, on the other hand, functions according to *productive potency*, where the relation signifies the capacity for a particular spatio-temporal substance to exhibit a certain universal property or quality. In this sense, it signifies that a mereological *asymmetry* obtains between the relata, since the inherent quality depends upon the whole substrate for its instantiation, but not *vice versa*.

Since it relates properties and substances, and yet retains a universal, self-standing identity, it does not quite fit any simple container-contained formalization. For example, if it

³¹ See, e.g., the *Tarkasaṃgraha-dīpikā: nityasambandhaḥ samavāyaḥ* (TD: v.84).

³² *aprāptayostu yā prāptiḥ saiva saṃyoga īritāḥ* (BP:115).

were simply an internal, or formal, relation between a certain spatio-temporal substance and its constitutive properties, the relation would perish when the terms no longer instantiate the relation. *Samavāya*, however, persists whether or not any particular substance and its qualities happen to instantiate it, due to its pervasive and eternal unity. K.C. Varadacari explains that the “essential difference between the two types of contact...lies in the fact that in *saṃyoga* one can disconnect oneself from the object just like a copulatory link between two carriages, but one cannot disconnect the *dravya* from *guṇa* in a mechanical way. It is a metaphysical distinction, not a mechanical disjunction, that is possible between the *dravya* and *guṇa* or *guṇa* and *sāmānya*” (in Jha 1992: 14). This description captures the curious logical form of *samavāya*, which remains metaphysically independent as a categorematic term, but also, in *practical* terms, necessarily manifests as a dependent relation between a quality and its substrate. Though a *guṇa* and a *dravya* appear *inseparable* at the common-sense level of description, where a universal quality represents one constitutive aspect of some particular substance, all three factors (the two relata and the *sambandha* itself) are decomposable *a priori* into distinct objective categories of existence.

Interestingly, the Nyāya argued that *saṃyoga itself* depends upon the reality (*vāstava*) of inherence as its own category of being (*padārtha*), since there is no way for movement to be concretely perceived unless the *saṃyoga-guṇa* inheres in its object(s) and causes that perception. Shastri dramatizes this reification of relations as “realism with a vengeance which stands in radical conflict with the idealism of the Buddhist” (1976: 376). As we will see, this ‘vengeful’ realism prompts a predictable retort from the Indian eliminativists like Dharmakīrti and Śrīharṣa: What binds *samavāya* to *saṃyoga*? If it is another *samavāya* relation, then we have a regress.

The Nyāya logicians, well aware of the regress arguments against relational reification, had to find alternative justifications for the existence of *samavāya*.

3. Is *Samavāya* Internal or External?

a. The Disagreement Over *Samavāya*'s Empirical Status

As briefly touched upon, although the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika share a fair portion of philosophical ground, one germane area of disagreement involves the perceptible nature of *samavāya*; namely, is this relation directly perceived or merely inferred as a necessary category of reality? This debate is important, as it speaks to an awareness of the type of Bradleyan ambiguity we have been scouting—i.e., between the internal and external status of *samavāya*—within the Indian schools themselves. In this regard, consider Praśastapāda's relatively early commentary on the VS (~2nd century BCE), where he claims that *samavāya* is a self-subsistent category of existence.³³ Yet, he also subsequently insists that *samavāya* is “contained” or “subsists” (*āśrita*) in the particular object.³⁴ The subsequent commentator Śrīdhara must have noted the complications here, because he glosses *āśrita* as an *epistemic* claim; the relation is *apprehended* (*upalabdha*) as *dependent* upon the substance.³⁵ But, if *samavāya* is *always* apprehended as *dependent*, that means we either do not cognize empirical reality as it *really is* (viz., we must

³³ *samavāyasya nānyā vṛttir asti, tasmāt svātmavṛttiḥ* (PS: 784). “There is no other subsistence (*vṛtti*) of *samavāya*; it is thus self-subsisting.” Dalvi explains that “[inherence] neither can be related by contact, as only substances can be in contact, nor can it inhere in the relata by a further inherence since, like Being (*sattva*), there is only one inherence” (60). Although the *saṃyoga-guṇa* exists in the object through *samavāya*, because *samavāya* is not categorized as a *guṇa*, but rather a *padārtha*, it needs no further quality of relatedness to obtain. It is simply taken as fundamental. Pertinently, the Jain commentator Vidyānandin attacks this position, on the grounds that if inherence is not based on the things it characterizes, then no actual connection obtains: “Inherence is not a relation, because it is in no way based [on the relata]. Whatever is in no way based [on the relata], that is not actually a relation, e.g. space, etc...But inherence is in no way based [on the relata]. Therefore, it is not a relation.” *samavāyo na sambandha, sarvathānāśritatvāt / yo yaḥ sarvathānāśritaḥ, sa na sambandhaḥ, yathā digādiḥ / sarvathānāśritaś ca samavāyaḥ, tasmān na sambandha*. (SŚP: 38.7-10).

³⁴ *āśritatvaṃ cānyatra nitya dravyebhyaḥ* (PS: 785).

³⁵ *āśritatvaṃ ca paratantratayopalabdhiḥ* (PSNK: 784).

give up on a common-sense perceptual realism), or re-define the *samavāya* relation as dependent on its terms (viz., in which case, it is no longer a self-standing, eternal and unchanging ontological category).³⁶

To address such dilemmas, the Vaiśeṣika ontologists opined that since *samavāya* cannot be related to another object through an independent relation on pain of regress, it must constitute *its own* relation. However, if *samavāya* is its own relation, then it is supra-sensible, insofar as every other positive object and category is only perceptible *in virtue of* the necessary reflexive nature of *samavāya* itself. Further, the Vaiśeṣikas argued that, unlike *saṃyoga*—which is clearly perceived as the result of a type of motion between two distinct substances—*samavāya itself* never appears as anything perceptible. One can therefore plausibly infer that this would not occur if the relation itself was some independent empirical percept. For these reasons, the later Vaiśeṣikas identified *samavāya* with something like *manas*, or *kāla*, in the sense that it is a positive ontological category distinct from the *ātman*, but itself does not inhere in anything else (cf. Thakur 2008: 437-8).

In the other corner, the Nyāya logicians believed that *samavāya* must be perceptible as a distinct category to account for the relational structure of determinate cognitions, and due to the question-begging of having to conceptually infer a cognition of inherence that is already assumed to be relational in its essence. Nyāya philosophers also maintained this position with an eye towards the problem of *negative* propositions, where at least one of the relata is not a

³⁶ Udyotakara takes a different approach. He writes that *samavāya* does not subsist anywhere insofar as it is intrinsically characterized by the five categories (*pañca-padārtha*), and “anything that does not subsist anywhere can be designated by *pañca-padārtha*, as for instance an atom.” *pañca padārtha vṛtti sadbaviṣayatvāt paramāṇuvat* (*Nyāyavārtika* [NV]: 159). He concludes “[the subsistence of *samavāya*] is an illusion” (*mīthyā pratyaya evas iti* (ibid)). The point here, I take it, is that inherence is like an unobservable atom that does not exist extensionally, whose intrinsic nature is characterized by the other five basic *a priori* categories of existence. But this feels like a cop out, insofar as he has reduced the ontological distinctness of *samavāya* into the five other categories. We should note, in this regard, that Udyotakara is the only classical Nyāya thinker who holds this understanding of *samavāya* (Jha 1992: 16).

positive entity.³⁷ Consider the phrase ‘there is no pot on the table’; here, the absence of the pot (*pratiyogin*) and the table itself (*anuyogin*) are perceptually recognized. But when we recognize a negative entity as a predicate, what is its *ontological* relation to the material subject? After all, the mere *absence* of a pot cannot be related to the table through either *samavāya* or *saṃyoga*, as it is not a positive universal or an independent substance, respectively.³⁸ In this case, some *other* relation must make recognition of the absence possible.

The Naiyāyikas reasoned that the relational cause of this judgment must be a *ghaṭa-svarūpa*, a type of *guṇa* that represents a property *internal to the specific pot*. Through this dependent relational property, the *samavāya* conveyed in an act of cognition becomes perceptible. Since this relation could not be *samavāya*, because knowledge is an attribute of the substantial soul, and thus cannot bear any inherence; nor could it be *saṃyoga*, because the act of knowledge is not an eternal substance; the Nyāya solution was to posit a *svarūpa sambandha*, or ‘self-linking’ property, one that enables the *samavāya* to be perceived in cases where neither *samavāya* on its own, nor *saṃyoga*, can effect determinate knowledge. Here, the relation that renders cognition perceptual is a *fully dependent* property of the *anuyogin* or *pratiyogin* in question, rather than a property of *samavāya* itself.

b. The Svarūpa Sambandha

The dependent status of the *svarūpa sambandha* was extended to resolve several problems within later Nyāya philosophy: it stops the Bradleyan regress of *samavāya*; it offered a way to

³⁷ Gaṅgeśa, in particular, argued for the empirical status of relation with negative propositions in mind (see Matilal’s (1968) study on the Navya-Nyāya doctrine of negation and its semantic repercussions).

³⁸ For example, in the judgment *ghaṭam jānāmi* (‘I know the pot’), three factors are recognized: (a) the pot as the object of knowledge; (b) the act of knowing said ‘pot’; (c) and the knower as the substratum of knowledge. (b) and (c) are related through *samavāya*, as knowledge is said to inhere in the substance of the individual soul. But there must *also* be a relation between (a) and (b) because this accounts for the determinate content of the act of knowledge itself.

account for the determinate knowledge of negative propositions; it could provide a means to relate the substance of time to non-substantival entities; and it prevented abstractions of abstractions from designating self-contained universals (*sāmānya*) independent of first-order qualifiers (e.g., abstracting *pratiyogitātva* from *pratiyogitā*, and *pratiyogitātvatva* from *pratiyogitātva*, *ad infinitum*).³⁹ As usual, though, this comes at quite a price. For the ‘peculiar’ dependence of the *svarūpa sambandha* also threatens to break down the entire edifice of Nyāya categorical realism. Gupta summarizes the problem:

In the case of the *svarūpa-sambandha*, Nyāya has been forced by its own logic to accept a relation, which though relating two relata, is at the same time, non-different from one of the relata. In normal case [*sic*], Nyāya had already postulated a relation of identity (*tādātmya*), connoting an identity of an entity with itself. But in *svarūpa* relation [*sic*], we find something more, it is not simply identity, it is more than that, insofar as it relates itself with some other entity... The fact that Nyāya has accepted it to be non-different from one of the relata poses a serious threat to Nyāya stand [*sic*]. If in the one case a relation can be non-different from the relata, why not in other cases? Why should we regard ‘*saṃyoga*’ or ‘*samavāya*’ as different from the relata? In the case of these, we can say that they become *viśeṣaṇa* (qualifier) to the relata and thus constitute a *viśeṣaṇatā-sambandha*. If in one case, the *viśeṣaṇatā sambandha* is non-different from the relata, why not in other case? (1984: 247-51).

In other words, the identity ‘relation’ represents a conceptual property of each thing solely with respect to *itself*. But the dependence relation of *svarūpa* holds between conceptually *distinct* relata. Hence it cannot provide the means of solidarity in judgments of relational dependence without ceasing to remain an autonomously intelligible relation in its own right: it would, instead, become just another internal property of one of the substantive relata taken *in isolation* (e.g., like *tādātmya*). At this point, though, the justification for keeping *samavāya* as a distinct independent category starts to unravel. Thus, Matilal remarks apropos the *svarūpa sambandha*: “carried to its logical conclusion, the doctrine destroys the traditional system of categories” (1968: 44).

In sum, the Vaiśeṣika’s attribution of a reflexive function to *samavāya* smacks of the *ad hoc* maneuvers of the early Russell. But the Naiyāyika solution offloads the problem of

³⁹ See Gupta (1981), who provides a nifty outline of the ‘peculiarity’ of the *svarūpa sambandha* in Navya-Nyāya.

dependent self-linkage to certain relational properties (*svarūpa-guṇa*) of the particular objects themselves. The principle of parsimony would then seem to oblige the Naiyāyika to just dispense with the category of *samavāya* altogether, now that it serves no apparent explanatory purpose. Even worse, this means that the eternal and inviolate category of *samavāya* comes to automatically depend for its own empirical expression on a separate relational *property* of *objects*—a property that can *already* only relate to the substance through inherence itself! On either account, we are left with significant conceptual problems.

c. The Ambiguous Logical Form of Samavāya

The dispute over the perceptual status of *samavāya* gestures at the fundamental tension between the way relations function at the common-sense level of description (i.e., as an ‘internal’ relation between a universal property and a particular partite whole) vs. the scientific and property levels of description (i.e., as a distinct categorematic referent, essentially individuated as a formal unity through its external relations to the other categories). Accordingly, one finds the literature on the subject peppered with disagreement over the internal or external form of *samavāya*. Some writers, particularly when compared with *saṃyoga*, describe *samavāya* decisively as an internal relation. For instance, S. Radhakrishnan writes that “*saṃyoga* takes place between two things of the same nature which exist disconnectedly and are for a time brought into conjunction. It is an external relation while *samavāya* is internal [*sic*] relation” (1927: 217). More recently, S.M.S. Chari claims, “[*saṃyoga*] is purely an external relation and ceases to exist the moment the objects are separated. In the case of the latter [i.e., that between a substance and its qualities], we have to conceive an inherent relation or internal relation. The Naiyāyikas describe such a relation as *samavāya*” (1988: 44). For Chari, ‘inherence’ is basically just synonymous with ‘internal.’

On the face of it, the categorization of *samavāya* as internal and *saṃyoga* as external appears to make perfect intuitive sense; after all, isn't inherence a relation between two *inseparables* (*ayutasiddhi*) of a substratum-superstratum (*ādhāryādhārabhāva*) sort, while *saṃyoga* represents a contingent relation between *independent* substances?⁴⁰ If we take Praśastapāda definition of *samavāya*, at least, it seems to fit the bill as a formal type of *internal* relation that ensures a certain universal is localized 'here'—that is, it causes a conceptual predicate to be perceived as a constitutive *part* of some empirical *whole*. Here, at the common-sense level of description, the distinct universals that presumably cause the cognitions of a certain substantial whole appear as *internal to* that respective whole: When I see a red stop sign, the universal redness that inheres in the whole coextends with the unobservable substances of the earth atoms that compose the metal and presumably lack this property. As far as my immediate sense perception is concerned, then, the property of 'redness' is internally related to the complex perceptual content 'stop-sign' in a container-contained relation; this is just what it means for the relata of *samavāya* to invariably appear 'ayutasiddhi.'

Others, however, have challenged this characterization of *samavāya* as internal based on its independent categorical form. The eminent Indologist M. Hiriyanna goes so far as to maintain that *saṃyoga* and *samavāya* are *both* strictly external, "[*saṃyoga*] in the sense that it relates co-ordinate factors; [*samavāya*] in the sense that one of the terms is relative and subordinate to the other. Speaking generally, the Vaiśeṣika seems to repudiate internal relations altogether. Its uncompromising realism and pluralism render this conclusion necessary. It recognizes only external relations, but they are not all of the same kind..." (1963: 222). Following Hiriyanna,

⁴⁰ Recall, in this regard, that the container-contained relation between a spatially extended whole and its constituent parts represents an understanding of 'internal' that even Russell and Moore accepted as valid—but only at a *formal* or *conceptual* level of description (i.e. not at the level of ontological simples): "[e]very relational property of the form 'having *this* for a spatial part' is 'internal' in our sense" (Moore 1919: 51).

many writers since have concurred with this assessment of *samavāya* and *saṃyoga* as both strictly external.⁴¹

Hiriyanna seems technically correct: To render *samavāya* as wholly external upholds the scientific and property realism of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas—for here *samavāya* itself must abide as an eternal and unchanging term *independent* of the relata. Its reality cannot depend upon the contingency of *saṃyoga*-like conjunctions. But Hiriyanna does not appear to acknowledge that, from this same perspective, the external ‘relation’ of *saṃyoga* could just as easily be redescribed as an internal relational property of each of the relata; i.e., a *saṃyoga* *S* between *a* and *b* can emerge either through the movement of *a*, *b*, or both together, to form *S(ab)*. Thus, one might as well state that only *saṃyoga* is *internal* in the sense that it *qualifies the terms themselves*—i.e., it does not exist on its own, independent of the intrinsic nature of the relata.⁴² Keep in mind, though, that this intrinsic nature must, for all intents and purposes, *always appear* in tandem with the independent existence of *samavāya* itself, which binds all the *guṇas* and *sāmānyas* to their respective *dravyas*!

I gather these definitional problems are due to insufficient attention to the practical/theoretical distinctions that obtain with respect to the meaning of the ‘reality’ of ‘internal’ and ‘external’ relations. In *practical* terms, *samavāya* must be (at least *partly*) internal, because it instantiates a *necessary* relation between container-contained, or substratum-

⁴¹ See, e.g., Padmarajiah (1963: 208) and Batthacharya (1994: 132). Cf. also Chatterjee (1912: 171).

⁴² From what I can tell, N.S. Dravid actually best recognizes the comparative problems at issue when he notes that, in the case of *samavāya*, “It is internal and yet a relation as it ‘couples its terms apart’, to use a phrase of Bradley. But it should be clearly borne in mind that there ‘internal’ should not be taken to mean ‘adjectival to one or both of its terms,’ as is evidently the idealists’ meaning of this word. In this sense only contact, an instance of a quality, can be regarded as internal to its terms. *Samavāya* is internal in the sense that the unity constituted by it is a factual one and also a unilateral one” (Dravid, N.S: 50). The argument put forth here aligns with Dravid’s analysis to some degree, insofar as the ‘factual unity’ of *samavāya* at the level of immediate perception implicates internal relations that only *have meaning* with reference to an epistemic, common-sense level of description—viz., one, in Wittgensteinian terms, where facts regarding predicative relations can be pictorially *shown*, but cannot be represented in categorematic terms.

superstratum. But as a theoretical category of inference, it is wholly external to both of its relata, and thus does not reflect anything *essential* to the nature of the terms taken in isolation. Any notion of ‘internal’ that follows Bradley—in which a relation must ‘at both ends affect, and pass into, the being of its terms’—automatically precludes comparison with the categorical definition of *samavāya* (Batthacharya: 132). At the same time, Hiriyanna’s comment that Nyāya “recognizes only external relations, but they are not all of the same kind” points to some of the conceptual difficulties that Nyāya logicians would face in explaining the dependent empirical appearance of *samavāya* relative to an inherent relational property like *saṃyoga*.

In this respect, I think that Shastri’s (1993) study of *samavāya* includes a more accurate discussion on whether *samavāya* is actually internal. He points out that since the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas held that categorical realities are partless simples, incapable of modification, *samavāya* cannot be considered an internal relation, insofar as the scope of this relation must somehow fall inside the particular relata *being related*, viz., undergoing some sort of apparent modification. This contradicts the naïve grammatical realism of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, since then linguistic entities would not reflect eternal, static, ontological categories. However, by that very token, *samavāya* is also conceptually distinguished *from saṃyoga* precisely *in virtue of the fact* that the relation never practically or empirically presents itself as anything wholly extraneous to the appearance of the relata themselves. He thus concludes that

samavāya is both external and internal relation, or it can be termed quasi-internal, because one of its relata is always intimate to it, while in *saṃyoga* both the relata are extraneous to that relation and, therefore, *saṃyoga* is entirely an external relation. The traditional view holds *samavāya* as [an] internal relation. This is one of the grounds on which *samavāya* has been distinguished from *saṃyoga*. There is no harm if *samavāya* is termed an internal relation, but it has some characteristics of an external relation also (1993: 172).

Shastri recognizes the intrinsically complex logical form of *samavāya*, avoiding a binary internal/external distinction. For *samavāya* is an ‘external relation’ that is never *practically*

encountered as such, while *samyoga* is an ‘external relation’ that can be reduced to a contingent, monadic property of independent relata. But he does not articulate the incompatible *realist* commitments that render *samavāya* philosophically problematic: On the one hand, insofar as we want to maintain a realism in regard to the empirical structure of common-sense objects (*qua* wholes and their constitutive attributes), we do not need to posit any ‘thick’ relation that stands distinct from the *mere appearance of the relata themselves*. On the other hand, if we wish to uphold the substantival nature of terms and the objectivity of their various predicates, Nyāya axioms of grammatical transparency demand a fully *independent* categorical referent that actively *causes* the lawful regularity of the predicative form of qualified knowledge.

At this point, one might instead proclaim that the Western distinction between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ is simply incommensurate with the Indian realist conceptions of *samavāya*. For example, in a 1977 article on “The Problem of Relation in Indian Philosophy”, N.S. Dravid suggests that a student of Indian philosophy engaged in a comparative analysis will discover that “a deplorable lack of precision” (39) characterizes the Western debate. In particular, he feels that “[the] dichotomy of relations as external and internal so popular in Western thought is rather otiose in the view of the Indian philosopher” (47). In the same volume, K. Bhattacharya contends that “the problem of ‘internal vs. external relations,’ once so important in Western Philosophy...was practically of no importance to Indian philosophers” (61). Concordantly, the relational premises upon which Bradley and Russell ground their dispute—not to mention their respective orientations as ‘idealist’ and ‘realist’—a gross simplification of the diverse relational categories that obtain for the average Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika realist.

Like Bradley, Dravid reasons that this is because a purely external relation (i.e., one that ‘retained an independent epistemic status in determinate cognitions’) would cease to be a real

relation, because it must be something ‘in itself’ while also ‘somehow being involved in its terms.’ Likewise, an internal relation wholly internal to its terms “would be but an adjective common to them both and as such could not function as relation.” In other words, the familiar reduction of internal ‘relation’ to a property of a set of terms taken together as a whole. Dravid concludes, “in whatever sense the pair of terms ‘internal’ and ‘external’ is interpreted, it is very difficult to give any sense to them. All that this means is that the relation of two terms is only epistemically involved in them but not ontologically” (48).⁴³

There is certainly some merit in Dravid’s contention that the internal/external distinction is simplistic from the Indian realist perspective. The Navya-Naiyāyikas, in particular, took great pains to detail diverse categorical types of relations, and would likely find the distinction between internal and external all-too crude.⁴⁴ But these sorts of remarks, taken to an extreme, miss the point. For we have just seen that the general problems of dependence and independence,

⁴³ Dravid himself proceeds to postulate a four-fold scheme to encompass Indian relational theory, consisting of ‘logical unity,’ ‘situational unity,’ ‘factual unity,’ and ‘propositional unity.’ We can define these, respectively, as cases where: 1. The logical relation itself is a type of conceptual unity to which the terms are subordinated. This is exemplified in the analysis of ‘*pariṣkāra*’, or the precise conceptual characterization of a logical entity (like the ‘invalidity of cognition’), in which all the analysans, or terms of the analysis, are put into a structure of relation to the analysandum, which is represented as a relational unity of any of the two terms that insatiate the relational property in question. 2. The situational relation is basically co-ordinate with the terms. Dravid identifies *samyoga* as a relation of this type, in the sense that one thing being in contact with another represents an adjectival state of the terms brought about through the circumstances. 3. In a factual relation, one term conceptually predominates, while the other term, along with its relation, are subordinate to this primary term. This sort of relation chiefly obtains between a substance and its universal properties, or attributes (i.e., *samavāya*). 4. Finally, propositional unity represents a case where terms equally predominate over a subordinate relation. Dravid cites negated propositions as exemplifications of this sort of relation (‘there is no pot on the ground’), where the empirical *absence* of an entity prevents this case from being indexed to any of the other types; “the unity constituted by the self-relating of negation is...such that this relation is wholly absorbed within its terms” (48-50).

⁴⁴ Indeed, there are a few ways to classify relations in the later Navya-Nyāya philosophy, depending on the type of analysis in question; direct or indirect (*sākṣāt* or *paramparā*); ‘locus-pervading’ or ‘non-locus-pervading’ (*vyāpyavṛtti* or *avyāpyavṛtti*); and ‘occurrence-exacting’ or ‘non-occurrence-exacting’ (*vṛttiniyāmaka* or *vṛtti-anīyāmaka*). In regard to the first, contact (*samyoga*), inherence (*samavāya*) and *svarūpa* (*svarūpa*) are direct, while co-extension (*sāmānādhikarāṇya*) is indirect. For the second, contact is a non-locus pervading while inherence, identity and co-extension are locus-pervading relations. And, with respect to the third, contact, inherence, and identity are ‘occurrence-exacting’, while co-extension is ‘non-occurrence-exacting’. However, despite all these classification innovations, even for Navya-Nyāya, *samavāya* was still the most ontologically significant relation, as it justifies the intentional solidarity of the basic categories in the act of judgement, and is thus the most prominent target of other schools. (For an overview of these various classification schemes in Navya-Nyāya, see Guha (1968: 56-60), Jha (1990: xiv-xxiii; 1992), Gupta (1984) and Ghosh (2001)).

or internal and external forms of relational properties, drove the central debate over the *perceptual* form of *samavāya* and the rationale for the introduction of the relation property of *svarūpa*. The primary significance of these categories thus cannot only be hashed out in terms of their own formal opposition, but in the very bounds of their adequacy to describe the synthetic quality of empirical phenomena.

To some extent, then, I agree with Dravid: I think these categories are useful in cross-cultural philosophy only insofar as they serve to trace the conceptual problems of this binary in the context of a naïve relational realism. We effectively showed that, in both Western and Indian settings, the internal/external distinction may only serve to scrutinize epistemic tokens of relationality, not its general objective form. If the oppositional (‘Secondness’) directive of the naïve realist approach to relation cannot coherently reduce the complex facts of experience into intelligible categories of sameness and difference, it implies that a general objective form of relation is not representable in those very terms. Through importing the internal/external distinction into these Indian contexts, and trying to understand the *explanatory limits* of these categories, then, we can come to a greater appreciation for relational philosophy as a universal inquiry into the transcendental conditions of knowledge itself.

Conclusion: The Rock and Hard Place of Naïve Relational Realism

This chapter presented the ‘naïve’ aspects of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika relational realism and its associated conceptual problems. Throughout the presentation, I have drawn attention to the way in which the dilemmas facing a consistent formulation of the logical form of *samavāya* resonate with Russell’s twofold theory of the verbal noun to ‘solve’ the unity of the proposition. I claimed that a systematically consistent account of *samavāya* is foreclosed to the Naiyāyika naïve realists

due to the relational incompatibility between their practical and theoretical ‘realisms’; i.e., the internal and dependent description of *samavāya* that obtains at the empirical level of common-sense realism vs. its external and independent status at the *a priori* level of property and scientific realism. When we designate the cause of the relational form of determinate cognition in terms of a self-standing categorical unity, it can only maintain this fully independent status without regress through the *ad hoc* introduction of the reflexive and dependent relational ‘property.’ Yet, this very move obviates the explanatory utility of *samavāya* to account for the synthetic solidarity of terms in qualified empirical judgments. From the perspective of common-sense perceptual realism, that is, *samavāya* is never empirically perceived as a *distinct entity*; the particular form of relational predication always reflects certain conventional contexts in which we naturally describe the logical form of this relation as dependent upon, or internal to, the nature of the relata themselves.

So, when it comes to *samavāya*, at least, the Naiyāyika will always find themselves caught between a rock of empiricism and a hard place of grammatical realism. Insofar as they seek to remain true to the relational forms of conventional experience, the internal relational properties of *svarūpa* will always obviate the need to posit the extra-experiential category of *samavāya*, which reifies the qualifier-qualificandum relation as something distinct from the internal relation between the relata as they empirically appear. At the same time, the manifest regularity of the qualified form of predication demands—by their own naïve standards of *real*—a distinct, self-standing unity that *causes* this relational structure. I have suggested that these two incompatible descriptions speak to a bipolarity inherent in Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika’s naïve realist commitments, which cannot be consistently reconciled within the theoretical apparatus of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system itself.

More generally, the problems here speak to the implausibility of a *wholly* external relation in the abstract that is, for all practical intents and purposes, never *empirically perceived* as anything other than internal to the appearance of the relata themselves. But it should be emphasized that our inability to definitely categorize *samavāya* as either internal or external reflects, not a deficiency in the separate realisms of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika *per se*, but rather *epistemic* limitations that the naïve realist must confront at a *systematic level*—viz., when they seek to categorically explain more and more general relational forms. For we cannot ultimately admit the realist conception of *samavāya* as an objective ontological category without also conceding that our *own mode of knowledge* thereof must remain inscrutable when taken exhaustively *in those very terms*. This reinforces Ganeri’s incisive point that Vaiśeṣika “is a realism that can remain coherent as long as no attempt is made to include within our conception of ‘the world’ *all* our own efforts to comprehend and describe it” (2010: 14). The problems that surround the logical form of *samavāya* pinpoint just this sort of blind-spot in the grand architecture of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system; the relational form of predicative judgement cannot be grasped in consistent logical terms insofar as we seek to simultaneously uphold this ‘relation-in-itself’ as a determinate unity.

In comparative terms, the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school teach us that the interpretive action of empirical predication becomes unintelligible if we attempt to objectify our synthetic *capacity* to practically recognize such relations exhaustively in those very terms (viz., as ‘Seconds’). James and Peirce would thus likely charge the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikas with putting the proverbial cart before the horse when they attempt to *explain* the concrete solidarity of practical judgement solely in virtue of some categorical objective unity. Just as one cannot ever hope to glue two bricks together solely with another brick, to the extent the Naiyāyikas identify the *reality* of *sambandha*

with its *status as an independent categorematic referent*, they can never hope to explain the synthetic unity constitutive of practical judgment. Or, we might say, insofar as the *force* and *content* of judgment are pragmatically indistinguishable, the concrete unity of practical judgment remains fundamentally inscrutable for the naïve categorical realism of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, because there are no ontological counterparts to the ‘syncategorematic’ expressions of judgment.⁴⁵

In Part Two, we turn to the Buddhists. The next chapter (III) briefly provides the religious and conceptual origins of Dharmakīrti’s relational philosophy, as well as the more general epistemological ramifications of Buddhism nominalism. Then, in Chapter IV, we will observe that—like Bradley *vis-à-vis* Russell—Dharmakīrti’s deconstruction of ontological relations adroitly exploits the Nyāya fallacy of substantive relational reification. For Dharmakīrti, all relations, including *samavāya*, cannot withstand the critiques of a reified interpretation of the causal relation, because it leads either to regress or analytic incoherence. Ergo, ontological relations—i.e., causal ‘relations’ of interdependence—don’t *ultimately* exist.

⁴⁵ Hence, in the Fregean terms of absolute idealists like Kimhi and Rödl, the Naiyāyikas can never offer a robust relational realism insofar as they have no way to account for the pre-established ‘identity’ between the modal *force* of judgement and its objective *content*. This derives from the absolute idealist principle that the self-consciousness of a unity and the objective form of this unity are formally coextensive.

PART TWO

CHAPTER III

FROM NO-SELF TO NOMINALISM: SAUTRĀNTIKA ABHIDHARMA AND ITS EPISTEMIC DISCONTENTS

Nominalism degenerates into idealism in that the extreme nominalist is led to hold that things are what they are in virtue of our ways of apprehending or conceiving of them—as evidenced by our ascription of predicates to them...Since there are no properties for things to have or relations for them to stand in, purported properties and things dissolve into our systematic ascription of predicates—including relational predicates.

-Herbert Hochberg (2013: 215)

Introduction

In this chapter, we turn to the Buddhist doctrines that lead to Dharmakīrti's relational eliminativism, with a focus on the protean logical forms that the category of 'relation' assumes along the way. Our purpose is both expository and constructive, respectively: Firstly, we must describe the appropriate historical and conceptual context for our analysis of the SP in the next chapter. But I also want to show that this evolution of Buddhist thinking about the reality of relation represents a prime case study for the rational movement from the *ontological* suppositions of early Abhidharma to the relatively later *epistemology* of Sautrāntika and Yogācāra. In a nutshell, we recover a cogent trajectory of relational reasoning that runs from (i) the Buddha's foundational teachings on causal co-dependence, impermanence and no-self; to (ii) the nominalist ontology of Abhidharma; to (iii) the Sautrāntika doctrine of radical momentariness and its 'representationalist' epistemology; which, finally, culminates in (iv) Dharmakīrti's fusion of relational eliminativism and Dignāga's epistemic idealism.¹ From this

¹ There is much to consider and debate with respect to Dharmakīrti's Yogācāra/Sautrāntika *bona fides*. There are arguably problems with a simplistic association of Dharmakīrti's 'external realism' with a straightforward Sautrāntika view (e.g., Dhammajoti (2007: 174); Gold (2015: 128-76); and Yiannopolous (119, f. 87; 43, f.58)). Furthermore, much of the associated categorization here is very hazy; for instance, explicit arguments against the reality of relations already exists in Yogācāra literature (e.g., in Vasubandhu's VŚ). But I believe this historical

perspective, we find that Dharmakīrti's 'sliding scales' of analysis²—typically taken to move from a provisional acceptance of Sautrāntika-Abhidharma to a more 'Yogācāra' position—comes to designate a special instance of Hochberg's observation that *nominalist* suppositions habitually 'degenerate' into strains of *idealism*. Among other things, I want to suggest here that the nominalist axioms of Abhidharma ontology lead Sautrāntika-inspired thinkers like Dharmakīrti to perforce explain the appearance of *relations* in terms of *universals*—i.e., rather than *vice versa*, as I interpret the 'objective idealists.' Indeed, I wager that Dharmakīrti's so-called '*idealism*' epitomizes just the sort of view that Peirce would disdainfully lump in with Berkeley's idealism as 'daughters of nominalism' (W 2.486). I propose, then, that Dharmakīrti's relational eliminativism and its attendant epistemic idealism remain acutely susceptible to similar 'upstream' critiques of a pragmatic-transcendental sort that we saw Peirce level against his own nominalist adversaries.

In the first section, I examine how the ontological premises of Abhidharma nominalism derive from the Buddha's core teachings (*dharma*) of impermanence (*anitya*) and no-self (*anatman*), as well as their complementary relation to the doctrine of the 'two truths' (*dvasatya*). We then turn to the *dharma*'s ontological systematization under the Abhidharma method of formal analysis. Philosophically, Siderits (2021; 2015) characterizes this as a form of 'mereological nihilism', but perhaps 'mereological reductionism' is a more proper description of the position: simply put, so-called 'wholes' are really *nothing more than* their independent,

framing brings out the way that the relational and epistemic idealist views of Dharmakīrti represent the fruit of the nominalist premises built into early Abhidharma. Hence, we are not so much advocating a strict chronological sequence of ideas, but more so outlining a series of logical entailments progressively unpacked from the axioms of Abhidharma.

² This is Dunne's (2004: 53-69) terminology, who builds upon the work of Dreyfus (1997: 99-104) and McClintock (2002: 68-76). Although Dunne technically identifies four levels in Dharmakīrti's discourse (which include provisional levels of (i) personal reality and (ii) gross compounded objects), philosophically speaking, only the last two categories are relevant here (i.e., the Sautrāntika 'slide' from (iii) external atomic particulars to Yogācāra (iv) epistemic idealism).

externally related parts. Ultimately speaking, then, the common properties of composite (*sāmagrī*) and extended (*sthūla*) sensory objects wholly supervene on the intrinsic properties of their causal constituents.³ The particular, self-characterized (*svalakṣaṇa*) nature of these causally efficacious entities contrast with the derivative or secondary knowledge of universal properties (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) and their inferential or ‘internal’ relations. It is precisely for this reason that philosophers have often described this Buddhist tradition broadly as a form of nominalism⁴, for the ‘distributed’ and/or ‘continuous’ (*anvaya*) appearance of universal wholes reduce to *nothing but* conceptual constructions or fabrications (*kalpanā*), erroneously (*bhrānti*) imposed upon (*āropa*) particulars whose self-characterizing nature is constitutively *otherwise* (i.e., *nirvikalpa*).

In Section 2, I narrow my focus onto those *temporal* aspects of Sautrāntika ontology that bear directly upon Dharmakīrti’s relational eliminativism and, ultimately, its epistemic and idealistic ramifications.⁵ For while all Ābhidharmika schools rejected the ultimate existence of

³ Cf. Dignāga’s PS 1.4cd, which reads “the [sensory] domain is universal” (*sāmānyagocaram*). This means that a gross extended sensory object is a universal “just insofar as it is a composite of individual particulars working in concert to produce a sensory image (*ākāra*) in cognition” (Yiannopolous: 35).

⁴ See, e.g., Dunne (2004); Siderits (2015; 2021; et. al. 2011); Arnold (2013; 2017); and Yiannopolous (65), the last of whom claims that “the Buddhist tradition is vehemently nominalist, maintaining that any and all universals are nothing but fabrications of the mind.” I would add that while it is obviously *right* to say that the *Indian Abhidharma tradition* has a ‘nominalist’ orientation, to state the ‘Buddhist tradition’ as a *whole* is ‘vehemently nominalist,’ is, I think, not doing justice to the Madhyamaka and Madhyamaka-inspired East Asian Buddhist traditions, where some of the most radical reductive excesses of Abhidharma nominalism are explicitly challenged—and often undermined completely (these sorts of issues naturally pertain to the relational matters at hand). Even more pertinently, though, one might question whether Ābhidharmikas themselves should really be considered ‘nominalists’ proper—or rather, in accord with a ‘trope’ reading, some sort of ‘phenomenal realists’ in which reality consists of tokens of a set of distinct types (i.e., *dharmas*). Thus, when we see a blue ball, the sphericity and the blue are real objective phenomena (the upshot being that there is no overarching ‘self’ above and beyond the conglomeration of these tropes). With the inception of the Pramāṇavāda tradition of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, this phenomenal realism turns into a full-blown nominalism, in the sense that particulars are all that can be said to finally exist. However, aside from the fact that the basic distinction between real existence (*dravya-sat*) and conceptual existence (*prajñapti-sat*) was already present in the Abhidharma, this suggestion might just be a matter of semantics, insofar as even a trope theory of phenomenal occurrences is often considered a form of ‘nominalism’ in a broad sense (i.e., these ‘particulars’ do not necessarily have to be *physical* or *atomic* particulars situated in time and space). As we will see, the question for Ābhidharmika is whether, and in what sense, the categorical *dharma*-types exist *as types*, or whether these *only actually manifest* as phenomenal *tokens* thereof. Most readers of Abhidharma, I take it, consider the latter to finally be the case, and thus the question of whether they are ‘nominalists,’ ‘trope theorists’ or ‘phenomenal realists’ may be a moot point.

⁵ It should be noted that Dharmakīrti never described himself as a “Sautrāntika,” and his early commentators prefer the term *bāhyārthavāda* to describe the Abhidharmic position from the ‘Yogācāra’ aspects of his philosophy.

distributed universal entities (and were thus basically nominalist), I take it that the Sautrāntika application of mereological reductionism to the extensive dimension of *events* represents the final nail in the coffin for any realist Buddhist appraisal of ‘relation.’⁶ More specifically, in opposition to the Vaibhāṣika-Sarvāstivādins (who adopted the view that ‘everything [i.e., all *dharmas*] exists [at all times]’), Sautrāntika endorsed a strong structural isomorphism between spatial and temporal forms of ontological decomposition; that is, the ultimate reduction of the universal properties of *spatially extended* objects (viz., the ‘whole’) to their constitutive atomic elements (viz., its ‘parts’) maps one-to-one onto the ontological resolution of the *durational event* (viz., a continuous ‘whole’) into a disconnected sequence of instantaneous moments (viz., its discrete ‘parts’).⁷ This ‘spatialization’ of events ineluctably gives way to a radical version of the doctrine of momentariness (*kṣāṇikavāda*) that rejects any form of temporal continuity between particular occurrences in the causal procession. Thus, the Buddhist nominalist must

Nevertheless, most readers of Dharmakīrti view his arguments for the provisional acceptance of external, momentary objects as characteristically Sautrāntika.

⁶ Consider the final verse of the SP in this regard: “Even when those are [conceived as] existent, a relation in the form ‘of this’ is not established. Therefore, this distinction of intrinsic natures is proved with respect to [things] whose production is momentary.” *teṣu satṣv api tasyeti sambandhasyāprasiddhitāḥ / yuktaḥ svabhāvabhedo ’yaṃ tat pratikṣaṇajanmanām*. While Dharmakīrti defends the intrinsic momentariness (*kṣāṇikatva*) of entities at several points in the PV(SV) (e.g., PV.192-196), the most well-known occurs in the HB. Here, he defends the so-called ‘argument from existence’, or “the inference [of momentariness] from the [mere] fact of [them] existing” (*sattvānumāna*) that was first developed in the second chapter of his PVin. It should be noted that while Dharmakīrti’s commitment to momentariness reflects perhaps the most radical and explicit form of temporal reductionism in Buddhism, to associate the entire Buddhist tradition with a staunch ‘presentism’ born of ontological momentariness would betray a rather crude modernist mischaracterization of the diversity of temporal views therein (aside from our own discussion of the Sarvāstivādins below, see Kachru (2021), who has argued cogently to this effect).

⁷ Whether this move from *spatial* decomposition to *temporal* nihilism is warranted reflects a debatable point in the Buddhist tradition. Tomlinson (2023: 413, f. 43) notes that Kamalaśīla deploys a mereological neither-one-nor-many argument to this effect in his BK (cf. also Arnold 2017: 387-9). However, in the TSP, Kamalaśīla *himself* argues that a mereological decomposition of temporal events is not necessarily valid, given that no moment can be considered in continuous *contact* with any others in a strict sequence (see Saccone 2018: 97-103; 168-69). Thus, the mereological premises upon which neither-one-nor-many arguments depend—viz., at least with respect to the *simultaneous properties* of the constituents of *spatially extended objects*—cannot even get off the ground. Aside from this, the picture is further complicated because the strictly *sequential* nature of the Sautrāntika doctrine of momentariness was not endorsed by all Abhidharma schools; for instance, the Vaibhāṣika’s accept simultaneous apprehension of multiple cognitions, and thus could establish a form of naïve realism that purportedly preserves the temporal dimension of intentional content. However, as we will see, the Sautrāntikas simply deployed various forms of ‘neither-one-nor-many arguments’ to disprove the simultaneous apprehension of temporally ‘distinct’ cognitions.

finally explain the phenomenon of diachronic unity itself in terms of a *post hoc* conceptual inference—viz., one imposed retroactively upon a discrete sequence of momentary, autonomously intelligible perceptual occurrences.

Section 3 shifts to explore the *epistemological* consequences of this nominalist worldview—namely, those that invariably terminate in skeptical forms of representationalism or idealism. In accord with their dichotomous ontology, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti admit two corresponding instruments of valid knowledge (*pramāṇa*): perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*). However, insofar as only the receptive immediacy of *pratyakṣa* is the direct *result* (*phala*) of the causal efficacy of particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*)⁸, the former identifies a privileged mode of cognition in the Pramāṇavāda tradition; the latter, alternatively, denotes an inherently misleading (*bhrānti*) cognition, for its constitutively *general* object (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) perforce fails to correspond to the particular nature of its constitutive perceptual causes.⁹ Sautrāntika epistemology has therefore often been dubbed a form ‘representationalism’¹⁰ on account of the fact that all cognitions of extensive and durational (read: relational) properties are merely internal conceptual images (*ākāra*) ‘isomorphic’ to their external causes.¹¹ From here, it is only a

⁸ To be clear, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti identified four different types of ‘perception’ (*pratyakṣa*): “sensory perception” (*indriyapratyakṣa*), “mental perception” (*mānasapratyakṣa*), “yogic perception” (*yogipratyakṣa*), and reflexive awareness (*svasaṃvitti*)” (cf. Franco (1993), who opines that *svasaṃvitti* should not necessarily be considered a distinct type of perception). Whether ‘mental perception’ *makes sense* as an autonomously intelligible cognition is a matter of debate in Buddhist accounts of the intentionality of perception.

⁹ The epistemic flipside of this is Dignāga’s influential theory of *apoha* that Dharmakīrti develops at length, which defines ‘universal’ appearances in terms of a process of conceptual exclusion, viz., not the positive apprehension of a real external entity. Here categorematic concepts like ‘pot’ refer to every individual that is *not a non-pot*. For in-depth discussions on the nominalist mechanics and theoretical critiques of *apoha*, see Hattori (1979); Katsura (1979; 1991); Siderits, et al. (2011); Arnold (2006; 2013: 116-157); Yin Sin (2023); for a relevant discussion of Utpala’s appropriation and adaptation of Dharmakīrti’s theory of *apoha*, see Pruiett (2016; 2017).

¹⁰ cf. Ronkin (2014: 6.1); Dreyfus (1997: 335, 380–1); Siderits (2021: 8.2) Westerhoff (2018: 3.3.a).

¹¹ The language of ‘isomorphic’ correspondence refers to Dunne (100-10) and Yiannopolous (ch. 3), who both suggest that this is the sort of function that obtains between the “causal features of the object, and the causal features of the image that corresponds to the object” (Yiannopolous: 48). Yiannopolous, in his recent (2020) dissertation, gives a very helpful translation and detailed analysis of portions of the third chapter of Dharmakīrti’s PV (~3.123-541) that deal with the theoretical mechanics of perception and this causal ‘isomorphism’ between external, momentary particulars and its respective cognitive form (see, in particular, chapters 2 & 3).

hop and a skip (and maybe not even that!¹²) to the *epistemic idealist* implications typically associated with Dignāga’s doctrine of intrinsic self-consciousness (*svasaṃvedana*). On Dharmakīrti’s ‘Yogācāra’ interpretation of Dignāga, at least, the only final ‘result’ of the means of valid cognition (*pramāṇaphala*) is the unmediated reflexive ‘perception’ (*svasaṃvedana*) of the cognitive ‘image’ (*ākāra*) itself—not the independent existence of its purportedly external, non-cognitive *causes*.¹³ The curious upshot is that the pure reflexive immediacy of perceptual cognition ‘contacts’ its real causes only to the extent that its actual imagistic content remains isomorphic to the supposedly non-relational features of the external object. Hence cognition is constitutively *inactive* (*nirvyāpāra*) and *self-manifest* (*svaparakāśa*). Accordingly, all mediated inferential and linguistic concepts remain ultimately ‘unreal’ just insofar as they do not apprehensively transmit the mode of actuality that characterizes the reflexive immediacy of the percept. We accordingly find at this point in the nominalist dialectic that Yogācāra philosophers prototypically insist that—because we cannot practically differentiate between so-called ‘external’ causes of cognition and their reflexive appearance as such—the objects of cognition could *just as easily* consist exclusively of mental forms *internal* to the stream of consciousness (with the conformal features of these ‘external’ causes appearing in virtue of, say, latent *karmic* ‘traces’ (*vāsanās*)).

¹² Arnold (2008) has argued that the epistemology of Sautrāntika and Yogācāra are effectively ‘the same,’ in which case the ‘sliding scales’ analysis obscures their considerable overlap. The question of whether Sautrāntika epistemology ‘just is’ Yogācāra involves pertinent relational issues, many of which I will touch upon below and in the coming chapters. In a nutshell, the Pratyabhijñā thinkers will assert that once the representationalism of Sautrāntika is overcome in a fully ‘idealistic’ framework—whatever that form of ‘idealism’ may be—the *nominalist premises* from which it derives arguably become practically incompatible with its own doctrine of intrinsic self-consciousness (*svasaṃvedana*/*svasaṃvitti*).

¹³ There is some debate over whether Dignāga considers the *pramāṇa* and *phala* as having potentially different objects (*viśayābhāsātā* and *bāhyārthajñāna*, respectively), which depends on whether he finally endorses a Sautrāntika or Yogācāra perspective in the PS. According to Kei Kataoka, Dharmakīrti avoids Kumāri’s charge of incoherence in this regard through his own novel interpretation of Dignāga, according to which, even for the Sautrāntika, “an external object is not directly cognized (PV III 348b: *arthātmā na dṛśyate*) and [Dharmakīrti] instead proposes...that *svasaṃvitti* (and not *bāhyārthajñāna*) is the *phala*” (2016: 38).

In conclusion, I discuss a possible ramification of the present discussion on contemporary debates in Buddhist scholarship, which concerns the place of relations in Dharmakīrti's theory of *inference*. Specifically, I question Steinkellner's suggestion that Buddhist eliminativism can be systematically reconciled with Dharmakīrti's construal of the *svabhāvapratibandha*—viz., a logical relation that guarantees the necessary 'pervasion' (*vyapti*) of inferential terms. According to Steinkellner "[t]his 'ontological' foundation of the logical nexus can only be understood if the necessity-providing natural connection denotes a character, a property, of instances of reality, but not in terms of being a real relation" (2020: xvi). In contrast, our analysis submits that Dharmakīrti is not entitled to practically *recognize* internal relations to justify a theory of inference while, in the same breath, denying that they exist in ultimate terms. If Dharmakīrti cannot consistently reconcile his epistemology and ontology of relations, it suggests that the convenient divide contemporary scholars have often erected between Dharmakīrti's theory of inferential relations and the SP's eliminativism is not quite as neat and tidy as often supposed.¹⁴

1. 'From Dharma to Dharmas': The Teachings of the Buddha and Abhidharma Nominalism

a. No-Self, Impermanence, and the Two Truths

The Abhidharma philosophy of relations evolved from the Buddha's core teachings on *no-self* and *impermanence*. Along with the inevitable *dukkhā* of all conditioned things, they comprise the 'three marks' (*trilakṣaṇa*) of existence in *saṃsāra*: all conditioned things are (i) impermanent, (ii) without any sense of 'self,' and (iii) inherently unsatisfactory. While formally distinguished, in praxis and theory, they remain inextricably co-implicated for the Buddha; he

¹⁴ See, e.g., Hayes and Gillon (1991) and Katsura (1992), who follow in the footsteps of Steinkellner's extensive analysis of the *svabhāvapratibandha* (1974; 1984; 1997: 627-629, 2013 II, n. 331 (158-165; 169-172) and n. 359 (pp. 204-210); 2022).

advises his son Rāhula, for instance, to “develop meditation on the perception of impermanence, for when you do this, the conceit “I am” will be abandoned” (M 531). Enlightenment, in turn, is defined as the total absence of any sense of ‘selfhood’ in the *Majjima Nikāya*: “It [i.e., Buddhahood] is by knowing...that in regard to this body with its consciousness and all external signs, I-making, mine-making, and the underlying tendency to conceit have been eradicated in me” (M 908). The intimate relations between the three marks expresses the religious essence of the *dharma* as a feedback loop of *ontological* and *soteriological* commitments: When we come to see the true nature of reality as a conditioned assemblage of ever-changing, impermanent causal factors, we also abandon clinging to the false notion of a permanent self; and, as we abandon the clinging to this false self and its attendant desires, we naturally ‘burn off’ the *karma* that keeps us bonded in *samsāra*, until complete and perfect ‘extinguishment’ (*nirvāṇa*) is achieved. Thus, to fully grasp the truth of impermanence is, in the same glance, to recognize the truth of non-self, and thus the possibility of liberation.¹⁵

In a nutshell, the doctrine means that the “I” we typically use to denote an essential subject of experience does not actually refer to anything *metaphysically* real. What we conventionally call a ‘self’ is a superimposition, or perhaps reification, of certain conceptual properties onto a reality whose intrinsic nature cannot possibly instantiate them—in particular, the mistaken sense of substantial perdurance and diachronic unity. Since, according to the Buddha, if there *were* a self, it would have to be permanent;¹⁶ but upon close empirical and

¹⁵ We might add here that while *saṅkhāras* (compounded things) are associated with impermanence and dissatisfaction, *all dhammas*—which includes the *unconditioned* state of *nirvāṇa*—are void of selfhood. Thus, the one ‘mark’ that the state of liberation and the state of bondage share is the mark of non-self. For this reason, one might surmise, the realization of non-self *within samsāra* provides a bridge from *samsāra* to the unconditioned, for it reflects the one ‘property’ they *share*. See also Collins (97-8) on Buddha’s arguments for non-self that take recourse to the principles of universal impermanence and unsatisfactoriness of all things—properties which make them wholly ‘unfit’ to be called a ‘self.’

¹⁶ We must see this conception of permanent selfhood in light of the significance of the eternal *ātman* for Vedic cosmology which the Buddha’s teaching explicitly challenged.

phenomenological investigation, we observe the manifest fact that all that is *really going on* is an ever-changing causal interaction of psycho-physical events. There is nothing *more* to what we call ‘self’ than a certain contingent configuration of impersonal factors or entities that comprise the causal procession—i.e., the five ‘aggregates’ of form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness.¹⁷ Given that the causal ground of each of these factors is fleeting and impermanent, ergo, no personal or substantial ‘self’ exists amidst the perpetual flux of existence.

Needless to say, this doctrine is not only profoundly counterintuitive, but also quite controversial. For example, not all early Buddhist schools agreed on the extent to which the notion of the *person (pudgala)* is negated along with the ‘self’ (*ātman*).¹⁸ Furthermore, some *suttas* are ambiguous with respect to its complete denial, for the Buddha did not want to be construed as a nihilist (cf. Harvey: 19-21, 44). For instance, in one well-known encounter, the Buddha is asked explicitly whether there is a self, or not, and he remain silent on the matter. When later questioned, he explained that answering would have been pedagogically unskilled, for the affirmation/negation of either proposition would reinforce the extremes of eternalism and annihilationism—the very sort of fallacies with which a Buddha should dispel (cf. Gowans: 67). Sutras like these suggest one approach scholars can take with respect to understanding the

¹⁷ In many *suttas*, we find the doctrine of non-self mentioned in the context of promulgating the necessary disidentification with these aggregates for the sake of liberation: “Material form is not self, feeling is not self, perception is not self, formations are not self, consciousness is not self...all things are not self” (M 324).

¹⁸ Cf. Kapstein (2010) and Lusthaus (2009) on the Pudgalavādins, who held that although no *ātman* existed, a person (*pudgala*) exists that “bears” the five-aggregates. The postulate of the *pudgala* solved the problem of consistency between *karma*, rebirth and *nirvāṇa*, which all require an identical generator and enjoyer of the fruits of intrinsically valenced action. In this regard, see also Eltschinger and Ratié (2010; 2012: 37-116;) for Dharmakīrti’s rebuttal of the *pudgalavāda*. Most notably for our purposes, consider the section of the PVSV (147, 2-148), where Dharmakīrti denies the independent existence of the *pudgala* based on his own analysis of relation, according to which a relation can be either one of identity or causality. In the latter case, the mode of relation obtains between entities that have intrinsically distinct natures. In other words, the *pudgala* cannot properly said to be identical with, nor other than, its constituents, because the first would represent only a conceptual designation while “otherness is a mere lack of relation (*apratibandha*)” (ibid., 96). Accordingly, no real causal ‘relation’ between the *pudgala* and the independent factors of existence can obtain given the Buddhist nominalist axioms for individuating real existents (ibid., 106-7).

ultimate meaning of ‘non-self’—one should not regard it as a systematic theory with definite conceptual content. Rather, it should be viewed chiefly as a rhetorical strategy for effective soteriological praxis.¹⁹

In any case, to the extent that a philosophical approach to the Buddha’s teaching of non-self is possible, he has generally been taken to mean that there is no permanent, intrinsically-unified ‘entity’ which functions as the *substantial bearer* of the ever-changing *impersonal* causes that actually comprise human experience; or rather, experience is nothing above and beyond an impermanent series of causes generated through such and such impersonal causal factors.²⁰ Hence, the designation “I” is ‘empty’ of any substantial metaphysical referent within which a series of distinct attributes could supposedly *inhere*.²¹ For this reason, it has often been suggested²² that what the Buddha *really* denies is the ultimate reality of a ‘substantial’ self, rather than the conventional reality of the empirical ‘person.’ This rejection of a ‘substantial self’—as

¹⁹ Collins expresses this sentiment when he skewers the ‘intellectual position’ of specialist scholars who “refuse to speak of a self or permanent person in any theoretical context.” He believes, instead, that it is “fruitless for the scholar to explain, in his own more or less technical terms, what this ‘means’ and what such a salvation can be. Rather, he should see Buddhism’s ideological stance as a social, intellectual, and soteriological strategy” (78). In other words, a thoroughgoing rational reconstruction of the Buddha’s project mistakes ‘non-self’ as a propositional statement with definite semantic significance, rather than merely a regulative ideal that prescribes optimal practical action (which presumably stays true to the religious business of a *Buddha*). I tend to agree with Harvey, though, who acknowledges the doctrine as an indisputable “soteriological strategy” but adds that this “does not preclude the scholar from teasing out what the teaching ‘means’” (1995: 43). Although an overly intellectualized approach to the Buddha’s teaching can doubtlessly obscure the doctrine as a lived form of religious praxis, there likewise can be no doubt that the Buddhist tradition includes within itself the resources to establish the utility of a systematic, rational approach to understand the *dharmā*—after all, wasn’t the entire point of Abhidharma an attempt to do *just that*?

²⁰ To appreciate this point, it must be noted that the Abhidharma conception of mind is constitutively ‘intentional’ in the sense that no consciousness exists without corresponding objective content—all consciousness is consciousness *of* something. As Ronkin explains with respect to the Abhidharma tradition, “[w]e can never experience bare consciousness in its own moment of occurrence as a single isolated dhamma, for consciousness always directs itself to some object; it cannot eventuate as a *dhamma* in isolation from other *dhammas*. Rather, it always occurs associated (*sampayutta*) with other mental states that enable the mind to be aware of perceived objects” (2005: 47). It is well recognized, however, that this broadly ‘intentional’ characterization of the Abhidharma view of cognition becomes problematic and simplistic when we move onto the more philosophically mature views of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti.

²¹ As we will see, Dharmakīrti’s main argument against the Pudgalavādins (Ratié & Eltschinger: 2013) comes back to the mereological incoherence of some inherence (*samavāya*) relation obtaining between a ‘whole’ and its ‘parts’, whereby a supposedly independently existent substance—the supposedly whole ‘person’ (i.e., the *pudgala*)—abides simultaneously in each of its constitutive parts.

²² See, e.g., Gowans (69-71), Siderits (2007: 45), Arnold (2005: 13) and Garfield (2022), but also many other contemporary scholars of Buddhism.

opposed to, say, a “process self” (Gowans: 71) or “empirical self” (Harvey: 54), or simply the “person” (Siderits 2021: 29-30; Garfield 2022: 37)—conveys that among the most salient delusions of the false self is its mistaken impression that it perdures as a unified substantive grammatical and/or metaphysical subject throughout its ever-changing psycho-physical bases. While the everyday notion of ‘self’ therefore *reduces* in some *ultimate* sense to a causal series of intrinsically disconnected existents—viz., those actualities that *cause* a particular instance of intentional consciousness—it retains its conventional usefulness, and so is ‘real’ *just to that extent*.

Given the indispensable practical utility of conventional notions of ‘self,’ one can appreciate how a distinction between the *conventional* truth of persons and the *ultimate* truth of metaphysical ‘selflessness’ emerged as a rhetorical solution to certain exegetical problems that would otherwise render the Buddha’s teachings inconsistent. For the Buddha often speaks as though selves and persons exist—he must, after all, communicate with *people* for the *dharma* to possess any *soteriological* significance! For these reasons, early Buddhists sought to convey the meaning of the *dharma* in terms of the hermeneutic principle of the two truths: The Buddha taught a “conventional” or “provisional” (*saṃvṛti*) truth, and an “ultimate” (*paramārtha*) truth. Accordingly, the ‘personal’ sense of ‘self’ may be a useful fiction in conventional practice, but it cannot designate something true about the constituents of *ultimate reality*, like the five-aggregates, which are all thoroughly *selfless*. The practical utility of a personal notion of ‘selfhood’ represents a primary reason early Buddhist scholars elaborated the doctrine of the two truths (*dvasatya*)—i.e., a provisional level of conventional experience (*saṃvṛti*) associated with conceptual delusion (*vikalpa*) and the ultimate truth (*paramārtha*) that coincides with non-conceptual experience (*nirvikalpa*) of reality as such (*tathātā*).

A well-known, relatively early post-canonical Buddhist text, ‘Questions of Milinda’ (*Milinda Pañha*), is often adduced to convey the relationship between the doctrine of non-self and the two truths.²³ The text records a dialogue between the Greek king Menander and a Buddhist sage called Nāgasena. When Menander asks who, in particular, he is speaking to, Nāgasena invokes the king’s chariot to segue into a teaching on selflessness and the two truths. In a Socratic fashion, Nāgasena poses the question: what, exactly, does the identity of the king’s ‘chariot’ consist of? After finding that ‘chariot’ cannot be identified with any of the parts taken in isolation; nor their mere conjunction; nor anything above and beyond; the king concludes that “the word ‘chariot’ functions as just a counter, an expression, a convenient designator, a mere name for pole, axle, wheels, chariot-body, and banner-staff.” Nāgasena responds:

Thoroughly well, your majesty, do you understand a chariot. In exactly the same way, your majesty, in respect of me, ‘Nāgasena’ functions as just a counter, an expression, convenient designation, mere name for the hair of my head, hair of my body...brain of the head, *rūpa*, feeling, perception, the volition, and consciousness. But ultimately there is no person to be found. And the nun Vajira, your majesty, said this before the Blessed One: ‘Just as there is the word “chariot” for a set of parts,’ So when there are *skandhas* it is the convention to say, ‘There is a living being’” (MP 25-28; in Siderits (54)).

In other words, just as the term ‘chariot’ does not refer to any substantial ‘thing’ above and beyond a contingent assemblage of parts (reins, wheels, axle, carriage, etc...), so too does the name ‘Nāgasena’ not designate anything other than its constitutive elements (bones, blood, skin, organs, etc...). Yet, insofar as the king uses the idea of a whole ‘chariot’ to facilitate communication—i.e., to designate a certain collection of independent parts configured for the sake of some practically determined end—the label ‘Nāgasena’ also functions in the same strictly conventional fashion. It is therefore ‘true’ that the king arrived in a chariot although no ‘chariot’ *really* exists, just as it is true that the king can pick out a relatively stable entity

²³ See Davids (1890 [2012]) and Horner (1963) for a full translation of the dialogue, as well as Siderits (2007: 58-68) for a sensitive treatment of its philosophical implications.

‘Nāgasena’ that endures for a single human lifetime, although no intrinsic and substantial ‘self’ is ultimately designated thereby.²⁴

Setting aside debates over the precise meaning of the no-self doctrine, we can already see in this canonical story the theoretical seeds of the nominalist orientation of the Abhidharma tradition. More specifically, Abhidharma theory can be understood as an extrapolation of the Buddha’s teachings of non-self into a systematic ontology, whereby the conceptual superimposition of dependent relational properties with respect to the ‘self’ applies equally to *all extensive and compounded empirical ‘wholes.’* Since the impermanent actualities that comprise the causal order can never possibly instantiate any of the substantive features of ‘wholes’ *in general—inter alia*, diachronic unity and real distribution/continuity (*anvaya*) over independent parts—neither general concepts, nor the predicative relations that render empirical objects practically intelligible, *ultimately* exist.

b. The Abhidharma Method of Analysis

²⁴ On the details of this relationship between dependent relation and personal continuity in early Buddhism, see Collins (103-110). Nāgasena also explains in this regard that the numerically distinct *skandhas* that constitute the impermanent causes of experience need not entail numerically distinct *persons* at a conventional level of description: A fire that burns through the night is neither the same as, nor different, than the fire in the morning; likewise, the milk that transforms from sour cream, to butter, and then to ghee, is no longer the same *milk*, though the sour cream, etc., depended upon it. In each case, the apparent identity of the terms involved (i.e., the ‘fire’ and ‘milk’) amounts to an abstraction from a series of discrete actualities in a state of causal dependence. Nāgasena considers these examples analogous to the conventional identity of persons, who are neither the same as, nor different, than their constitutive *skandhas*: “In exactly the same way [as the fire and milk], your majesty, is the series of psychophysical elements (*dharmas*) connected together: one element perishes, another arises, seamlessly united as though without before and after. Therefore neither as the same nor as a distinct person does this latest aggregation of consciousness connect up with earlier consciousness” (MP 41f, in Siderits 2007: 60). For philosophers like Siderits, the fact that causally conditioned factors are neither the same as, nor different than, the whole they constitute represents the Buddhist solution to the extremes of annihilationism and eternalism, respectively. In other words, the *causal dependence* of existents, or *dharmas*, explains how conventional ‘persons’ can be said to persist over time, although the *dharmas themselves* represent a disconnected series of independent and irreducible factors—i.e., those that ultimately *constitute* the ‘parts’ of experience on a moment-by-moment basis. The unity of the person owes itself to the fact that these elemental factors emerge and perish in conformity with the metaphysical law of dependent origination. By the time Buddhism becomes ardently nominalist in the Abhidharma-Pramāṇavāda tradition, however, the conventional idea of the person being *both* the same *and* different from its elements is *ultimately* denied on relational eliminativist grounds—and thus not even the conventional sense of a ‘person’ should be countenanced (at least not for Dharmakīrti).

As we saw in Nāgasena’s response to King Menander above, the ‘*dharma*,’ or teaching, of non-self requires reference to the ultimately real ‘*dharmas*,’ or ‘elements,’ that constitute the person in lieu of a substantial self. Given the usage of the term *dharma* in both contexts, one can reasonably speculate as to how the analytic methodology of the Abhidharma²⁵ project initially developed; the identification of the fundamentals of the *teaching* (*dharma*), that is, naturally gave way to ontological speculation about the corresponding constituents of *reality* (*dharmas*) referenced therein.²⁶ Thus, when we identify something that actually exists according to the *dharma* of conditioned arising, we have also identified a constitutive element of reality itself. We can safely infer that the original Abhidharma tradition likely arose to definitively codify, coordinate, and explain the basic theoretical apparatus of the Buddha’s teaching.

Indeed, perhaps the definitive feature of the Abhidharma tradition is the transformation of the singular term for the Buddha’s teaching or law (*dharma*) to a pluralistic term that refers to the fundamental ‘building blocks’ of reality itself (*dharmas*). As Gethin notes, “what is

²⁵ Three genres of literature comprise the traditional Pali Canon: the doctrinal discourses of the Buddha (*sūtras*), a regiment of disciplinary codes for monks and layfolk (*vinaya*), and a corpus of later commentarial literature termed Abhidharma. Generally, Abhidharma can translate as either (1) ‘highest’ (*abhi*) ‘teaching/doctrine’ (*dharma*), or (2) ‘with regard to’ the *dharma* (cf. Cox 1995: 3). Both indicate that the genre aimed to organize and analyze the teachings in the *sūtras*—in other words, the meaning of the *dharma*, which is a notoriously multifaceted and slippery term in all Indian traditions, but especially in Buddhism. Cox (2004: 543) opines that “perhaps no term in Indian Buddhism has generated more extensive study or greater disagreement than *dharma*.”

²⁶ Although the exact historical course of this terminological development is likely irretrievably obscure, see Cox (2004) and Ronkin (2005) for a historical overview of the transformation of this term in early Abhidharma literature. The question of whether any *dharma* theory in the ontological sense was present in the original *sūtras* is a matter of scholarly debate (cf. Geiger (1973) and Bronkhorst (1985)). We can attribute the logic behind this evolution, at least partly, to the Buddha himself, who affirmed an identity between truth and *dharma*, such that ‘whatever is *dharma* is truth and whatever is truth is *dharma*’ (Gold: 23; cf. Gethin (2004)). Gethin also remarks, on this point, that “the question of the relationship between *dhamma* and *dhammas* is perhaps most easily seen with reference to *paṭicca-samuppāda* [dependent origination]. It is stated in the Nikāyas that he who sees *paṭicca-samuppāda* sees *dhamma*, and that he who sees *dhamma* sees *paṭicca-samuppāda*. This is in fact a very succinct statement of the principle involved, for what is *paṭicca-samuppāda* apart from the inter-relatedness of *dhammas*?” (1992: 151). Likewise, summarizing the most plausible theories of the evolution of Abhidharma, Bronkhorst adopts the position that *dharma* in the sense of “element/factor” derives from *dharma* as “teaching”: “In their efforts to preserve the teaching of the Buddha, the early Buddhists were not content to memorize his own words. They also enumerated the elements contained in his teaching, and this led to the creation of lists of so-called *dharmas*” (1996: 111–112; cf. also 1985: 318).

distinctive about the Abhidharma is that it is an attempt to give a comprehensive statement of the Buddha’s teachings exclusively in ultimate terms” (1998: 208). The interpretation of *dharmas* as ‘ultimately real existent’ explains the characteristic Abhidharma methodology that generates causal ‘matrices’ (*mātikā/māṭṛikā*) to unpack the terminological lists in the *Nikāyas*. In Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharmakośa* [AK], for instance—which largely consists in a reconstruction of the debates between different Abhidharma schools—he presents a canonical list of seventy-five *dharmas* that comprise the ultimately existent primitives upon which all other phenomena supervene.²⁷

Most important for our purposes is not the details of these categorical types or their concrete interactions, but the manner by which they are conceptually classified and ontologically individuated—for the reasoning involved culminates in the mereological nihilism of Abhidharma and the Sautrāntika doctrine of momentariness. This requires introducing two important terms that come to signify the ontological and epistemological dimension of *dharmas*, respectively (cf. Ronkin 2022: 6); ‘intrinsic essence’ or ‘own-nature’ (*svabhāva*) and ‘self-[defining] characteristic’ (*svalakṣaṇa*). I will explain each of these in turn.

Although it does not occur in the early *sūtras*, beginning with the period of the early *vibhāṣā* compendia, one repeatedly finds that *dharmas* (*lit.* ‘bearers’ from the verbal root *dhṛ*) are defined in virtue of ‘bearing,’ or simply *being*, a ‘*svabhāva*.’²⁸ According to Cox, it seems likely that the technical notion of *svabhāva* was introduced to “identify the specific property that

²⁷ See Cox (1995: 12) for a description of the seventy-five *dharmas*. It is worth noting that the list of seventy-five represents a Sarvāstivādin interpretation of the *Nikāyas*, while the Theravāda introduced a system of eighty-two *dhamma* categories.

²⁸ For instance, in a canonical definition transmitted in the AKBh “*dharma* means ‘upholding,’ [namely], upholding intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*),” and the *Mahāvibhāṣā* states that “intrinsic nature is able to uphold its own identity and not lose it [...] as in the case of unconditioned *dharmas* that are able to uphold their own identity...” (trans. in Cox 2004: 558–9). Later commentaries simply equate the two, with the *Visuddhimagga* proclaiming that “*dhamma* means but intrinsic nature.” Likewise, the sub-commentary to the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* states that “there is no other thing called *dhamma* apart from the intrinsic nature borne by it...the term *sabhāva* denotes the mere fact of being a *dhamma*” (trans. in Ronkin 2022: 4).

enables the discrimination of categorial-types, whether on the level of individuals or groupings, and not to signify that the category as a whole exists as a single, independent dharma” (2004: 563). In early texts like the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, for instance, ‘dharma’ is often used ambiguously to designate both categorial groups of dharma-types and the criterion according to which individual dharmas are included as members (*saṃgraha*) thereof.

But given the nominalist orientation of the Abhidharma, they needed to be able to specify that the abstract categories of dharma types did not correspond to the intrinsic nature of their particular tokens. In other words, the Abhidharmic nominalists had to resolve the fact that the word *dharma* could in principle designate the abstract or universal referents and their interrelations (which do not ultimately exist *qua* general types), as well as identify the irreducible aspect of the distinct actualities that come into being and perish in the causal flux. As Cox explains,

Intrinsic nature not only provides the basis for a factor’s abstract classification but also functions as the determinant of its existential status: any factor characterized by intrinsic nature is determined to actually exist as a real entity (*dravya*); all other experienced phenomena exist as aggregations of these real entities and, as aggregations, are said to exist only provisionally (*prajñapti*). Thus, the fivefold taxonomy of seventy-five factors represents a definitive list of all possible categories of entities recognized to exist as real entities (1995: 12).

For the later Abhidharma traditions, then, the distinction between that which exists *substantially* (*dravyasat*) and what only exists *provisionally* (*prajñaptisat*) hinges on whether the dharma in question ‘bears’ an intrinsic nature or essence (*svabhāva*). This ‘essence’ reflects the irreducible feature of a dharma that ‘makes it what it is’—viz., that makes a dharma identifiable as an actual token/trope of the dharma-‘type’ it happens to be. As Yaśomitra glosses Vasubandhu’s

use of the term in the AKBh, “What is essence [*svabhāva*]? The body is its being constituted by course elements, feeling is its being an experience, thought is its being an apprehension.”²⁹

The other closely related term we need to gloss here is *svalakṣaṇa*. This is the ‘defining property’ or ‘self-characteristic’ of a *dharma*. While a *dharma* is the irreducible leftover of reductive analysis that expresses a categorical type of existent, the *svalakṣaṇa* represents that property in virtue of which some a particular causal factor is characterized and individuated as such. In other words, the *svalakṣaṇa* distinguishes something as a self-defined trope of one of the seventy-five general *dharma*-types. So, for instance, earth (*pṛthivī*) atoms (*paramāṇu*) are self-characterized by ‘hardness’ and ‘resistance’ (*khara* or *kāṭhinya*), while perceptual cognition (*viññāna*) is self-characterized by being a “specific representation of an object” (*viṣayaprativijñapti*) (cf. Arnold 2005: 18). We should note that although generally valanced with respect to ontological and epistemological applications, *svabhāva* and *svalakṣaṇa* are often used interchangeably and defined in terms of each other: “Each such primary factor, or *dharma*, is determined or distinguished by an intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*), which is itself defined as the particular inherent characteristic (*svalakṣaṇa*), or distinctive characteristic, that can be applied to that factor alone and to no other” (Cox 1995: 139). Accordingly, from the time of the *vibhāṣā* literature onward, *svalakṣaṇa* (“particular/inherent characteristic”) often contrasts with *sāmānyalakṣaṇa* (“common/general characteristic”) since the former “is the intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*) that is not held in common by other *dhammas*” (*VM* II 137; trans. in Ronkin 2022: 6).

Implicit in this development of the notion of *dhammas* is a central tension that drives the speculative engine of Abhidharma ontology: The reconciliation of the permanence of the abstract categorical *types* of *dhammas* within the axiomatically impermanent metaphysical framework of

²⁹ *kaḥ svabhavaḥ? kāyasya bhūtabhautikatvam, vedanāyā anubhavatvam, cittasya upalabdhitvam* (Shastri 1998: 2.709 and Arnold 2005: 20; 224, fn.19).

co-dependent origination.³⁰ Unlike the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika naïve realists, that is, every category deployed in the revisionist description of the Buddhist Abhidharma needed to conform to a single nature—for all real *dharmas* emerge and perish in accord with the principle of co-dependent arising.³¹ Abhidharma analysis therefore naturally leads from matters of abstract categorization to ontological concerns about the meaning of the substantial (*dravyatas*) existence of real entities.³² For while a dynamic conception of *dharmas* that exert a transient, productive causal potency might be consistent with the primary axiom of impermanence, the claim that such *dharmas* bottom out in any form of *permanent categorical types* threatens the entire conceptual edifice of Abhidharma Buddhism. So, as long as the Ābhidharmikas speak of ‘*dharmas*’ as things that *substantially exist (dravyatas)*, they cannot thereby mean they exist *as substances (dravya)*, for this would contradict the words of the Buddha himself—and that’s, after all, the only ‘*dharma*’ that really *matters*.³³

³⁰ As mentioned, the Sarvāstivādins formulated a system of seventy-five basic types of *dharmas* organized into a fivefold categorization. When the various attributes of these *dharmas* are elaborated (e.g., wholesome/unwholesome), we are left with “an abstract web of all possible conditions and characteristics exhibited by actually occurring *dharmas*. The individual character of any particular *dharma* can then be specified in accordance with every taxonomic possibility, resulting in a complete assessment of that *dharma*’s range of possible occurrences” (Cox 2004: 552).

³¹ A caveat in this regard is the category of the unconditioned (*asaṃskṛtāḥ*) *dharmas*, which in the Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma number three: space (*ākāśa*) and two states of cessation (*nirodha*), one of which is synonymous with *nirvāṇa*. See AKBh 1.48b (37.3): “Permanent *dharmas* are unconditioned” (*nityā dharmā asaṃskṛtāḥ*).

³² Explaining the significance of the term *dravya* in the *vibhāṣā* compendia and contemporaneous texts, Cox writes “the explicit emphasis upon categorization *per se* recedes in importance as the focus shifts to clarifying the character and eventually the ontological status of individual dharmas. Accordingly, the term *svabhāva* acquires the dominant sense of ‘intrinsic nature’ specifying individual dharmas [...] And determining individual *dharmas* through unique intrinsic nature also entails affirming their existence, as a natural function both of the etymological sense of the term *svabhāva* and of the role of dharmas as the fundamental constituents of experience. This then leads to the prominence of a new term that expressed this ontological focus: namely, *dravya*” (ibid., 569).

³³ Many scholars have argued that the Abhidharma system portrays a ‘dynamic’ conception of *dharmas* rather than a static, or substantial, one. They should thus generally be conceived as types of psycho-physical events that occur in necessary dependence on appropriate conditions and qualities. (For arguments to the effect that Abhidharma promotes a constitutively non-substantial event-based metaphysics, see Cox (2004: 549ff); Gethin (1992: 149–150); Karunadasa (2010: Ch. 4); Nyanaponika (1998: Ch. 2 & 4) and Waldron (2002: 2–16)). For these sorts of reasons, some philosophers classify Abhidharma as a form of ‘process philosophy’ (e.g., Ronkin (2005: 71–6), Inada (1971; 1975), Dilworth (1978) and Harding (1992)). Ronkin expresses the motivation for this comparison when she writes that “both the Nikāya and the Abhidharma lines of thought agree in what they are not, namely, substance metaphysics. They are both subsumed under the category of process philosophy” (2005: 71). Insofar, that is, as Abhidharma “understands *dharmas* as properties, activities, or patterns of interconnection that construct one’s

c. Nominalism and Mereological Nihilism

We have just seen that in the Abhidharma tradition, the fundamental occurrences constitutive of all intentional experience are *dharmas* with a *svabhāva* defined in virtue of a *svalakṣaṇa*—i.e., real ‘bearers’ of an essential nature defined in terms of a self-characterizing property that, epistemically speaking, betokens a certain *dharma*-type. Additionally, these real *dharmas* cannot

world, not as static substances”, (ibid., 2022: § 2) one might reasonably infer that this entails a form of process metaphysics akin to the views of Western thinkers like Bergson, Whitehead, James, and Peirce (ibid., 2005: 73-4). As will become quite clear, however, I believe this is a strong non-sequitur: Just because Abhidharma is anti-substantialist, that is, does *not* entail it is a ‘process philosophy’ in the contemporary Western sense associated with Bergson, Whitehead, or the American pragmatists. Most germanely, all these thinkers took seriously the *irreducible continuity of experience* as the primary phenomenological touchstone for a coherent *process metaphysics* (albeit to varying degrees of formality and theoretical specificity). They did not seek to *explain away* the apparent continuity of action with reference to a fundamentally *discontinuous* ontology—rather, the continuity of experience represented a transcendental fact to which they all held themselves theoretically accountable in some form or another (for an illuminating treatment of the distinction between Peirce and Whitehead on the metaphysical nature of continuity, see Rosenthal (1996)). Similarly, all these thinkers accept, in one way or another, a temporal ontology of *internal relations*, which perforce *rejects* radical momentariness. And, finally, all these thinkers (again, in one way or another) rejected a thoroughgoing nominalism insofar as they accepted the ‘objective’ reality of *conceptual possibilities* (albeit this is a more complicated matter for Whitehead, as it turns on his notion of God). In other words, three of the bedrock tenets of modern process thought—ontological continuity, concrete internal relatedness, and the objective nature of futural possibility—are all *denied* in Abhidharma. Ronkin does not foreground the centrality of these concepts for Western process metaphysics in her review of the subject, and thus does not, in my view, appreciate that the grounds for the comparison with Abhidharma is rather tenuous—to wit, they are both generally ‘anti-substantialist’. Granted, this might be due to the fact that Ronkin views her project as “seriously look[ing] into the possibility of grasping the doctrine shift in the history of Theravāda Buddhism not in ontological terms, but rather in epistemological terms...While the ontologist asks how time as a transcendental category contains and determines occurrences, the epistemologist searches for features in experience that make us conceive of occurrences the way we do...[Thus] the doctrine of momentariness deals not with temporality as such, but with the construction of temporal experience; it analyses *dhammas* as they transpire through time: as psycho-physical events that appear in consciousness and, in fact, construct time” (2005: 66-7). The motivation for this epistemological interpretation of temporality comes from thinkers like Gethin, who points out that “the concerns of the Abhidharma are practical rather than purely theoretical or scholastic; they arise directly out of the concerns of the Nikāyas themselves: what is going on in the mind when one tries to train it and wake it up?” (1992: 351). Cousins also expresses this intuition when he notes that “the aim of this Abhidharma analysis is not really theoretical; it is related to insight meditation (*vipassana*) and offers a worldview based upon processes in order to facilitate insight into change (*anitya*) and no-self (*anatta*) so as to undermine mental rigidity” (1995)). While we must certainly keep the practical dimension of the Abhidharma in view as a historical fact, my own impression is that, even if Abhidharma begin with epistemological concerns, the ontological valence of these aims had already come to a head by the time the doctrine of momentariness was formulated. As Gombrich observes, the lists of *dhammas* ultimately went from an open-ended practice of distinguishing the self-contained characteristics of mental events to “an inventory of what the Buddha taught to *exist*, as the building blocks of the universe...There were many more abstract than the concrete *dhammā*, and some were still the names of processes, like anger, but the list was a closed one. Thus the number of kinds of things in the world was taken to be established (though the various schools disagreed about the exact number), even though the number of instances of those things could not be” (1996: 37).

bear the general or distributed properties of either permanence or compounded wholeness, as this would violate Buddhist axioms. Accordingly, the relational properties attributed to the personal ‘self’ do not map onto the actual reality of its constitutive impersonal *dharmas*: just as ‘chariot’ is a mere *name* for a certain assemblage of parts, so too does the whole ‘person’ reduce to a conventional designation for a bundle of impersonal psycho-physical ‘tropes,’ or ontologically separate, particular instances of a generic class of referents (e.g., the five *skandhas*). But the necessary reference to false selfhood is practically intelligible given the distinction between the enduring person, construed as an independent and self-subsistent whole, and the ultimate reality of its impermanent causal constituents.

In a much-cited verse of the AKBh, Vasubandhu expresses the Abhidharma mereological criteria for the ultimate reality of a thing. In doing so, he also conveys the mode of reasoning epitomized by the Abhidharma tradition, where the doctrine of no-self leads to a mereological reductionism that denies the objective reality of all universal concepts and their relational properties. According to the Buddhists, any empirical object that cannot withstand reductive analysis is not, *ipso facto*, *ultimately real* (viz., just like the perduring self) because it does not exhibit the ontological independence of a *svabhāva* defined in virtue of a self-individuating *svalakṣaṇa*:

Anything the idea of which does not occur upon division or upon mental analysis, such as an object like a pot, that is a conceptual fiction. The ultimately real is otherwise. A conceptual fiction is such that the idea of it does not occur when it is divided into parts. Like a pot: there is no idea of a pot when it is broken into sherds. And that is also to be known as a conceptual fiction the idea of which does not occur when properties are stripped away by the mind. Like water: there is no idea of water where properties such as shape and the like have been excluded by the mind. And with respect to these, the convenient designations being formed through the power of convention, saying that pot and water exist is true, one does not speak a falsehood, this is conventional truth. What is other than this is ultimate truth. Where there is the idea even upon division, as well as upon exclusion of other properties by the mind, that is ultimately real. Like color: even when it is divided up into atoms, and even when the mind takes away properties such as taste and the like, there is still the intrinsic nature

(*svabhāva*) of color. Feeling, etc., should be seen in the same way. Because this exists in the highest sense, it is called ultimately real.³⁴

Based on this mereological style of reasoning, Abhidharma philosophers like Buddhaghosa thought that “mere names” encompass not just the bundle of “person” and “chariot,” but also *any conceptual referent* with the properties of permanence and partite composition—e.g., “house,” “forest,” “tree,” “fist,” “lute,” “city,” and “army”; in other words, any universal used to designate the compounded structure of empirical objects. As Siderits summarizes the connection, “The point [of mereological nihilism] is not to get us to stop believing there are chariots. The point is to help us see how we could all be mistaken about an ‘I.’ For the mechanism that generates belief in a real ‘I’ is the same: hypostatization. What we have in both cases is a many masquerading as a one” (2015: 98).

The dualistic semantics of ‘one’ vs. ‘many’—as incompatible properties predicated of a particular spatio-temporal existent—begins to indicate how the mereological results motivating Abhidharma reductionism jibe with the sort of ‘intelligibility conditions’ that spur relational eliminativism, i.e., the theoretical incoherence of something’s necessarily being *both* unified *and* diverse.³⁵ Although Abhidharma and Bradley are divided over the ontological primacy of these categories, both deny the ultimate existence of one or the other due to the contradiction of something *real* bearing the properties of unity and diversity *simultaneously*. In the Buddhist case,

³⁴ *yatra bhinne na tadbuddhiranyāpohe dhiyā ca tat / ghaṭārthavatsaṃvṛtisat paramārthasadanyathā // yasminnavayavaśo bhinne na tadbuddhirbhavati tat saṃvṛtisat / tadyathā ghaṭaḥ / tatra hi kapālaśo bhinne ghaṭabuddhirna bhavati / tatra cānyānapohya dharmān buddhacyā tadbuddhirna bhavati taccāpi saṃvṛtisadveditavyam / tadyathāmbu / tatra hi buddhacyā rūpādīndharmānaśohyāmbubuddhirna bhavati / teṣveva tu saṃvṛtisaṃjñā kṛteti saṃvṛtivaśāt ghaṭaścāmbu cāstīti brūbantaḥ satyamevāhurna mṛṣetyetatsaṃvṛtisatyam / atonyathā paramārtha satyam / tatra bhinne 'poi tadbudhirbhavatyeva / anyadharmāpohe 'pi buddhacyā tat paramārthasat / tadyathā rūpam / tatra hi paramāṇuśo bhinne vastuni rasārhānapi ca dharmānapohya buddhacyā rūpasya svabhāvabuddhirbhavatyeva / evaṃ vedanādayo 'pi draṣṭavyāḥ / etat paramārthena bhāvāt paramārthasatyamiti (AKBh ad AK 6.4; trans., with slight alteration, in Siderits (2022: 57); cf. Dunne (41)).*

³⁵ To this extent, one might construe the problem of ontological relations and mereological nihilism as both just iterations of the ancient problem of the One and Many. See Unger (1980) for an influential modern articulation of mereological nihilism in response to the “The Problem of the Many”. Additionally, McEvelley (2001: 23-67) offers a relevant comparative study of ancient Greek and Indian thinking on the problem of the One and the Many.

since any compounded referent resolves into the disjunctive diversity of its constitutive causes, empirical wholes only ‘exist’ as terms that factor into *conceptual descriptions* of a personal perspective—universals and relations, in other words, are both not ultimately real on the same *a priori* grounds.

This much is evident in the pervasive deployment of ‘neither-one-nor many’ arguments throughout Abhidharma literature, which deny the existence of some reified entity (stereotypically, the self) because the logical form of any real relationship between this unified conceptual whole and its diverse empirical constituents is *a priori* incoherent. More precisely, if we grant reality to both the parts and the whole (like the Naiyāyika realist), the Buddhist reductionist claims that these two referents could *only* be *identical* or *distinct*; one the one hand, if we consider them identical, partite wholes always have at least one property (i.e., oneness) that the parts lack (i.e., manyness), and thus they cannot, *ipso facto*, be identical.³⁶ On the other hand, neither can they be formally distinct: For something to exist, it must instantiate an intrinsic nature. But two distinct entities, *x* and *y*, possess an intrinsic nature ‘*S*’ just insofar as they do not depend on one another for their existence: To say that *x* is ‘*S*,’ then, *just is* to say that *x* can exist in the absence of *y* and *vice versa*—in other words, in a symmetrical relationship of mutual independence, or pure external relatedness, necessarily instantiated in the bare actuality of distinct individuals. However, Ābhidharmika theorists claim, like the modern logical atomists, that the whole and its parts bear a constitutively *asymmetrical* form of relation; while the parts do not depend upon the whole, the whole ‘borrows’ its nature from the parts. Consequently, there is

³⁶ At least, that is, according to the Identity of Indiscernibles. Baxter (2014) distinguishes between two kinds of ‘identity’: composition and numerical identity. The reductionist can employ this distinction to save the ontological identity between the whole and its parts while acknowledging that the unified identity of the single thing can be described under numerically distinct aspects. “A six-pack can itself have the distinct property of being one under one count aspect [unit of sales] and being six under another count aspect [units of consumption]” (Siderits 2015: 101). In this case, numerical identity reflects a less fundamental identity than that of composition. This ultimately serves to support the reductionist view that the whole *just is* the parts, and the way we sort these parts represents an epistemic distinction, not anything ultimately real.

no fact about the compounded whole that cannot in principle be explained in terms of facts about its constituent parts (e.g., mass, size, and causal efficacy).

In this respect, we can frame the problem of ‘relation’ in terms of the *inherence* of the whole within the parts; that is, does the whole ‘inhere’ in each part, or does it only *partly* inhere in each part? The former is nonsensical, for it is obvious that a whole chariot cannot inhere in each of its parts (some of which, like nails and lynchpins, are significantly smaller).³⁷ Alternatively, if the whole ‘chariot’ inheres only *partly* in each part, we are faced with a characteristic regress: To explain how the chariot might only partly inhere in each of its parts, we will need to supply it with further parts. There are now two ‘parts’: Parts₁ that exist either separately or assembled and come together to form the empirical chariot; and there are parts₂ of the separate universal ‘chariot’ that map onto the different loci corresponding to parts₁. But then what is the *relation* between parts₂ and the universal ‘chariot’? The chariot cannot inhere in each of them, for reasons just adduced. The only alternative is to explain the relation through positing further parts₃ and inherence relations, and then turtles all the way down (*ibid.*, 103).

In sum, then, the canonical Buddhist argument for mereological nihilism is that causally compounded wholes cannot be considered identical with, nor distinct from, their constitutive parts—and, most explicitly, this is so because we cannot make sense of the logical form of something *real* simultaneously instantiating the contradictory numerical properties of *unity* and *diversity* without contradiction or regress.³⁸ Unsurprisingly, this is precisely what Dharmakīrti will argue the essential definition of a ‘*relation*’ is. And so, the Buddhist Abhidharma tradition transforms the category of relation from an arguably common-sense empirical principle of causal

³⁷ This is just a result of the mereological principles of logical atomism; on this note, recall Moore’s asymmetrical argument against Hegelian organic wholes in Chapter I.

³⁸ For more on the logic and debates surrounding the neither-one-nor many arguments in Buddhism and the Tibetan tradition, see Tillemans (1984), Hugon (2015) and Tomlinson (2023). For Śāntarakṣita’s Madhyamaka-inflected deployments of these arguments following Nāgārjuna, see Blumenthal (2004; 2009).

dependence in the Pali *sūtras* to an abstract object of formal analysis, one rendered theoretically incoherent, and thus conceptually fabricated, when subjected to the *a priori* analysis of mereological nominalism.

2. Temporality and Momentariness in Sautrāntika Abhidharma

a. Sautrāntika vs. Sarvāstivāda on the Nature of Time

Abhidharma debates over the temporality of *dharmas* naturally emerged from a basic theoretical tension between two foundational Buddhist doctrines that we have already encountered: The causally conditioned nature of all real existents and their necessary impermanence. While the former doctrine explains the nature of present entities based on their causal relations with others (to wit, their immediately antecedent progenitors), the latter demands that all real entities emerge and perish within some limited time frame. So, there is a *prima facie* tension between the temporal features of causality and impermanence, insofar as there does not appear to be any difference between saying that things are *eternal* and/or *permanent* and that they somehow exist in the past, present, and future. As Vasubandhu inquires: “Does a past and future thing really exist, or not? If it exists, then you have to say that conditioned things (*saṃskāra*) are eternal, because they exist at all times. If, on the other hand, it does not exist, then how is one bound in it or by it, or freed?” (trans. in Gold: 27). If the Abhidharmic system cannot explain how to reconcile the *temporality* of causal relations within an ontology of constitutively disconnected, impermanent entities, it cannot explain the doctrinal and empirical relationship between causality and impermanence. Thus, the question that faced Abhidharma philosophers involved whether and how causal relations that reference past and future times make any sense in light of the impermanence of real existents.

In Vasubandhu's AK, temporal arguments typically pit Sautrāntika (lit., 'followers of the *sūtras*') advocates of radical momentariness (*kṣaṇikavāda*) against their Sarvāstivādin opponents (lit., 'those who believe in the doctrine (*vāda*) that "everything exists"' (*sarva-asti*)).³⁹ Generally, the Sautrāntika position boils down to a rather straightforward argument that resonates with the Buddhist either/or mode of deconstructive analysis: Since intrinsic natures cannot, *ipso facto*, change and remain as such, they must either exist *eternally* or *momentarily*; but the existence of permanent entities violates the Buddha's teaching of impermanence; therefore, real existents must be momentary. Past and future referents, on this account, are conventional and dependent designations, but not ultimately real. To understand the mereological conception of temporality that motivates this position, however, one must place the argument in its rhetorical context against the Sarvāstivādins. In the AKBh Vasubandhu will typically side with the Sautrāntika who claims that one cannot establish the real temporal existence of intrinsic natures without regress or circular reasoning.

As one can infer from the name, according to the Sarvāstivādins, past, present, and future all have some valid ontological status. That is, they are not merely conceptual constructions, but real, independent existents with their own *svabhāva* that distinguishes them as abiding in one of the three times. In the AK v.25–27,⁴⁰ Vasubandhu presents four arguments the Sarvāstivādins marshalled in support of their view. Aside from two arguments that appeal to scriptural authority (*āgama*) where the Buddha himself references temporal entities, two arguments from logical reasoning (*yukti*) are provided: (1) "due to the existent sense object" (*sadviṣayāt*) and (2) "due to the result" (*phalāt*) (cf. Gold: 26). The first argument appeals to the intentionality of cognition,

³⁹ For discussions on the Sautrāntika proofs of momentariness, see Steinkellner (1968), Mimaki (1976), Yoshimizu (1999; 2007). See Oetke (1993), in particular, for a focus on the argument from existence. A staple of secondary literature on momentariness is von Rospatt's extensive (1995) study. For Abhidharmic debates concerning the nature of time and momentariness, see Cox (1994).

⁴⁰ See Gold (25-39) for a translation and summary of this portion of the AK.

while the second appeals to the effects of *karma*.⁴¹ Glossing the former, Vasubandhu writes: “Consciousness arises when there is an object, not when there is no object. This is a fixed principle. If past and future (*dharma*) were non-existent, there would be a consciousness having a non-existent object. Hence, in the absence of an object, consciousness itself would not exist.”⁴² On epistemological grounds, then, the Sarvāstivādins urged that if objects of the past and future did not exist, we could not refer to them: or rather, we would not be able to take intentional stances towards objects of the past or future if they possessed no real objective referents whatsoever.⁴³ In this respect, one of the primary philosophical reasons the Sarvāstivādins promoted the existence of the three times was to preserve the temporal integrity of intentional life. In this respect, they illustrate the ‘realist’ wing of Abhidharma that wanted to safeguard the Buddha’s teaching from a common-sense level of description, lest a radical skepticism take hold of all knowledge—including, no doubt, the coherence of the *dharma itself*, given that the salvific orientation of *nirvāṇa* presupposes, at some basic level, the teleological structure of practical and temporal consciousness.

However, given the self-individuated criteria for all actual existents, the Sarvāstivādins needed to explain how the *dharmas* in the three times become objectively distinguished from

⁴¹ With regard to (1), recall that for Buddhists, all instances of consciousness are constitutively object-directed, insofar as they depend upon the independent function of a particular sense-field (*āyatana*) for their occurrence. As Saṅghabhadra, one of the most important Sarvāstivādin philosophers, holds, “the characteristic of a real existent is that it serves as an object domain for generating cognition...If, with regard to a thing, a cognition (*buddhi*) is produced without depending on anything else, this thing exists truly — e.g., *rūpa*, *vedanā*, etc. If it depends on other things to produce a cognition, then it exists conceptually/relatively — e.g., a vase, army, etc” (trans. from Chinese in Dhammajoti (2007b: 79)). Cox (1995: 138) contrasts Saṅghabhadra’s definition of a real existent with Vasubandhu’s, i.e., as “that which has already been produced and has not yet passed away.”

⁴² **sadviṣayāt** // *sati viṣaye vijñānaṃ pravartate nāsati / yadi cātītānāgataṃ na syādasādāmbanaṃ vijñānaṃ syāt / tato vijñānameva na syādāmbanābhāvāt* (AKBh 5.24, 295.19-21) (cf. Westerhoff on this point (2018: 60-2)).

⁴³ Another compelling argument made by Buddhadeva, appeals to the intrinsically indexical character of the term “present”. In support of this idea, McDermott notes that, even if we assume the present moment precedes the following moment and likewise succeeds the moment which preceded it, “to conclude that...the present moment is (in a timeless sense of the word ‘is’) past with respect to the subsequent moment and future with respect to the antecedent moment, is to overlook the lexical character of the terms...to demand the cake one has just eaten” (411). On a relevant treatment of the “impossible generalization” that ‘now is the only time that matters,’ see Valberg (2013). For Valberg, the paradox comes from the apparent *generalization* of a property ascribed to the temporal present that simultaneously claims *particularity*—to wit, ‘*uniquely* being *the* time that matters.’

each other. In this regard, Vasubandhu records several ‘differentialist’ (*anyāthika*) views of the Sarvāstivādins: being (*bhāva*), quality (*lakṣaṇa*), activity (*kāritra*), and difference (*anyathā*).⁴⁴ We will explain Vasubandhu’s Sautrāntika arguments against *bhāva* and *kāritra*, since they not only bring into relief the relevant *relational* problems with the differentialist views, but Vasubandhu also happens to take *kāritra*, in particular, the most seriously.

The ‘being-differentialist’ (a view he attributes to Dharmatrāta) explains the distinction of the three times in terms of a transformation in the mode of an entity, not its substantial existence (viz., intrinsic nature). Just as a pot of gold essentially remains gold throughout its destruction and reformation, so too does an intrinsic nature retain its identity throughout changes in its mode of being. Vasubandhu dispatches with this option like he does the Sāṃkhya theory of substance, for “the substance itself has a change, simply by becoming possessed of difference (*anyathābhāva*). This is what is illogical” (Gold: 31). In other words, Vasubandhu argues that the changeful characteristics that *dharmas* supposedly ‘bear’ for the being-differentialist cannot be considered identical with, nor distinct from, the substantial entity itself: If the former, then there is no unchanging ‘backdrop’ that ‘bears’ these changing characteristics, and thus it no longer qualifies as a substantial existent; if the latter, however, then the changeful ‘possession’ of these variegated characteristics are, by definition, not constitutive of the substantial existent itself, in which case they make no actual difference to the unchanging nature of the real entity.⁴⁵ Note how similar the structure of reasoning here mirrors Abhidharma arguments against universal wholes on the basis of their incoherence as neither-unified-nor-distinct from their parts.

⁴⁴ See AKBh v.26 for text, and Gold (29) and Cox (1995: 139) for commentary on these views.

⁴⁵ Ditto for what Gold calls the ‘quality-differentialists’ like Ghoṣaka, who view the past and future of *dharmas* as dormant ‘qualities’ of an unchanging entity: e.g., “like a man who is attracted to one woman is not devoid of desire for others.” Vasubandhu argues that, regardless of whether or not ‘differentiation’ occurs through qualities or being, the temporality of causation remains the problem. For what *causes* the temporal shift from dormancy to discharge of these qualities, such that they can be said to be independent of the changeless substance—*sans*, that is, a vicious regress?

Vasumitra's *kāritra* differentialism construes a *dharma*'s movement through the three times as a change in its state of existence (*avasthā*), but not its substantial nature. Vasubandhu quotes him as saying: "A *dharma* proceeding through the times, reaching one position and then another, is taken as being one thing and then another due to its having another position, not another substance. Just as a one and the same mark placed in the ones' space is called 'one' and in the hundreds' space a hundred, and in the thousands' space, a thousand" (trans. in Gold: 32). While this might sound at first like crude relativism (i.e., the fourth option, *anyathā*), Vasumitra contends that this change in position is effectuated with appeal to the modes of activity of a *dharma*: if a *dharma* is currently discharging its activity, it is present; if it has already done so, it is past; and if it will do so, it is future. In this case, a real entity can exist "either as intrinsic nature alone [i.e., past and future factors] or as intrinsic nature also possessed of activity [i.e., present factors]" (Cox 1995: 140).

This distinction is explained, in turn, with recourse to a distinction between the 'activity' and 'capability' of existents. According to Cox (ibid., 142) "activity is considered an internal causal efficacy that contributes toward the production of an effect within a particular factor's own stream. Capability, however, is considered an external conditioning efficacy directed toward the stream of another factor; it constitutes a condition that assists another factor in the production of its own effect." If I understand this correctly—and I'm not sure I do—the capacity of past and future factors to condition present entity are deemed ontologically independent of those factors *actually engaged* in *present* activity (since something presently active presumably cannot, at the same time, instantiate a mere latent *capacity* to be active), but they themselves also constitute a necessary condition for that very activity.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ For details on the two arguments Sarvāstivādins leveraged to prove the ontological (not merely semantic) distinction between capability and activity, see Cox (1995: 141).

As one might surmise at this point, Vasubandhu's Sautrāntika response to this model simply deploys another neither-one-nor-many argument to show that we cannot coherently relate a factor's activity or capability to its intrinsic nature: If they are the same, then the intrinsic nature would have to change along with its activity. If they are different, then each factor would really be two factors, one bearing activity and the other an intrinsic nature. Furthermore, if we try to relate these two factors together through yet some other 'capacity' or 'function'—viz., to explain the discharging function of a present 'activity' with recourse to further independent factors—we find ourselves on the brink of relational regress. Thus, we cannot account for the difference between temporal activity and intrinsic nature without recourse to concepts that already presuppose a temporal form of activity; that is, we cannot *explain* the way an unchanging intrinsic nature 'bears' the changes of temporal action without recourse to discrete factors whose very *modes of efficacy* already take this very idea for granted. This point comes to a head in Abhidharma attempts to articulate the nature of the relationships between the 'four characteristics' that comprise the temporality of *dharmas*—i.e., the so-called '*saṃskṛtalakṣaṇas*.'

b. The Saṃskṛtalakṣaṇas, Regress, and McTaggart's A and B Series

While the previous neither-one-nor many arguments already imply a movement towards radical momentariness, the tension between temporal and mereological levels of description becomes most explicit in a debate over the discrete nature of temporal entities. Based on the Pali Canon, the Ābhidharmikas accepted 'four characteristics' of conditioned existents (*saṃskṛtalakṣaṇa*):

birth (*jāti*), continuance (*sthiti*), aging (*jarā*), and perishing (*anityatā*).⁴⁷ According to the Sarvāstivādin, temporal experience is caused by the successive apprehension of distinct causally efficacious factors that condition the present *dharma*. von Rospatt summarizes this model, “The Sarvāstivādins—in accordance with their tendency to hypostatize conceptual terms to real entities (cf. the other *cittaviprayukta saṃskāras*)—conceived of origination, endurance, transformation and destruction as entities in their own rights which (partly in conjunction with external causes) respectively originate, stabilize, transform and destroy the conditioned factor they qualify” (45).⁴⁸ Even though the Sarvāstivādins agreed with the Sautrāntikas that causal activity only discharges in the present moment, due to their reification of temporal properties, they regarded past and future *lakṣaṇas* as distinct objects of conceptual knowledge (*utpādo api prajñāyate*).⁴⁹

We will not go into the details of the Sautrāntika arguments against the four characteristics.⁵⁰ Suffice it to say, many boil down to familiar relational problems. For let’s say

⁴⁷ It is worth noting that some Abhidharmic texts omit ‘continuance’ (Cox: 147). This does not, though, deflect the general thrust of the Sautrāntika critique.

⁴⁸ Such objects possess a kind of reality that is “*cittaviprayukta saṃskāras*,” i.e. a conditioned object that nonetheless exists independently of the mind. Remember that all existents were either conditioned/contingent (*saṃskṛta*) or unconditioned/non-contingent (*asaṃskṛta*). Conditioned existences were temporal, and included mind and matter (*nāma* and *rūpa*) and the five aggregates; all Ābhidharmikas agreed that there is at least one *asaṃskṛta*, or eternal *dharma*, i.e. Nirvāṇa.

⁴⁹ Vasubandhu, siding with the Sautrāntikas, denies that the four characteristics are objects of either knowledge or perception: “This [doctrine of the *saṃskṛtalakṣaṇas*] is tearing apart empty space [i.e. analyzing something that does not really exist]. So they [the Sautrāntikas] hold: The phenomena of birth and so on do not exist as substantial entities (*dravyatas*) as they are differentiated [from the originating etc. entity by the Sarvāstivādins.] Why is that? Because there are no means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) [testifying to these substances]. For there is no means of knowledge whatsoever, be it perception, inference or reliable tradition, which, as in the case of material phenomena and so on, [testify] to their substantial existence.” *tadetadākāśaṃ pātyata iti sautrāntikāḥ / na hy ete jātyādayo dharmā dravyataḥ saṃvidyante yathā 'bhivyajyante / kim kāraṇam / pramāṇābhāvāt / nahyeṣāṃ dravyato 'stīve kiñcidapi pramāṇamasti pratyakṣamanumānamāptāgamo vā yathā rūpādīnāṃ dharmānāmiti* (AKBh 76, 22-076, 23-25).

⁵⁰ The Dārṣṭāntika’s, for instance, maintain that a single entity cannot bear mutually exclusive marks: “If the three *saṃskṛtalakṣaṇas* did exist in one moment, then the qualified entity (*dharma*) would have to originate and decay and perish at one time. This, however, is not reasonable, because [these activities] are mutually exclusive” (von Rospatt: 49, f.99). The Sarvāstivādins reply that even though the *lakṣaṇas* exist simultaneously, they *operate* consecutively—that is, not at the same time. “Because the time of their activity differs, [these marks] are not mutually exclusive. That is to say, when the *dharma* originates, the [mark of] origination has its activity. When the *dharma* undergoes destruction, then the [marks of] age and destruction have their activity. Even though [as] entities [they exist]

we grant the existence of the *saṃskṛtalakṣaṇas*. A prototypical regress ensues, as the *lakṣaṇas* (as *cittaviprayukta saṃskāras*) represent conditioned objects of their own, and thus now demand their own respective *lakṣaṇas*, and so on.⁵¹ The bottom line is that there is no way to *relate* independent temporal characteristics to an actual determinate existent without positing further relations, or cutting off the regress *ad hoc* through the stipulation of an intrinsic nature with some *internal* relational properties whose complexity contradicts the mereological ontology of Abhidharma.

We can get handle on the conceptual problems here with reference to McTaggart’s essay “The Unreality of Time”, which essentially set the terms for temporal debate in the early 20th

simultaneously, their activity is sooner or later. That the operations of origination and destruction of one *dharma* have been completed is called ‘one moment.’ Therefore, there is no mistake [in our teaching]” (ibid.: 50, f.101). In this case, however, we are confronted with a regress similar to the one previously mentioned. In short, the Sarvāstivādin doctrine only gets off the ground by presupposing that the indexical attributes of temporality either do not apply to the *saṃskṛtalakṣaṇas* themselves (such that birth (*jāti*) and duration (*sthiti*) do not occur for any amount of time), or are simply supplied *ad hoc* to provide a ground for the regress. Insofar as these properties were supposed to “explain” the *temporality* of *dharma*s, however, the Sarvāstivādins are simply begging the question. They have invoked entities that presuppose the very temporal activity they had intended to explain in the first place. That is, if each *lakṣaṇa* represents an object externally related to, but also temporally dependent upon, another *lakṣaṇa*, we are forced to endlessly posit some higher-order *lakṣaṇas* to account for the temporality of the external relations that obtain between contiguous elements in the sequence of the prior level. Much like Zeno’s paradoxes of motion, a world of *lakṣaṇas* all the way down would appear to render a limited temporal action impossible. Vasubandhu thus concludes that “clearly, it is also the case that those who maintain that (i.e. as in the case of the mark of origination) the [marks of] duration etc. discharge their activity successively, [is wrong because] this infringes upon the momentariness [of the qualified entity]” *yo ‘pi hi brūyāt sthityādīnāmapī kāritraṃ kramṇeti tasya kṣaṇikatvaṃ bādhyate* (AKBh 78, 23; see von Rospatt: 52, f.106 for translation).

⁵¹ In response, some Sarvāstivādins taught of a second-order set of ‘*anulakṣaṇas*’ that accompany each first-order *lakṣaṇa*. Thus, we have a total of nine *lakṣaṇas* that presumably attend each causally efficacious action. But in order to avoid the looming regress, the Sarvāstivādins argued that the first and second order *lakṣaṇas* co-condition each other. According to this peculiar view, “the secondary mark of origination engenders the primary mark of origination which at the same time engenders the other three primary marks as well as all four secondary marks (among them the very secondary mark of origination by which it is engendered itself) and, most importantly, the principle entity, to which all these marks are attached” (von Rospatt: 45). It is clear, though, that granting co-conditioned status to the initial *jāti* appears *ad hoc* and arbitrary. If we assume the shared conditionality of the other *lakṣaṇas* (duration (*sthiti*), aging (*jarā*) and impermanence (*antiyatā*)), then the “*jāti-jāti*” attains a *causa sui* status for each element in that sequence, and thus each *lakṣaṇa*s originates from a *relata* that is itself not part of the chain of causal interdependence—in other words, it is an intrinsic nature with an internal relation. Indeed, if origination occurs in the same spontaneous fashion as perishing, we are led to their nominal identity as essentially ‘causeless’ activities (insofar as we cannot identify such causes as operating *qua* external relations), in which case we are inclined to adopt the Sautrāntika point-instant! So, the Sarvāstivādin must bite a big bullet: They must admit that, insofar as the *lakṣaṇas* are externally related and also causally-interdependent, the *jāti-jāti* function becomes an exemption from the shared conditionality of all objects of existence, which would *prima facie* contradict the Buddha’s teaching of *pratīyasamutpāda*.

century. McTaggart posits two types of formal series that could plausibly characterize time: the so-called A and B-series.⁵² The latter is a set of moments organized without reference to the temporal indexicals of past, present and future: “The series of positions which runs from earlier to later I shall call the B-series. The contents of a single position in time are called events...A position in time is called a moment” (1908: 458). We can thus formalize the B series as a strict *total order* of moments, $\langle T, < \rangle$, where the elements of time are moments, $m \in T$, related by “temporal precedence” $<$ (i.e., $m < n = m$ is *earlier than* n). This model of time notably leaves out the three tenses, which is critical to our pre-theoretic intuitions about time; without distinctions of past, present, and future, we could not account for our experience of change. The B-series is fundamentally static in this respect. He thus introduces an A-series that divides events (or the moments they occupy) exhaustively into three disjoint sets according to those that possess the distinct properties of past, present, and future: In an A-series, the elements of time are moments, $m \in T$, related by temporal precedence ‘ $<$ ’, with three mutually exclusive properties: P, C, F. (e.g., $C(m) = m$ is present). That is, each moment is either past, present or future ($P(m)$ implies $\neg C(m)$ and $\neg F(m)$, and so on).⁵³

Having argued that our conception of change must necessarily involve the A-series of temporal indexicals, he concludes that,

[p]ast, present and future are incompatible determinations. Every event must be one or the other, but no event can be more than one...It may seem that this can be easily explained...The characteristics are only incompatible when they are simultaneous, and there is no contradiction to this in the fact that each term has all of them successively. But this explanation involves a vicious circle. For it assumes the existence of time in order to account for the way in which moments are past, present and future. Time then must be presupposed to account for the A-series. But we have already seen that the A-series has to be assumed in order to account for time. Accordingly the A-series has to be presupposed in order to account for the A-series. And this is clearly a vicious circle...The difficulty may be put in another way, in which the fallacy will exhibit itself rather as a vicious infinite series than as a vicious circle. If we avoid the incompatibility of the three characteristics by asserting that M is present, has been future and will be past, we are constructing a second A-series, within which the first falls, in the

⁵² Technically, he also introduces a C-series, but it is not relevant here.

⁵³ I credit Thomas Pashby for this formalization of the series.

same way in which events fall within the first....You can never get rid of the contradiction, for, by the act of removing it from what is to be explained, you produce it over again in the explanation. And so the explanation is invalid (468-9).

The first problem McTaggart identifies is that according to the A-series only one moment can be present. But if that is the case, then the idea that moments approach from the future, become present, and then recede into the past is logically inconsistent. So the A-series cannot accommodate temporal passage, understood as the transition of moments from future to present to past. But McTaggart also proceeds to frame the argument in terms highly reminiscent of the Sautrāntika critique of the Sarvāstivādins: To account for the present of the three distinct properties of each moment in the A-series, we would need an A₁-series to provide a meta-context for the temporal properties of each of those three terms. We wind up with an endless regress. Like the Sautrāntika, he exploits the reduction of temporal relations to strict externally related predicates; any attempt by the Sarvāstivādins to *explain* the causal efficacy of a discrete moment by outsourcing it to some secondary temporal properties, the causal dependence of these very *lakṣaṇas* will require some further meta-level of explanation, etc.

In more germane terms, we might simply say that Vasubandhu and fellow Sautrāntikas believe real existents cannot change because there is no way to make sense of the *relations* between the singular (*ekatvā*) existence of an intrinsic nature and its ostensible temporal ‘parts.’ As Gold reflects on Vasubandhu’s Sautrāntika-inspired conclusions: “It is evident here that not only change, but in fact all *relations* to changing things become impossible for an unchanging entity...If an unchanging substance possesses the characteristic *future*, it will never come to be present; to be present would contradict its nature as *future*, which it cannot relinquish without also relinquishing its nature as *unchanging*” (ibid.: 31). As Bradley reasoned, changeable properties make no sense taken either *with* (internally related to), or *without* (externally related to), their substantive relata. If intrinsic nature cannot substantially *relate* to its temporal activity

in any possible way and retain its inviolate status *as such*, then “a factor’s activity (*karitra*) constitutes its very nature, its very existence as a factor. Since factors only exist by virtue of their activity, existence can be applied only to the present moment in which the activity occurs” (Cox 1995: 146). This, in a nutshell, captures the basic Sautrāntika *reductio* method to establish the doctrine of radical momentariness: something’s intrinsic nature cannot be different from its causal function; only present things have causal function; ergo, intrinsic natures only exist in the present. When applied to an ontology of self-individuated impermanent factors, only the actual particular remains—everything else is conventional designation. Nominalism and momentariness thus become natural allies in the Sautrāntika system, where the ultimately real is an impermanent flux of particular moments in strict causal succession.⁵⁴

What I wish to highlight in closing is the way that the mereological suppositions of Abhidharma nominalism ultimately force the Sautrāntika to sever the temporality of *dharma*s from their ‘activity/function’ (*vyāpāra*)—a move that rhetorically bottoms-out in the Sautrāntika ontology of momentariness and the attendant denial of real relations in Dharmakīrti’s work. While the Sarvāstivādins acknowledge that the intrinsic nature of a *dharma* is neither the same as, nor distinct, from its causal activity (and thus relationally indeterminate), the mereological

⁵⁴ Relevantly, Saṅghabhadra’s response to the Sautrāntika, just like the Personalist’s riposte to the mereological nihilist above, maintains that we should not consider the relationship between intrinsic nature and activity as one of either absolute identity or absolute difference: “[The relation between activity and intrinsic nature should be understood] like [the case of] the stream of conditioned factors. That is to say, the uninterrupted arising of factors is referred to as a stream, and yet there is no [stream] apart from the factors because it is not apprehended as distinct from them. Nor is the [stream] simply the factors themselves because that would result in the undesirable conclusion that even one moment has the nature of a stream. Nor [can it be said that] the stream does not actually exist, because there is real existence of its activity. It is said: “The activity of the stream is accepted, but no stream is to be found [as a discrete entity].” Through reasoning in this way one should understand that the time periods are established by activity...The real characteristic, [or intrinsic nature,] of factors is without change, but their mode of existence is not without distinction. The real characteristic and mode of existence are neither different nor the same. Therefore, the particular inherent characteristic of conditioned factors always exists, and yet their predominant capability has arising and disappearance” (trans. in Cox: 144). In other words, the relationship is ultimately *indeterminate*, but that does not mean temporal characteristics do not really exist, i.e., they are not merely relative, or conventional designations dependent upon the present entity, but objective and independent factors that ‘act’ in concert therewith (cf. Cox: 80-2).

constraints of Abhidharma nominalism prevent a coherent conception of the *relationship* between the actualized *dharma* and its temporal appearance. Accordingly, it is only really with the momentary doctrine of the Sautrāntika school that a religious tradition built on the universal principle of ‘co-dependence’ rather ironically develops into a chief antagonist to the reality of anything like a ‘relation.’ Since the Buddhist nominalist admits two, *and only two*, sorts of existents—i.e., ultimately real particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*) and conventionally real universals (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*)—they unquestioningly pigeonhole *relation* (*sambandha*) into the same ontological category as *universal* (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*). The idea that all possible entities fall strictly into two camps (‘either fish or fowl—no vegetables’) naturally results in a conceptual reification of ‘relation’ that renders it susceptible to the same arguments that Ābhidharmikas deployed against the independent existence of all permanent, distributed properties or wholes, which also effectively reduces the distributed appearance of temporal actions to tokenized inferential relations.

c. Dharmakīrti’s Eliminativism

Given the ‘promiscuous’, *ad hoc* ontology the Sarvāstivādins were forced to endorse to explain the external relations between the temporal factors of momentary entities, it is unsurprising that Dharmakīrti opted for the relatively ‘parsimonious’ Sautrāntika doctrine of radical momentariness (cf. Arnold 2005: 13). For Dharmakīrti, to ‘be’ is to be casually efficacious (*arthakriyā*),⁵⁵ and to be casually efficacious is to be momentary (*kṣaṇika*); all ultimately real

⁵⁵ *tad eva paramārthasat / arthakriyāsamarthyā-lakṣaṇatvād vastunaḥ* (NB: 14-15). “That [object of perception, the particular *svalakṣaṇa*] is the ultimate reality. The defining characteristic of a real object (*vastu*) is the capacity for *arthakriyā*.”

entities emerge from immediately prior factors and immediately perish (*vināśitva*) thereupon.⁵⁶

“Momentary entities [have] neither any preceding nor any succeeding stages, and cannot exist in a different manner and in a different place” (HB: 53).⁵⁷ Following Vasubandhu’s lead, Dharmakīrti (and Dignāga, to a lesser extent⁵⁸) employs *reductio ad absurdum* arguments to deconstruct *a priori* the reality of anything with extensive properties; all self-characterized particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*) are absolutely simple (*ekatva*, *ekatā*) and momentary (*kṣaṇika*).⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Dharmakīrti offers two principal arguments for the thesis of momentariness: one developed from Vasubandhu, the “*vināśitvānumāna*,” or “the inference of things perishing [spontaneously]”; and one apparently of his own design, the “*sattvānumāna*,” or “the inference [of momentariness] from the [mere] fact of [them] existing” (Tillemans 2020: 1.3). The former argues on similar grounds to the Sautrāntika Ābhidharmikas already discussed, for they inferred the spontaneousness of the mark of destruction based on the impossibility of logical relations between the four *samskṛtalakṣaṇas* (presented in the PV but already laid out in the AKBh; cf. Mimaki (1976: 32., fn. 113)). In this case, the ‘property’ of perishing must be intrinsic to the nature of the object, insofar as it cannot logically represent any causal factor *external to* the object’s actual existence. The latter thesis (*sattvānumāna*) claims that to actually exist just *is* to be causally efficacious—and causal efficacy is only possible if things are changeless. Dharmakīrti justifies this argument at the beginning of the *Vādanyāya*, where he claims that a permanent entity (*nitya*) would be causally effete, as it would neither produce its effects all at once (*yaugapadyena*) nor serially (*kramena*). Notably, he argues regarding the latter case that no ‘nascent,’ ‘would-be’ causal factors of a permanent substance could account for the causal efficacy of the entity itself, because the existence or absence of these distinct factors could not, *ipso facto*, make any practical difference to the supposed *unchanging nature* of the substance itself. Although Tillemans (ibid.) prefers the novel approach of the ‘argument from existence,’ I think both arguments stem more or less directly from the Sautrāntikas, who obviated the need for a temporal construal of the *samskṛtalakṣaṇas* through describing the fundamental incoherence of any changeful *relations* thereof. Thus, radical momentariness was acceptable for the Sautrāntika, and Dharmakīrti, because, unlike the Sarvāstivādins, “they did not accept that origination, etc. are causally efficient entities in their own right that exist apart from the thing that originates” (von Rospatt: 61), and thus they did not need to explain the nature of any relations *between* the actual entity and its causal efficacy.

⁵⁷ *teṣāṃ ca na pūrvaṃ na paścān na pṛthag bhāva iti samarthān / api pūrva-apara-pṛthag-bhāva-bhāvino doṣā na upalīyante* (cf. Gupta (1980) for translation and detailed discussion of the proofs of momentariness in the HB).

⁵⁸ We should note that Hayes (1988a) and Katsura (1991) resist retroactively attributing to Dignāga Dharmakīrti’s Sautrāntika interpretation of “particulars as point-instances, which amounts to a commitment to a doctrine of radical momentariness (*kṣaṇikavāda*)” (Hayes ibid: 15). For these thinkers, Dignāga’s understanding of *svalakṣaṇa* does not necessarily refer only to infinitesimal atoms, but all macro-scale objects of ordinary experience. Hence Katsura insists that “[Dharmakīrti’s view of] reality is characterized by momentariness, an idea which has no place in Dignāga” (1991: 144). In this respect, Dignāga could potentially avoid some of the revisionist extremes that bedevil Dharmakīrti’s reductionistic atomism. From the perspective of this section, though, the most salient feature of Dignāga’s *epistemology* is not necessarily whether he accepted *radical momentariness*, but whether he views cognition, and thus self-consciousness, as fundamentally *inactive*—which he most definitely *does*. Since these are clearly very related in Dharmakīrti’s Sautrāntika-inflected work on relational eliminativism, whether Dignāga believed explicitly in a radical momentariness does not impact the general thrust of the ensuing discussion of his epistemic doctrines.

⁵⁹ The word ‘*ekatā*’ means ‘unity’ but it would be a mistake to associate momentariness with a nominalism that refers to determinate formal unities. This is ultimately because unity is a constitutively *relative* term, in opposition to *diversity*; unity therefore implies a complete internal determinacy. But particulars are utterly unique and self-defined, and thus strictly speaking, for the Buddhists, ‘inexpressible.’ In other words, insofar as one conceptualizes something *as a unity*, one conceptualizes something *as distinct from other things*. But for Dharmakīrti and Dignāga,

Accordingly, the intrinsic nature of all real entities—whether external particulars or perceptual cognitions—occurs with infinitesimal discreteness.

As discussed, for our purposes, the most important consequence of this doctrine of momentariness is that all real entities cannot exhibit any “distribution” (*anvaya*), or, perhaps more germanely, “continuity.” The ultimately real is the ‘bare,’ ‘utterly unique’ particular that cannot, by definition, have an essential nature defined in terms of anything other than itself (cf. Arnold 2005: 25; Dunne: 80); viz., an essential nature is always defined in virtue of that property which completely excludes it from what is other (*sarvato bhinna, sarvato vyāvṛtta, ekāntavyāvṛtta*): “All entities, by their individual nature—inasmuch as they are established through their individual essences—are characterized by differentiation from [all things that have] similar essences and dissimilar essences.”⁶⁰ Unlike conceptual entities, then, particulars have no extensive properties over any dimensions; real entities are necessarily “devoid of spatial, temporal, and semantic distribution” (Dunne: *ibid.*).

Like all his Abhidharma predecessors, Dharmakīrti divides the objects of the world strictly into two categories that correspond to the two truths. As he succinctly affirms, “whatever has causal efficacy (*arthakriyāsamartha*) ultimately exists (*paramārthasat*) in this case. Anything else is declared to be conventionally existent (*saṃvṛtīsat*). These two are particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*) and universals (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*).”⁶¹ Most saliently, *there is no ‘liminal’ reality*

this characterization already presupposes a relational form of conceptual distinction (*vikalpa*). On this point, consider Coseru’s description of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla who follow Dignāga and Dharmakīrti’s intuition here: “Whatever does not appear as separate from its substratum cannot be separated from it, since any thought of separation *is* a case of conceptual elaboration and thus cannot be a proof for the existence of universals” (158). This is why we chose the translation of ‘simple,’ which implies not necessarily determinacy, but a constitutively non-relational mode of being.

⁶⁰ *sarve bhāvāḥ svabhāvena sva-svabhāva-vyavasthiteḥ / svabhāva-parabhāvābhyām yasmād vyāvṛtti-bhāgināḥ / tasmād yato yato arthānām vyāvṛttis tan-nibandhanāḥ / jāti-bhedāḥ prakalpyante tad-viśeṣa-avagāhinaḥ* (PV I.40-42).

⁶¹ *arthakriyāsamarthaṃ yat tad atra [vastuvicāre] paramārthasat / anyat saṃvṛtīsat proktaṃ [kalpanamātravyavahāryatvāt] / te [paramārthasaṃvṛtī] svasāmānyalakṣaṇe* (PV III.3 with Manoranandin’s commentary in brackets; cf. Tillemans: 2011). Whitehead’s critique of traditional scientific empiricism aptly

between distributed natures and unique particulars, for these two types of objects are exhaustively accounted for in virtue of *pratyakṣa* and *anumāna*, the only *pramāṇas* accepted in the Buddhist system.⁶² Since all cognitions are either one or the other, *relations*, as types of ‘distributed’ cognitions, were naturally pigeonholed into the latter category.⁶³ Dunne succinctly explains this connection between relations and universals in Dharmakīrti’s ontology: “[A]n ultimately real thing must be simple. Hence, if a relation were to be ultimately real, then it too must be a simple, unitary entity. If a relation is hypostasized in such a fashion, the mereological style of analysis applies because the relation must now be conceived much as a whole: a single that, while existent in itself, is somehow distributed over its parts” (Dunne: 42).

Dunne also touches upon this point when he explains that Dharmakīrti’s critique of *temporal* extension suggests the mereological reduction of all entities that are “whole-like: that is, they exhibit ‘distribution’ (*anvaya*). A whole is a distributed entity in that it is a single real thing that is somehow instantiated in other single real things that are its parts. The same may be

characterizes the governing disjunction between causally efficacious reals and conceptually constructed experience that is similar to the worldview of Dharmakīrti: “What I am essentially protesting against is the bifurcation of nature into two systems of reality, which, in so far as they are real, are real in different senses. One reality would be the entities such as electrons which are the study of speculative physics. This would be the reality which is there for knowledge; although on this theory it is never known. For what is known is the other sort of reality, which is the byplay of the mind. Thus there would be two natures, one is the conjecture and the other is the dream.... Another way of phrasing this theory which I am arguing against is to bifurcate nature into two divisions, namely into the nature apprehended in awareness and the nature which is the cause of awareness” (CN: 30-1). To this extent, Dharmakīrti may be said to endorse a ‘bifurcated’ vision of nature, in which the external ‘nature’ that causes empirical awareness—i.e., ultimately existent momentary particulars—is ontologically severed from the ‘internal’ form of the apprehension thereof (e.g., the conventional world of extended objects with temporal duration). Clearly, the potential epistemic *skepticism* that obtains in the bifurcation of nature—one that runs throughout the present discussion of Buddhist nominalism—also motivates Peirce and his ‘reformed’ style of relational realism. On this note, Kultgen suggests that both Whitehead and Peirce, in contrast to Kant, deny “even a problematic distinction of noumena from phenomena”—the true nature of reality is manifestly open to us (Kultgen 1960, 288; cf. Lowe 1964: 445; Nubiola: 2008).

⁶² A *locus classicus* for this division occurs at the very beginning of Dignāga’s PS(V): “Perception and inference are the instruments of valid cognition (*pramāṇa*). These are the only two, since there are only two objects of knowledge; for there is no object of knowledge other than the particular and the general characteristic. And we intend to affirm that the object of perception is the particular characteristic [and] the object of inference is the general characteristic.” *pratyakṣam anumānam ca pramāṇe te dve eva, yasmāt prameyaṃ lakṣaṇadvayam / na hi svasāmānyalakṣaṇābhyām anyat prameyam asti. svalakṣaṇaviśayaṃ ca pratyakṣaṃ sāmānyalakṣaṇaviśayaṃ anumānam iti pratipādayiṣyāmaḥ* (PS(V) 1.2; all Sanskrit from Steinkellner’s (2005) reconstruction).

⁶³ “For a relation is that which has a dual-locus; it has no other definition” *dviṣṭho hi kaścit sambandhaḥ. nāto anyat tasya lakṣaṇam* (SP 11ab).

held of a perdurant entity that allegedly endures over time: to be real, it must be a single thing distributed over numerous temporal instances” (42). We might mention in this regard that one way to frame the pragmatic critique of Buddhist nominalism is the indiscriminate way they generalize the property of *anvaya*—namely, from the constitutively spatial wholes that concern early Abhidharma to all other ‘whole-like’ existents. For the Sautrāntika, the ontological deconstruction of *universals, temporal duration, and causal relations* are all similarly justified on the basis of logical principles that Abhidharma thinkers dispatched with respect to the mereological analysis of spatially extended compounded wholes like Milinda’s chariot.⁶⁴ Accordingly, we will find that the arguments Dharmakīrti deploys against relations in the SP draw upon the same intelligibility conditions that render all other mereological wholes ontologically unacceptable: Just like a universal whole, that is, we cannot coherently consider a relation either the-same-as-or-distinct-from its relata: if the relation and relata are *one* (internally related), then there are not really *two* relata; but if they are distinct (externally related), a regress ensues.⁶⁵ Dunne thus concludes that the arguments of the SP “clearly point to a theme within [Dharmakīrti’s] ontology, namely, the rejection of the notion that an entity could be at once one (and thus a simple real) and yet participate in what is many” (44). At any rate, it should now be clear how Dharmakīrti’s relational analysis in the SP will conform to the Sautrāntika doctrines of nominalism and momentariness, which foist upon the Buddhist system a very general and all-

⁶⁴ This sort of ‘spatialized’ reasoning is evident in a well-known, cheeky verse in the PV: “It [i.e., the universal present in one instance] does not go [to another], it was not there [before the instances], nor is it there after [them], nor does it have parts. [And even when in other places] it does not leave the previous locus. Oh my! It’s just one disaster after another.” *na yāti na ca tatrāsīd asti paścān na cāṃśavat / jahāti pūrvam nādhāram aho vyasanasamtatih* (PV: I.152; cf. trans. in Tillemans 2020: 1.1). In effect, universals can’t ultimately exist because they don’t obey laws of spatial decomposition, such as residing in a particular locus and having distinct mereological parts.

⁶⁵ Phillips likewise notes that Dharmakīrti’s regress argument ensues because the relation is treated “as a term, as the same sort of thing, logically, as the relata. Without an argument that a relation is a different sort of critter, it seems that if a third thing is required to relate two things, then the third thing requires equally a fourth and a fifth...*ad infinitum*” (1995: 23).

inclusive dismissal of any ontological ‘distribution.’⁶⁶ Chadha expresses the basic idea: “[r]elations, like universals instantiating many properties, link several relata, and thus cannot have a place in a nominalist ontology” (282). Since only ultimately real particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*) and conventional universals (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) exist, relations, as ‘distributed’ entities themselves (*anvaya*), naturally fell into the latter category.

One might suggest at this point that the nominalist doctrine of momentariness does not yet technically classify as a relational *eliminativism*, but rather as a kind of ‘doctrine of external relations,’ similar to the one associated with the 20th century logical atomists. After all, we have just observed that what defines the existence of a real entity is its complete *independence* from all other existents. Since all real existents are defined in virtue of that property which renders them self-individuated to the mutual exclusion of all other entities, isn’t this *precisely* what defines an ontology predicated on the real existence of *external relations* between a plurality of isolated atomic particulars? It would appear, in other words, that only *internal* (read:: conceptual) relations between abstract entities and parts-to-wholes are denied at the ultimate level of description, rather than *all* relations *tout court*. Why, then, do we claim that Dharmakīrti endorses a Bradleyan relational *eliminativism* rather than a Russelian ‘doctrine of external relations’?

This question can only be answered by tracing the historical shift from the *ontology* of Sautrāntika to the corresponding *epistemology* of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. For it is only in the *epistemic* entailments of Sautrāntika metaphysics that Dignāga and Dharmakīrti can be said to finally adopt a full-fledged relational eliminativism. That is to say, it is only when Dignāga

⁶⁶ Yiannopolous (168) helpfully summarizes this Sautrāntika view: “There is no temporally distributed ‘action’ (*kriyā*) in the sense meant by the Nyāyas, and hence no intermediate “functioning” (*vyāpāra*) event...there is nothing that supervenes across all the instants of an “action,” uniting them as a composite entity, nor any ontologically real relationship between an ontologically-distinct *kartr*, *karana*, and *karman*. In reality, all there is, is a succession of moments, a ‘stream of cause and effect.’”

attempts to analyze the causal structure of *cognition* in nominalist terms that even the ‘relations’ that appear to differentiate a plurality of ‘external’ particulars *no longer apply to the reflexive nature of perception itself*—viz., such descriptions *only apply* to a particular cognition’s retroactive conceptual elaboration. We must now therefore turn to the representationalism of Sautrāntika and its connection to the Yogācāra ‘mind-only’ school to elucidate Dharmakīrti’s transition from the nominalist ‘doctrine of external relations’ to the relational eliminativism advanced in the SP—and, at least according to later Yogācāra commentators like Śāṅkaranandana, the idealism implicitly entailed thereby.

3. The Epistemic Ramifications of Buddhist Nominalism

a. Vaibhāṣika Direct Realism and Sautrāntika Representationalism

Several epistemic problems ensue in the wake of Sautrāntika nominalist theories of cognition and perception. The most germane is the so-called ‘time-lag’ problem,⁶⁷ or the inevitable temporal ‘gap’ that obtains between the moment the external object exists and the moment it is perceived. For the external object that appears in perception cannot be the external object *itself*, because these phenomena exist at *different* moments in a causal succession: the external object exists at t_0 ; it is then perceived by a corresponding sense organ at t_1 ; and, finally, it appears as conceptual content in judgment at t_2 . At minimum, then, the cognitive ‘time-lag’ straddles at

⁶⁷ Note that this problem obtains even for materialist or scientific accounts of perception, since light’s propagation from an object takes time, and so one does not perceive the object directly. Yiannopolous (38) usefully notes in this regard that, “Of course, one may in principle appeal to some kind of continuity between the object at t_0 (when it emits or reflects light) and the object at t_1 (when this light hits the retina), such that the two are held to be “the same” object. This kind of appeal, however, would be equally impossible from both strictly physicalist-materialist and Vaibhāṣika Buddhist perspectives, on account of the momentariness (*kṣaṇikatva*) of everything that exists. At a subatomic level, everything is in constant flux; nothing is absolutely or completely “the same” from moment to moment.”

least three moments, which do not only include the existence of the object and its perception, but also its subsequent conceptual apprehension and relational predication.

In response to the unwanted skepticism, or potential solipsism, that results in this case, two epistemological views arose. For reasons that will become clear, the Sautrāntika position is associated with the Dārṣṭāntika school, while the Sarvāstivādin position corresponds to the Vaibhāṣika.⁶⁸ Generally speaking, the Vaibhāṣika—motivated by similar ‘realist’ concerns as the Sarvāstivādins—argued that cognition perceives the external object *directly*. Thus, they are often described as ‘direct’ or ‘naïve’ realists (e.g., Siderits 2021: 8.2-4; Yiannopolous: 37), for they argued that the object of perception is the external object itself. For contemporary views of naïve or direct realism, this entails intentional content is apprehended in concert with its relation to the external object, presumably without the need to posit any ‘time-lag’ between these moments.⁶⁹

The Vaibhāṣika attempted to render this notion consistent via the concept of ‘simultaneous causation.’ More specifically, though they agreed with the Sautrāntikas that all *dharmas* are ultimately momentary, they adopted the Sarvāstivādin ontology according to which they ‘simultaneously’ abide in all three times. Thus, they differed from the Sautrāntika-Dārṣṭāntika over the dynamics of conditionality. Cox writes that “the Sarvāstivādins allow both

⁶⁸ The doxographical details of these relationships between these schools is obscure. Dhammajoti (2007b: 14), e.g., defends of the notion that “Dārṣṭāntika” and “Sautrāntika” should be kept conceptually separate, and that earlier commentators did not ‘indiscriminately’ associate the two. Willems, Dessein, and Cox (1997: xii), alternatively, claim that “Dārṣṭāntika was used in a derogatory sense, more or less meaning heterodox Sarvāstivāda.” Independently, Cox (1988: 70, fn.4) also states that “the history of the Dārṣṭāntikas and Sautrāntikas are closely intertwined, with the Dārṣṭāntikas as the probable predecessor of the Sautrāntikas.”

⁶⁹ Yiannopolous (37) states that “a fair summation” of Vaibhāṣika realism is Crane and French’s definition that “experiences themselves consist of relations of awareness to objects,” such that “what is fundamental to experience is something which itself cannot [be] explained in terms of representing the world: a primitive relation of awareness to aspects of the world” (2017: 3.4.1). For reasons that should be clear, the problem the Vaibhāṣika’s ran into with this position in the context of Buddhist nominalism is the loaded status of the word ‘relation’—for how can the logical form of relationality at work here be consistent with the nominalist suppositions of the Abhidharma? That is to say, when a single perceptual cognition is *internally related* to its diverse successive causes *simultaneously*, a familiar critique of the distributed nature of relational existents ensues; at least, that is, insofar as the perceptual image is just considered an isomorphic effect (*phala*) of causal particulars.

successive and simultaneous models of causation: certain causes (*hetu*) or conditions (*pratyaya*) arise prior to their effects, while others, which exert a supportive conditioning efficacy, arise simultaneously with them” (Cox 1988: 33). If causes and effects can exist *simultaneously*, then a concrete continuity could be said to obtain between the external object, the instrumental cognition, and the perceptual cognition that can itself be directly cognized. Cox (ibid.: 35) summarizes the reasoning involved here: “[i]n direct perception (*pratyakṣa*), a momentary external object-field [*viśaya*] is grasped by a momentary externally directed sense organ and apprehended by an equally momentary instance of one of the five externally directed types of perceptual consciousness. This is possible only if the object-field, sense organ, and perceptual consciousness are simultaneous.” The Vaibhāṣika effectively diffuse the time-lag problem because the cognitive ‘effect’ generated by the contact between the sense-organ and the external object exists at the exact same time as its constitutive causes. Accordingly, “the external object can be directly grasped, in spite of [the] universal law of momentariness” (Dhammajoti 2007a: 137; cf. Yiannopolous: 39).

In contrast to the Vaibhāṣika, the Dārṣāntikas allowed only ‘successive causation’ that holds a cause must always strictly precede its effect. They justified this stance with recourse to the Sautrāntika critiques of the Sarvāstivādin views already discussed. Specifically, the Dārṣāntika, just like the Sautrāntika, insisted that “to exist” can only possibly mean “to perform a function in the present moment,” which, ostensibly, leads to the elimination of the assumption that *dharmas* ultimately consist of unique bearers of some independent ‘property’ of causal efficacy:

Dārṣāntikas equate a factor’s existence with its present activity. One cannot meaningfully distinguish a factor’s intrinsic nature from its activity, and thereby speak of its existence in the past or future. Further, they argue, factors do not exist as isolated units of intrinsic nature that manifest a particular activity through the influence of other isolated conditions. For the Dārṣāntikas, the process of causal

interrelation is the only fact of experience; the fragmentation of this process into discrete factors possessed of individual existence and unique efficacy is only a mental fabrication (Cox 1988: 33).

At this point, we can begin to see the resonance such a vision has with Dharmakīrti's slide from Sautrāntika to Yogācāra. In a Hochbergian sense, Sautrāntika already has ample conceptual resources for an epistemic idealist interpretation, where so-called independent particular 'things' and their constitutive external relations 'dissolve' into a systematic ascriptions of predicative properties. Since *dharmas really* only exist in the present moment; and the temporality of causation entails that cause and effect must be strictly *successive*; past *dharmas* cannot be said to *actually* 'condition' the efficacy of *present* ones. This violates the self-defined nature of real particulars. Likewise, if perceptual cognition always consists in an effect of prior causes, intentional content never occurs at the same time as the existence of its constitutive objective causes (or, for that matter, the moment of sensory contact therewith).

For this reason, philosophers have often characterized Sautrāntika as a form of 'representationalism' (cf. Siderits: *ibid.*; Ronkin 2014: 6; Dreyfus 1997: 335, 380-1), insofar as the resultant perceptual cognition does not correspond to the external object itself, but rather "apprehend[s] its objects indirectly, through the mediation of aspects (*ākāra*) representative of their objects" (Ronkin: *ibid.*). The term *ākāra* (lit. a phenomenal 'form,' 'aspect,' or 'image') will play an important role in the following discussion. In Abhidharmic literature, it refers to the cognitive effect of the conjoined causal operation of the fundamental particles of the external object and the sense faculties (a definition that, to some extent, carries over for the Pramāṇavādins (Kellner: 2013)).

Although the Sautrāntikas adopted an indirect form of perceptual knowledge, they argued that each mental representation emerges in 'conformity with the object' (*arthasārūpya*) due to a 'similarity' (*sadrśya*) that purportedly consists of a 'structural isomorphism' with its external

causes. They were accordingly dubbed *sākāravādins*, or ‘those who hold that [sensory cognition] occurs with an ‘image’ of the [external] object.’ Since the structure of the cognitive image ‘tracks’ the causal features of its object, a Sautrāntika could uphold the inferential validity of empirical knowledge, despite the fact that the supposed ‘external object’ is only perceived through this representational form. Kalupahana (1974: 187) thus characterizes the essential epistemic position of the Sautrāntikas as such: “There are no instantaneous connections between external events and the observer. Hence there is no direct perception of an object; there is inferential knowledge only (*anumāna*). Thus the Sautrāntikas were popularly known for their doctrine of ‘representationism’, that is, the inferability of the external object (*bahyārthānumeyavāda*).”

For our expository purposes, the most important epistemic consequence that attends the Sautrāntika form of representationalism is their deflationary view of cognitive activity. In particular, Vasubandhu argues that, in the same way the cognitive image manifests in conformity with its causes without actually ‘doing’ anything, so too does the perceptual consciousness thereof; the manifestation of representational forms and the perceptual consciousness of these forms should equally be considered passive ‘effects’ of the causal procedure, rather than the locus or initiator of an activity whereby the latter transitively ‘partakes’ in the former.⁷⁰ As he explains in AKBh:

In that case, when it is said in the scripture that “perceptual consciousness (*viññāna*) is aware (*viññānti*),” what does perceptual consciousness do? It does not do anything. Just as it is said that the effect conforms to the cause since it attains its existence (*ātmalābha*) through similarity (*sādṛṣya*) [to its cause] even without doing anything, in this way also it is said that perceptual consciousness is aware since it attains its existence through similarity [to its object] even without doing anything. What

⁷⁰ This whole discussion raises thorny issues about the nature of the ‘intentionality’ of perception in the Buddhist tradition, which is a complicated and contentious topic (see Arnold (2012) and Coseru (2012) for two recent contrasting views). Much of this complexity emerges in the ‘slide’ from Sautrāntika to more Yogācāra modes of rhetoric—which, in the Buddhist tradition, often coincides with the soteriological dimension of ‘non-duality’ that complicates claims about the constitutive ‘intentionality’ of cognition (see the concluding section of this chapter, where this is addressed in more detail.)

is [this that is referred to as] its “similarity”? It is the fact that it has the aspect (*ākāratā*) of that [object]. For this reason, even though that [perceptual consciousness] has arisen due to the sense organ, it is said to be aware of the object-field and not of the sense organ. Or, just as the series of perceptual consciousness is the cause with regard to a given [moment of] perceptual consciousness, so there is no fault in saying that perceptual consciousness is aware, since one can apply the word “agent” (*kartr*) to the cause.⁷¹

For Vasubandhu, any supposedly distinct ‘agent’ of cognition emerges, *ipso facto*, after its prior causes—s/he does not actually ‘touch’ (to use a pertinent Pratyabhijñā phrase) the moment of perceptual cognition. Accordingly, on this account, the *kāraṅka* relations that convey the grammatical form of a cognitive action—i.e., as a triadic relation between an agent (*kartr*), object (*karman*) and instrument (*kāraṅga*)—become purely *conceptual, post hoc* distinctions (*vikalpa*): At t_0 , the external object exerts a causal force on the sense faculties; at t_1 , an indeterminate cognitive image of this object emerges in perception; and, at t_2 , a determinate conceptual judgment about the object occurs (Yiannopolous: 49). At no point in this process can cognition properly be said to ‘do’ *anything at all*—like any other momentary effect in the causal succession, the actualization of cognition is something that just ‘happens.’

b. Dignāga’s Theory of Self-Consciousness as the Pramāṅaphala

The continuity, or lack thereof, between the epistemic views of Sautrāntika and Yogācāra remains a matter of extended scholarly dispute.⁷² Generally speaking—but in a way not quite

⁷¹ *yat tarhi vijñānaṃ vijñānātī ’ti sūtra uktaṃ kiṃ tatra vijñānaṃ karoti | na kiṃcit karoti | yathā tu kāryaṃ kāraṅgaṃ anuvidhīyata ity ucyate | sādṛśyenā ’tmalābhād akurvad api kiṃcit | evaṃ vijñānaṃ api vijñānātī ’ty ucyate | sādṛśyenā ’tmalābhād akurvad api kiṃcit | kiṃ punar asya sādṛśyam | tadākāratā | ata eva | tad indriyād apy utpannaṃ viśayaṃ vijñānātī ’ty ucyate ne ’ndriyaṃ | athavā tathā ’trā ’pi vijñānasamātānasya vijñāne kāraṅgabhāvād vijñānaṃ vijñānātī ’ti vacanān nirdoṣaṃ kāraṅge kartrśabdānirdeśāt* (trans. in Cox 1988: 39).

⁷² Gold notes that the doxographical distinction between the associated schools is difficult to demarcate (2015: 20). Just as much is evident in Arnold’s (2008) claim that the epistemologies are essentially ‘the same.’ For Dharmakīrti’s part, he spends most of his time arguing from the ‘Sautrāntika’ position of external realism. The most infamous ‘slide’ into Yogācāra occurs at PV 3.333: *arthakriyāsamarthaṃ yat tad atra paramārthasat / anyat samvṛtisat proktaṃ te svasāmānyalakṣaṇe / aśaktaṃ sarvaṃ iti ced bījāder aṅkurādiṣu / dṛṣṭā śaktiḥ matā sā cet samvṛtyā astu yathā tathā*. “Here [in this analysis] that [object] which has the capacity for causal efficacy is

doxographically kosher—the Sautrāntika maintain that the causal ground of representational images (*ākāra*) are *external* objects independent of these cognitions (*bāhyārthavāda*)⁷³; while the Yogācāras hold that these *internal* representational forms, *in one way or another*, are all that can be said to actually *exist* (*vijñaptimātra*).⁷⁴ I do not have the space to dig into the many nuances of these doxographic debates; nor do I wish to adjudicate the accuracy of their application in regards to Dharmakīrti’s ‘sliding scales.’⁷⁵ What I wish to do here, instead, is probe *why* Dharmakīrti might have been forced to adopt the ‘sliding scale’ approach in the first place. We will find that the answer profoundly impacts how to understand the place of *activity* (*vyāpāra*) in

ultimately existent. [Any] other object is conventional. These two are called the particular and the universal.” In the next verse, however, Dharmakīrti tersely dispatches with a rather significant objection: “[Objection:] Nothing is capable [of causal efficacy]. [Reply:] The capacity of things like a seed [to produce] a thing like a sprout is observed. [Objection:] This capacity is considered [only] conventional. [Reply:] Let it be so” [or, as David Eckel notoriously suggested, ‘Whatever’ (Dunne: 79, f.37)] (also see Yiannopolous (ch. 4) on these verses). Some commentators have pinpointed Dharmakīrti’s ‘slide’ from Sautrāntika to Yogācāra here (cf., in particular, Franco and Notake 2014: 35-42). Steinkellner also published an interesting analysis of these verses (1990: 75), where he shows that it has been invoked by at least one commentator, Ravigupta, to argue that Dharmakīrti was actually Mādhyamika at heart. (This interpretation, it should be noted, is in the minority, and Devendrabuddhi and Śākyamati both understand verse 4 as a statement to the effect that such issues should be left to the Mādhyamikas to deal with rather than an explicit endorsement of their position. As Eltschinger explains, “although, as a (non-Mādhyamika!) Buddhist, Dharmakīrti does not negate causality as a physical or psychological process, he denies any kind of real relation between the cause and its effect” (2021: 102)).

⁷³ Cf. Ratié (2010: 438; f. 6), who notes that ‘internalism’ might be a more appropriate label for the Pratyabhijñā thinkers—and perhaps, I would think, Yogācāra as well—than ‘idealism,’ insofar as the doctrine they opposed is the Sautrāntika doctrine that affirms the existence of external objects (*bāhyārthavāda*). For her part, she thinks this would lead to a misunderstanding of Pratyabhijñā, because “they explicitly state that there is nothing outside of consciousness,” and thus still feels comfortable opting for the term metaphysical ‘idealism’ to describe the Kashmir Śaivites.

⁷⁴ The canonical expression of this view is the opening verse of Vasubandhu’s *Vś: vijñaptimātram evedam asadarthābhāsanāt / yadvat taimirikasyāsat keṣoṇḍukādidarśanam*. “This is all mere appearance only; for even non-existent objects are presented to us, as, e.g., a person with faulty vision sees unreal hairs, etc.” Whether Vasubandhu’s *vijñaptimātravāda* represents an ‘idealism,’ and, if so, just what sorts—is a matter of scholastic dispute (see Gold’s (2021: 5) summary of the issue). While many scholars have been comfortable with describing Vasubandhu as a *representational* idealist in the Sautrāntika vein, Kachru’s recent (2021) reinterpretation of the *Vś* explicitly aims to challenge some of the more simplistic forms of representationalism attributed to Vasubandhu.

⁷⁵ In addition to Kellner (2011) and Arnold’s (2008) interpretations of the Dreyfus (1997) and Dunne (2004) model of ‘sliding scales,’ see McCrea (2020), who critiques the basic presumption that Dharmakīrti intends to ultimately persuade readers that a *vijñānavādin* stance is *preferable* to the *bāhyārthavādin* view. Based on a selection of verses that appear to defend the latter view, he concludes that “it seems difficult to maintain that Dharmakīrti was seeking in his major epistemological works to push readers to ultimately adopt a *vijñānavādin* stance.” In any case, it is clear that the adequacy of the sliding scales model, and Dharmakīrti’s ultimate intention or preference with respect to Sautrāntika or Yogācāra modes of description, remains definitely unsettled.

the ‘intentional’ constitution of self-consciousness (*svasaṃvitti*)—and therefore, I maintain, what various idealists will mean when they speak of the objective *reality* of ‘relation’.

To begin, we must harken back to Dignāga’s influential elaboration in the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* [PS] of the Buddhist theory of self-consciousness as the actual ‘result’ (*phala*) of the epistemic instruments (*pramāṇa*). Dignāga was the first Buddhist to elaborate a theory of the intrinsically reflexive dimension of cognition, and almost all subsequent Buddhists philosophers—including, of course, Dharmakīrti in his commentary on Dignāga’s text—responded to his theory. We are obliged to note, however, that his actual writing on the matter is notoriously ambiguous and steeped in controversy. Indeed, from the outset, we should add the proviso that, even with the invaluable *svavṛtti*, the PS stands as a paragon of the laconic—and often inscrutable—style of the Pramāṇavāda tradition.

He begins the text with the Buddhist affirmation that only two epistemic instruments exist: perception and inference: “For there are no other objects of knowledge other than the self-[defined] character and the general characteristic.”⁷⁶ Pertinently, when the *vṛtti* subsequently inquires into cognitions that apprehend the universal and particular aspects of an object, or the repetition of an object, Dignāga stipulates that “[t]here is no other *pramāṇa* in regard to the combination of these two [i.e., the particular and universal characteristic]. For having apprehended a color, etc. in terms of both its indefinable [nature] and ‘color-ness’ (i.e., the particular and general characteristics) the mind connects (*saṃdha*) it with the state of impermanence [and judges] ‘colored [things], etc., are impermanent.’ Therefore, there is no other *pramāṇa*.”⁷⁷ In other words, the relational, predicative features of an object—whether with

⁷⁶ *na hi svasāmānyalakṣaṇābhyām anyat prameyam asti. svalakṣaṇaviṣayaṃ ca pratyakṣaṃ sāmānyalakṣaṇaviṣayaṃ anumānam iti pratipādayiṣyāmaḥ* (PS(V) 1).

⁷⁷ “Cf. AKBh 1.16 and MVŚ 9c-d: *tatra-arthadrṣṭir vijñānam tadviśeṣe tu caitasāḥ* (cf. Arnold 2013: 227, n42). Of course, for the relational realist, the notion that the mind ‘connects’ these two characteristics through an act of

respect to the recognition of difference or repetition—requires no means of knowledge over and above the dual apprehension of the particular and universal *themselves*. Given the cognition of these two, the mind ‘connects’ them through a form of conceptualization, or recognition (*abhijñāna*), that corresponds to a qualified empirical judgment.⁷⁸

Since there are only two *pramāṇas*—i.e., indeterminate perception and determinate conceptualization—Dignāga emphasizes that the distinctive feature of perception is its constitutively non-conceptual (*nirvikalpa*) status: “Perception is free from conceptualization; that cognition which does not possess conceptualization is perception. And what is so-called conceptualization? That which is associated with a name, a category, etc.”⁷⁹ For Dignāga and his Pramāṇavādin protégés, the *causally conditioned* nature of perception reflects that mode of cognition uniquely constrained by ultimately real particulars, entities whose intrinsic natures do not bear any general content. In contrast to perceptual cognitions, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti both define conceptualization as a cognition which can be ‘joined’ with verbal designations (*abhilāpasamsargayogya*). Among other things, this means that perception is, by extension, fundamentally *non-discursive* and *non-linguistic*. However, since almost all gross perceptions are capable of linguistic attributions, technically speaking, *pratyakṣa* does not translate to

conceptualization begs the very question at issue. Namely, how does the mind ‘connect’ the independent characters of the conceptually determinate universal and the inexpressible, self-defined particular when no other objects of cognition *exist* other than the universal of inference and the particular of direct perception. Or, in other words, how is it that the synthetic features of practical judgment are possible when *all that exist* are universals and particulars, and their respective cognitive objects, *in the first place*—viz., ‘relational’ *pramāṇas* are not real.

⁷⁸ His brief justification for this position reveals the relational suppositions at play: “**Nor is there [another *pramāṇa*] in regard to the repeated recognition (*abhijñāna*) [of the same object], due to the endless series of [cognitions in] memory, etc.**” That is, a regress ensues if the ‘recognition’ of an object represented a *means of valid knowledge in itself*. For, in that case, mnemonic cognition would never ‘bottom out’ in determinate content—each cognition would merely signify a means to remember the memory of a memory, and so on, rather than a conceptually determinate state (cf. Kellner’s (2011) analysis of different regress arguments in Dignāga and Dharmakīrti).

⁷⁹ *pratyakṣam kalpanāpoḍham; yasya jñānasya kalpanā nāsti, tat pratyakṣam. atha keyam kalpanā nāma. nāmajātyādiyojanā* (PS(V) 1.3 (cf. also NM 15ab)). Notably, Dharmakīrti adopts this definition wholesale, but also affixes “non-erroneous” (*abhrāntam*) for the sake of his inferential agenda: “Perception is free from conceptual construction and is nonerroneous” (*pratyakṣam kalpanapodham abhrantam*, PV 1.4, NB 1.4ab; see Yamamoto (1987) for an assessment of the significance of Dharmakīrti’s addition of non-erroneous to Dignāga’s theory of perception.)

conventional notions of empirical perception; it denotes the strictly inexpressible (*anirdeśyam*) immediacy of perceptual cognition as a direct *effect* (*phala*) of the function of causal particulars.

Dignāga first introduces the concept of reflexive awareness under the rubric of ‘mental perception’ in verse 6ab: “The reflexive awareness of [affects] such as desire, and the [cognition] of objects, are non-conceptual mental [perception].”⁸⁰ The relationship among these terms (and, in particular, the compound *artha-rāgādi-sva-saṃvitti*) is notoriously vague for both ancient and contemporary interpreters (cf. Arnold 2010: 336). Even when we consider Dignāga’s gloss on this verse, it remains unclear, for instance, whether he intends to introduce self-awareness as a distinct form of mental perception—i.e., restricted in scope to affective states ‘like desire and pleasure’—or simply equal thereto. Moreover, he does not explicate how the non-conceptual status of *sensory* perception practically differs from the non-conceptual status of *mental* perception (indeed, if both states are intrinsically non-conceptual and indeterminate, on what practical grounds are they theoretically differentiated?) And, in the midst of all this, there is the intractable issue of the status of ‘intentionality’ in Dignāga’s theory of perception.

In any case, leaving these dense problems aside for now, let’s just safely assume that Dignāga intends to identify self-awareness with a constitutively non-conceptual mode of perceptual cognition (*pratyakṣa*). Given the privileged causal status of perception, though, one could interpret Dignāga as saying that reflexive cognition should, in the final analysis, signify the proper ‘effect’ of the epistemic instruments (*pramāṇa*), rather than the exercise of a ‘distinct’ sensory *pramāṇa*. In other words, the idea that cognition does not pick out the exercise of any mediating epistemic instrument (*pramāṇa*), but should be considered—*like any other effect in*

⁸⁰ *mānasam cārtharāgādisvasaṃvittir akalpikā. mānasam api rūpādiviśayālambanam avikalpakam anubhavākārapravṛttaṃ rāgādiṣu ca svasaṃvedanam indriyānapekṣatvān mānasam pratyakṣam* (PS(V) 6): “mental [perception], whose content is objects like form, etc., is also non-conceptual, occupied with aspects of experience. And, due to its being independent of the senses, self-awareness in regard to such things as pleasure is mental perception” (cf. translation by Arnold (2013: 165)).

the causal stream—merely the ‘result’ (*phala*) thereof, captures the basic thrust of the *locus classicus* of the *pramāṇaphala* doctrine in verse 8cd:

Because it is apprehended as engaged in activity (*savyāpāra*), the resultant cognition (*phala*) just is the means of valid cognition (*pramāṇa*).⁸¹ For here it is not the case that the result is distinct from the means of cognition, as it is for non-Buddhists. Rather, since the cognition arises with the image (*ākāra*) of the object, the apprehension (*pratīti*) of just that very cognition—i.e., the result—[appears] **engaged in activity (*savyāpāra*)**. The status of being a (*pramāṇatva*) is figuratively ascribed based on that [cognitive-image], though it is devoid of activity (*nirvyāpāra*). For example, it is said that an effect (*phala*) arising in conformity with a cause (*hetvanurūpa*) “obtains the form of the cause (*heturūpa*)” even though there is no activity [i.e., the ‘obtaining’ of this form]. The same applies in this case as well.⁸²

We can get a purchase on Dignāga’s theory of *pramāṇaphala* though his appropriation of characteristically *sākāravādin* modes of description: the commentary explains that people misconstrue a cognitive activity in the apprehension of an object because cognition emerges with the ‘image/form’ (*ākāra*) of its object (*viṣayākāratayā*). That is, in the same way that cognitive images appear ‘isomorphic’ to their objective causes without any active ‘appropriation’ of these features on the part of cognition *itself*, so too do perceptual cognitions emerge merely as ‘effects’ (*phala*), without the exercise of any separate ‘*pramāṇa*’ thereof. Kellner thus explains that “this situation is comparable to that of cause and effect in general. The effect arises from its cause and resembles it. It is therefore believed to perform the activity of taking on the cause’s form, but in reality, it is without any activity” (2010: 219). The causal coincidence of perceptual cognition and the representational image therefore provides the theoretical lynchpin for Dignāga’s claim that all cognition is devoid of activity/function. In its capacity as the final ‘result’ (*phala*) of the causal order, that is, perceptual cognition is *as* particular as the particulars

⁸¹ *savyāpārapratītatvāt pramāṇam phalam eva sat* (PS 1.8cd). In addition to Kellner’s important (2010) study, see Arnold (2008; 2013: 165-174) and Yiannopolous (173-82), who also discusses these verses with Jinendrabuddhi’s commentary.

⁸² *na hy atra bāhyakānām iva pramāṇād arthāntaram phalam. tasyaiva tu phalabhūtasya jñānasya viṣayākāratayā utpattiyā savyāpārapratītiḥ. tām upādāya pramāṇatvam upacaryate nirvyāpāram api sat. tad yathā phalam hetvanurūpam utpadyamānaṃ hetu-rūpam grhṇātīty kathyate nirvyāpāram api, tadvad atrāpi* (PSV 1.8cd) (cf. trans. in Arnold (2013: 168-9).

that *produce* it (or, as Dharmakīrti will say, individual cognitions are non-distributed (*asādhāraṇa*) and inexpressible (cf. Yiannopolous: 414-21)).⁸³

Dignāga proceeds to assert in PS(V) 1.9 that the same reasoning applies to the perceptual status of *self-awareness*; that is, when we speak of the cognitive ‘result’ of *pramāṇas*, we *really* might as well just be referring to the *self-awareness* of cognition in its capacity as an effect of mental *perception*: “Or, in this case, self-awareness is the result.” In glossing this *pada*, he explains his well-known ‘dual-aspect’ theory of cognition, according to which each cognition emerges with a ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ pole:

For cognition results with two appearances: its own appearance and the appearance of the object. The self-awareness of both appearances is the result. Why? **Because the determination of the object has that form [i.e., of self-awareness].** For when the object (*artha*) is a cognition along with an object-field (*saviṣaya*), one then apprehends the object in conformity with the self-consciousness [thereof], i.e., as either desirable or undesirable. But when the object of valid cognition (*prameya*) is just the external object, then the **means of valid cognition is the [cognition’s] having the appearance of the object.** For in this case, although the nature [of the object-appearance] is reflexively known by cognition⁸⁴, the **means of valid cognition is just the fact of its [i.e., the cognition’s] having the appearance of the object** without reference [to this self-conscious nature]. This is because the object is **known by means of that [appearance].** For however the image of the object appears to cognition (i.e., as attractive or unattractive, etc.) the object is apprehended in just that very form. Hence, based on the self-consciousness of cognition with multiple images, the ‘means of valid cognition’ and the ‘object of cognition’ are figurately assigned (*upacaryate*) in such and such a manner. But all phenomena are devoid of activity (*nirvyāpāra*).⁸⁵

⁸³ In a relevant footnote comparing Hattori’s (1968) ‘idealistic’ interpretation of Dignāga vs. Wayman’s (1979) ‘realist’ construal, Arnold (2005: 104, f.30) notes that Wayman’s appeal to the *paramārthasat* of *svalakṣaṇa* to establish Dignāga’s adherence to the existence of the external object does not necessarily negate Hattori’s idealistic stance, because “being ‘absolutely existent’ and uniquely ‘particular’ can just as well describe *sensations* as external objects.”

⁸⁴ Kellner translates this phrase as “even though it is [invariably] brought to awareness by cognition itself.” She notes (2010: 222, f.60) that Jinendrabuddhi glosses the compound as *jñānasya svasaṃvedyam* “but it is not clear how he understands the genitive” (see Yiannopolous (541) for a full translation of Jinendra’s commentary on this verse in the PST).

⁸⁵ *svasaṃvittiḥ phalaṃ vātra. dvyābhāsaṃ hi jñānam utpadyate svābhāsaṃ viṣayābhāsaṃ ca. tasyobhayābhāsasya yat svasaṃvedanaṃ tat phalaṃ. kiṃ kāraṇam. tadrūpo hy arthaniścayaḥ / yadā hi saviṣayaṃ jñānam arthaḥ, tadā svasaṃvedanānurūpam arthaṃ pratipadyata iṣṭam aniṣṭam vā. yadā tu bāhya evārthaḥ prameyaḥ, tadā viṣayābhāsataivāsya pramāṇam tadā hi jñānasvasaṃvedyam api svarūpam anapekṣyārthābhāsataivāsya pramāṇam. yasmāt so 'rthaḥ tena mīyate. yathā yathā hy arthākāro jñāne pratibhāti śubhāśubhādītvena, tattadrūpaḥ sa viṣayaḥ pramīyate. evaṃ jñānasvaṃvedanaṃ anekākāram upādāya tathā tathā pramāṇaprameyatvam upacaryate. nirvyāpārās tu sarvadharmāḥ (PS(V) 1.9).*

Much ink has been spilled about this section of the text; indeed, these and proximate verses are perhaps the most scholastically fraught in Dignāga’s entire corpus. In contemporary terms, many of the stickiest issues revolve around whether Dignāga intends to articulate a theory of cognition as definitionally ‘intentional’ in the Brentano-Husserlian sense; and, relatedly, whether he means to definitively speak from an ‘internalist’ (‘Yogācāra’) or ‘externalist’ (‘Sautrāntika’) perspective.⁸⁶ To be sure, the only thing *not* in dispute is the ambiguous structure of these passages, which appear to deliberately play with the epistemic boundary between Sautrāntika external realism and its Yogācārin idealistic subversion; perhaps we must resignedly conclude that the disclosure of the hazy permeability of their epistemological foundations may have been his only final rhetorical goal.

At first blush, Dignāga seems to be saying that each cognition is aware of both an object and itself. For, in phenomenological terms, when an object is cognized, it invariably conforms to the subjective nature of the self-consciousness thereof (i.e., in an affective, normative, or dispositional sense). In this context, when we refer to a so-called ‘*pramāṇa*,’ what we really mean is that cognition *appears to itself* with the form of an object-appearance. We subsequently take this form as evidence of some distinct *pramāṇa*, though no *pramāṇa* distinct

⁸⁶ See Arnold (2008; 2010; 2013: 165-74) and Kellner (2010; 2011; 2017) for useful expositions on the ambiguities in Dignāga’s dual-aspect theory of cognition. Some scholars (e.g., Iwata: 1991) have interpreted PS 1.9 as wholly copacetic to a Sautrāntika viewpoint; while others view the doctrine as the philosophical bridge between the Sautrāntika and Yogācāra perspectives (e.g., Arnold: 2008); and some do not view him as finally committing to either one (e.g., Kellner: 2010). See Mackenzie (2015) on the reflexive nature of consciousness in Dignāga and Dharmakīrti in relation to a phenomenologically robust theory of non-self. With respect to the intentionality of perception, Coseru (2012; 2015) has long been a proponent of reading Dignāga’s elaboration of dual-aspect theory in conversation with Husserl and Brentano’s model of cognition as intrinsically di-polar. In the conclusion section, we discuss Dunne (2004) and Yiannopolous’s (2020) basic opposition to a straightforward Husserlian interpretation of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti’s theory of mind, insofar as ultimate reality (which, in their view, equates to the perspective of the final truth of ‘epistemic idealism’) is *constitutively non-dual*—and thus, *ipso facto, non-intentional*. As Gold (2015: 167-8) notes with respect to Vasubandhu: “This is not to deny that there is something called ‘consciousness’; it is only to deny that its ‘perspective’ is truly an intentionally structured relationship between two distinct entities (the subject and the object).” Yiannopolous notes that while this view of non-intentional cognition—viz., a wholly undifferentiated luminosity of pure reflexive awareness—is counterintuitive and open to critique, “[a]s an interpretation of Dharmakīrti, however, it is not really open to debate; there is no question that this is his position” (403).

from cognition itself is ever actually disclosed. Alternatively, when we speak of the cognition of an ‘external’ object, all we are *actually* doing is referring to a cognition that deliberately ‘brackets’ reference to the *self-consciousness* of the object-appearance. Since each cognition intrinsically appears with these two aspects, though, no epistemic ‘distance’ really obtains between the ‘*means*’ of knowledge (viz., the self-consciousness of the cognition) and the cognitive ‘*result*’ (viz., the perceptual appearance of the object itself). If the temporal and grammatical distinction between ‘means’ and ‘object’ does not apply to the intrinsic self-consciousness of cognition, then such relata represent mere *figurative* ways of talking *about* the autonomously intelligible occurrence of a perception. Concordantly, Dignāga takes this to entail that, insofar as they are not actually constitutive of direct perceptual cognition, the triadic relation between a cognitive ‘grasper,’ ‘grasped,’ and ‘means of grasping’ should likewise be regarded as mere *metaphorical* designations—and thus ultimately unreal.⁸⁷

c. Sahopalambhaniyama and the Severance of Action and Cognition

If the above description holds, it is not hard to see how a typical Yogācārin interpretation of Dignāga’s PS might proceed; in effect, they will claim that he means to explain everything about the appearance of the supposedly ‘external’ object in terms of the self-consciousness of the representational form. On this account, Dignāga argues that for a cognition to *appear* or *seem* some way is, in fact, *all that can really be said* to constitute *direct knowledge* of the ‘external’ object itself: There is nothing over and above the intentional *content* of a cognition, that is, other than it’s *seeming* the way it does *relative to* a cognition whose constitutively

⁸⁷ PSV 1.10: *yadābhāsaṃ prameyaṃ tat pramāṇaphalate punaḥ / grāhakākārasaṃvittiyos trayam nātaḥ pṛthak kṛtam*. “Again: That whose appearance [cognition possesses] is the object that is validly cognized. The apprehending form and [self-]awareness are [respectively] the means of valid cognition and the result (*phala*). Therefore, these three [aspects of cognition] are not separate [from one another].”

reflexive character always necessarily renders the ‘external’ object coextensive with its own nature. In this case, we need not *necessarily* refer to anything outside, or externally related to, the reflexive nature of cognition to fully articulate what cognition is actually *of*. As Arnold comments, “it’s only as internally related to acts of cognition that anything at all can be experienced by us; self-awareness is just the manifestness of the cognitions in which everything that is present to us shows up. This is why it makes sense to say *svasaṃvitti* is the *pramāṇaphala* regardless of our ontological commitment” (2013: 174). For these sorts of reasons, Arnold’s main takeaway from all this is that, on either account, the ontology would be practically indistinguishable for both Sautrāntika representationalism and Yogācāra idealism, and thus their epistemology is essentially ‘the same’ (2008).

That Dignāga’s thesis obtains ‘regardless’ of our ontology is basically to make a case for what we have been calling *epistemic* idealism, insofar as we only have immediate perceptual ‘access’ to content as it shows up within self-consciousness. In this case, we might as well dispatch with the notion of an ‘external,’ ‘non-cognitive’ object altogether—although, whether the objects of knowledge are *finally* external to cognition itself can never be theoretically or practically settled one way or the other. The Buddhist nominalist is thus potentially left in a familiar Cartesian skeptical position, where s/he practically recognizes that the only direct knowledge available to humans necessarily obtains in virtue of the reflexive dimension of consciousness—but, by that very token, s/he cannot ever hope to determine whether any particular, impersonal, non-relational *causes* of cognition actually *exist over and above this very seeming*, for the appearance of both reflexive cognition and the object always necessarily co-occur.

In Dharmakīrti's work, this idealistic insight is expressed in the famous 'sahopalambhaniyama' argument (or "the necessary co-apprehension [of the object and the cognition]"), which succinctly captures the mode of epistemic or phenomenological *necessity* that drives *vijñaptimātratā* readings of Dignāga's dual-aspect theory. The *locus classicus* is articulated in PV (~3.388-90) but is also more succinctly stated at PVin (1.54), which reads: "There is no difference between 'blue' and the 'cognition of blue' because the two are necessarily apprehended together. For those who do not perceive the perception, the object is not established either."⁸⁸ Dharmakīrti here expresses the inconvertible phenomenological or practical fact that it is impossible to perceive an object without also thereby, at that very moment, also reflexively 'perceiving' the perception itself. As he inquires in the relevant portion of the PV (3.387): "How can it be proven that the object is distinct from the [cognition, when it is] necessarily experienced simultaneously with the cognition [itself]?"⁸⁹ In other words, the phenomenal appearance of an object—in virtue of its merely *appearing as such*—must appear in tandem with the reflexive nature of the cognition itself; it is simply *definitional* that the appearance of any object do so, for this is just what it *means* for something to phenomenally register *as appearing*.

Yiannopolous concludes in his recent study of the *sahopalambhaniyama* argument that it "constitutes a restriction such that both aspects of cognition necessarily accompany each other, but also, by extension, that there is in fact an objective aspect of cognition" (446-47). Yet, in virtue of this very necessity, the ontological *independence* of this 'objective aspect' must nevertheless be *inferred* on the presumption that the causal features of the reflexive phenomenal image are strictly 'isomorphic' to the causal features of the non-cognitive object.

⁸⁸ *sahopalambhaniyamād abhedo nīlataddhiyoḥ / apratyakṣopalambhasya nārthadr̥ṣṭiḥ prasidhyati.*

⁸⁹ *sakṛt saṃvedyamānasya niyamena dhiyā saha / viṣayasya tato 'nyatvaṃ kenākāreṇa sidhyati?*

With respect to the problem of idealism, then, much of the philosophical unpacking of this argument consists in analyzing the deductive force and scope of the type of logical ‘necessity’ that Dharmakīrti purportedly invokes here.⁹⁰ In particular, it is unclear just what, if anything, follows from the ‘*sahopalambhaniyama*’: Is the necessity of co-occurrence just a formal *epistemic* ‘restriction’ on the intrinsically phenomenal structure of knowledge (*à la* Kant)? Or does this have any *metaphysical* force—i.e., does it show that nothing *actually exists* other than the phenomenal appearances of reflexive cognition?⁹¹

The *sahopalambhaniyama* exemplifies how Dignāga’s nominalist interpretation of action and cognition profoundly influences Dharmakīrti’s own epistemic views. Indeed, even if Dignāga was not fully committed to ontological momentariness as was Dharmakīrti, he still believed that all *dharmas*, including cognitions, are fundamentally *inactive* in their particular nature (*nirvyāpārās tu sarvadharmāḥ*). Thus, the mark of the reality of reflexive cognition corresponds to the static determinacy of the representational image itself, which is *only* real to the extent that it instantiates a fundamentally inactive or passive (*nirvyāpāra*) impression of causal factors that necessarily map in one-to-one correspondence to a reflexive cognitive form. If the reflexive aspect of cognition cannot arise without a determinate representational form; and only the initial moment of immediate perception coextends with the intrinsically reflexive dimension of cognition itself; then phenomenal self-consciousness is a thoroughly *determinate*

⁹⁰ The most seminal historical overview of this argument is Iwata’s (1991) study, which traces its development from Dignāga to Jñānaśrīmitra. Yiannopolous (2020: chap. 4) also recently translated the relevant sections in the PV and their commentaries. Chakrabharti (1990) Arnold (2010: 357-64; 2013: 175-83), and Taber (2020) have offered more overt philosophical expositions of the argument, and in particular, whether and how the argument is deductively valid.

⁹¹ Cf. Arnold (2010: 357-69) on this point. Arnold interprets the formal necessity of Dharmakīrti’s argument in conversation with Mark Sacks’s notion of ‘situated thoughts,’ which defines the epistemic preconditions for practical knowledge: “A thought is *situated* [in that it] is construed as being the thought that one would have from a *particular point* within a framework, the content of which is informed by it[s] being grasped as if from that perspective. It is not bare propositional content considered as if from nowhere, but is rather informed by being phenomenologically embedded and directed” (Sacks 2005: 444).

and *passive* affair, wherein the apprehension of actional and relational unities becomes a mere *post hoc* conceptual ‘latecomer’ onto the primary perceptual scene.

In sum, the most salient consequence of Dharmakīrti’s interpretation of Dignāga’s *pramāṇaphāla* doctrine is its absolute rejection of any constitutive cognitive activity. This, in turn, leads to the attendant rejection of the conceptual reality of the three-fold *kārāka* relation that describes the intentional *function* (*vyāpāra*) of cognition, (i.e., ultimately at a ‘figurative’ (*upacāra*) level of description). Just as Dignāga established, even if self-consciousness represents a phenomenological and existential ‘horizon’ in which all possible cognitive forms necessarily appear, it nevertheless cannot be said to actually *do* anything with respect to the causal ‘apprehension’ of the cognitive objects themselves—*whether these objects be ‘internal’ or ‘external.’* Kellner accordingly concludes that “in internalism as well as in externalism...Dignāga’s conception of means and result is based on rejecting that cognition is an activity” (2010: 224). In other words, regardless of whether Dignāga means to endorse Sautrāntika or Yogācāra here, his identification of means and result as they pertain to self-awareness jibes with Vasubandhu and Dharmakīrti’s own momentary conception of cognition as *essentially* inactive.⁹²

It is important to note that our translation of ‘activity’ has heretofore been deliberately ambiguous: for the term Dignāga uses is *vyāpāra*, which can indicate (and is often translated as) ‘activity,’ but technically means something like ‘operation’, ‘occupation’ or ‘function.’ *Vyāpāra* thus already grammatically *implies* a three-fold relational structure in which an intermediary function *of* some substantial subject produces a formally *distinct* referent.⁹³ As a description of

⁹² Cf. Śāntaraṣita on this point (TSP vol.1: 488): *kṣanikatvena nirvyāpāratvāt sarvadharmāṇām*.

⁹³ This association of *vyāpāra* with a substantive *phala* traces back to Pāṇinian grammatical philosophy. Here every verbal root divides into two elements: *vyāpāra*, ‘activity,’ ‘effort,’ ‘function,’ and *phala*, ‘result,’ ‘object,’ or ‘fruit’. Likewise, Mīmāṃsaka grammarians regarded every verbal ending as a generalized transformation of that which is

causal action, then, it is always genitively or instrumentally indexed to an ‘agential cause’ in whom such an ‘intermediary function’ *inheres* to produce a separate effect. As we have seen, though, in the wake of the Sautrāntika crusade against any temporal notion of *self* and *substance* alike, the *kārāka* construal of *vyāpāra* in terms of a three-fold relation—i.e., between (i) cause, (ii) means, and (iii) effect—cannot apply to the dual-aspects of the cognitive event *itself*. For in this case, there is no logical or temporal ‘distance’ between the reflexive knower as the ‘agent,’ (*pramātr*) the ‘mediating function’ of knowing itself (*pramāṇa*), and the ‘object of knowledge’ that results (*pramā*). Given the irreducible dual-aspectual character of each cognition, these sorts of metaphorical distinctions ultimately collapse into the singular reality of pure, immediate self-consciousness. And so, in the final analysis, cognition “only appears” to possess a function (*savyāpāram ivābhāti*).⁹⁴

denoted by the abstract root *kr*. Cf. Nāgeśa’s PLM: *phalānukulo yatnasahito vyāpāro dhātvarthaḥ* [...], ‘The meaning of the verbal root is an operation (*vyāpāra*) conducive to the production of a result and accompanied by a volition or effort’ (trans. in Coward and Kunjuni Raja (2001: 330)). According to Bansat-Boudon “*vyāpāra* is therefore nothing else but the effective or transforming power, which, under a given circumstance, produces the expected result (*phala*). As such, this power is equivalent to the abstract meaning of the root *kr*” ((2014: 48), which also helpfully discusses the grammatical significance of *vyāpāra* in light of Śaiva dynamical metaphysics). Additionally, see Shaw (2002: 241-2) on the Nyāyika distinction between the technical terms ‘*vyāpāra*’ (‘operation’) and ‘*karaṇa*’ (‘special instrumental cause’): “An operation (*vyāpāra*) is defined in terms of the relation of one causal condition to another. An operation is itself a casual condition, but it is due to another causal condition (*tajjanyatve sati tajjanyañanakatvam*)...[In the making of a pot from clay] the movement of the wheel is due to the stick and the jar is due to the movement of the wheel. For this reason the movement of the wheel is considered an operation. Since the movement is due to the stick, the stick becomes the operation-possessor (*vyāpāravat*). Other intermediary conditions such as the conjunction relation between the stick and the wheel are to be eliminated by applying the third criteria of a causal condition. Since the stick is related to the parts of the jar through this operation and becomes a cause by virtue of this relation, it is called ‘*karaṇa*’ (*vyāpāravat karaṇam karaṇam*).”

⁹⁴ Cf. Dharmakīrti (PV 307-309): *sā ca tasyātmabhūtaiva tena nārthāntaram phalam / dadhānam tac ca tām ātmany arthādhigamanātmanā // savyāpāram ivābhāti vyāpāreṇa svakarmani / tadvaśāt tadvyavasthānād akārakam api svayam // yathā phalasya hetūnām sadṛśātmayodbhavād / heturūpagraho loke ’kriyāvattve ’pi kathyate*. “And this [form of the object] is of the very nature of that [cognition]. By virtue of this, the resulting cognition (*phala*) is not something other [than the instrument]. And, bearing that [form of the object] within itself (*ātmani*), by virtue of having the nature of being an awareness of the object (*arthādhigamanātmanā*), the cognition appears as though it has intermediary functioning (*savyāpāra*), by virtue of functioning with respect to an intrinsic patient (*svakarmani*), because, due to that [form of the object], there is the establishment of that [cognition as instrumental], even though [the cognition] itself does not act (*akārakam api svayam*). For example, in common parlance (loke), [an effect] is [sometimes] said to have assumed the form of its cause, even without having [performed] any activity (*akriyāvattvepi*), because an effect arises with a similarity in nature to its causes” (trans. in Yiannopolous: 222; see also TS 1.346: *ata utprekṣito bhedo vidyate dhanurādivat / utpādyotpādakatoena vyavastheyam tu neṣyate*).

The Buddhist account of cognition as *sa-ākāra* is clearly predicated upon their nominalist ontology; for perceptual cognition to count as the actual *result* of the casual efficacy of real particulars, the representational features of the cognitive image must be ‘isomorphic’ to the deterministic features of its external causes. However, when the problem of the reflexive aspect of cognition enters the conversation with Dignāga, Buddhist nominalism leads to a form of skepticism or perhaps epistemic idealism; phenomenologically speaking, insofar as one can never definitively *establish* that perceptual cognitions are ‘caused’ by objects ‘external’ to the reflexive nature of mind itself, perceptual ‘content’ may just as easily be caused by factors internal to consciousness (e.g., karmic *vāsanās*). Given that the reflexive aspect of cognition *necessarily* goes together with its representational content, there is just no way to ever *know* one way or the other—to step out of the ‘situatedness’ of consciousness and attain a god’s-eye-view of its substantial or existential causes. In effect, the conceptual or inferential dimensions of discursive practices remain *incidental* to the reflexive nature of perceptual consciousness.

As we will see in the coming chapters, this ‘objective aspect’ of cognition—i.e., that the general form of all cognition speaks to the identity of its reflexive ‘force’ and its objective ‘content’—pinpoints just the sort of pragmatic-transcendental feature of cognition that Peirce and Utpala will leverage to establish their own brand of *objective* idealism. This coheres with Ratié’s observation with respect to her analysis of the Pratyabhijñā appropriation of Dharmakīrti’s *sahopalambhaniyama*: “[T]he argument showing that there is no epistemic access whatsoever to the external object is also the argument *par excellence* for a ‘metaphysical’ or ontologically committed idealism, because an object that cannot even be conceptualized can have no existence” (2014a: 368-9). We will eventually show that the Pratyabhijñā appeal to the incoherence of an intrinsically incognizable entity—that is, an

objective entity completely discontinuous with the interpretive action that *practically* constitutes reflexive cognition itself—is quite similar to the semiotic arguments we saw Peirce press against his own nominalist opponents.

Conclusion: The Systematic Tension of Relation in the Pramāṇavāda Tradition

In this chapter I intended to present the philosophical background of Dharmakīrti's relational eliminativism in the SP and sketch out its idealist implications. To this end, the first half of the paper argued that we can frame the general trajectory of Buddhist Pramāṇavāda philosophy as a case study for Hochberg's observation that characteristically nominalist claims 'degenerate' into skeptical forms of idealism. Among other things, I wanted to show how the Buddhist nominalist ontology—comprised exclusively of real particulars and abstract universals—necessarily attempts to explain relational phenomena (*sambandha*) in terms of the category of universal properties (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*). In the mereological style of analysis characteristic of the Abhidharma tradition, the Buddha's *dharma* (i.e., the teachings of causal impermanence, co-dependent origination, and selflessness) leads to the scholastic preoccupation with producing a categorical set of impersonal *dharma*-types whose external interactions comprise the concrete causal procession. Theoretically, at least, this means reducing the compounded complexity of all empirical 'wholes' to the essential natures (*svabhāva*) of the self-characterized 'tropes' (*svalakṣaṇa*) which practically instantiate, or tokenize, the categorical *dharma*-types. Since both common universals and dyadic relations share the general property of 'distribution' (*anvaya*), they equally reduce during mereological analysis to real entities that definitionally *lack* any such 'distributed' nature.

As should be evident, Hochberg’s characterization of nominalism’s ‘degeneracy’ into idealism applies fairly well to the development of Dharmakīrti’s philosophy from Sautrāntika Abhidharma, which can be read as a progression of reasoning that leads one from (i) positing a nominal ontology of external, atomic particulars, whose basic non-conceptual/perceptual nature inspires a causal explanation of mind in the guise of a thoroughgoing representationalism; to (ii) the ultimate rejection of any universal that could legitimately bear a predicative *relation* to these momentary particulars. From there, it is only a hop and a skip to (iii) the declaration that the mental representations of extensive, external objects could just as easily be *caused* by preceding *mental events themselves* as purportedly ‘external’ objects, which cannot be established independently of the self-consciousness thereof.⁹⁵ Thus, according to this view, we *need not posit* any independently existent objects to explain the perceptual constraints on mental activity. *Nota bene* this does *not* mean that Dharmakīrti has given a *metaphysical argument* for the non-existence of external objects. He has only led us to be skeptical that they are required to explain intentional consciousness.⁹⁶

Where not straightforwardly stated, we will see this allegiance between nominalism and epistemic idealism everywhere implied in Dharmakīrti’s work. That is, the extensive and

⁹⁵ A central verse here would be PV 3.336: *kasyacit kiñcid evātra vāsanāyāḥ prabodhakam / tato dhiyāṃ viniyamo na bāhyārthavyapekṣayā*. “The constraint (*viniyama*) on cognitions is just some particular activator (*prabodhaka*) of the karmic imprint (*vāśana*) for some [cognition] at a certain time and place (*atra*); thus [cognition] does not depend upon an external object [for this constraint]” (cf. Dunne: 277).

⁹⁶ A well-discussed passage from Manorathanandin’s commentary on the PV (3.336) is worth mentioning here: *pratibhāsamānaṃ jñānaṃ bāhyaṃ tu na pratibhāsata eveti tāvatāvābhīmatasiddheḥ sādhakapramāṇarahitapiśācāyamānabahirarthaniśedhenāsmākam ādaraḥ. yadi tu tanniśedhanirbandho garīyān sāmśatvānaṃśatvakalpanayā paramāṇupratiśedhe ācāryīyaḥ paryeṣitavyaḥ*. “A cognition is appearing; but it does not *appear* as external (*bāhyaṃ tu na pratibhāsata eva*)—our effort (which is dedicated to negating a fiendish external object which is without a *pramāṇa* that is probative of the desired conclusion) is only to that extent. But if the desire to refute this [i.e., external objects] is weightier, [the effort] of the master (*ācāryīyaḥ*) with respect to the refutation of atoms (by considering whether or not they have parts) should be considered” (translation in Arnold (2008: 16)). Arnold (*ibid*) singles out this passage as evidence of at least one commentator who made an explicit distinction between epistemic (Dharmakīrti) and metaphysical (Vasubandhu) arguments for idealism in the Yogācāra tradition. Ratié (2014) responded to Arnold’s observation by comparing Manorathanandin’s commentary with the Pratyabhijñā authors who believe that “the epistemic version of the Buddhist argument in favour of idealism is already metaphysical insofar as it necessarily involved a denial of the existence of the external world” (353).

durational form of conventional appearances—J.L. Austin’s ‘medium sized dry goods’—do not actually bring us into immediate contact with the particular momentary *causes* thereof. Thus, in accord with Hochberg’s schema, Dharmakīrti affirms that the relational predicates we attribute to particular entities do not actually relay any positive information about the ‘real’ world, but only conventional forms of abstract description. We can practically ascribe relational properties to appearances, but insofar as these relations are thought to *actually relate* fundamentally *distinct terms* in some greater distributed unity, they are merely conceptual constructions with no ultimate reality. And so, one starts with the ‘realism’ of nominalism and watches it unravel into a skeptical sort of representationalism in virtue of the *a priori* unintelligibility of empirical relations. Thus, an epistemic gulf will always abide between the ostensibly non-conceptual nature of empirical particulars that *cause* perceptions and the relational predicates by which they are conceptually mediated.⁹⁷ Technically speaking, therefore, the relationship between nominalism and idealism is more restricted than Hochberg suggests (at least in the Buddhist case), because certain forms of idealism, as the philosophy of Peirce exemplifies, are decidedly *incompatible* with nominalism.

Before closing, I would like to flesh out how this reconstruction of Buddhist eliminativism might inform contemporary debates in Dharmakīrti scholarship. Specifically, with an eye towards the Pratyabhijñā idealist critique of Dharmakīrti in Part III, I want to challenge contemporary Dharmakīrti scholars who tend to downplay the potential systematic inconsistencies of his *epistemic* and *ontological* treatment of relations. I obviously cannot give a comprehensive treatment of Dharmakīrti’s sophisticated theory of inference here. To the extent,

⁹⁷ This is arguably the thesis of Dignāga’s *Ālambanaparīkṣā*, which famously begins with the observation that even though atoms may be the cause of sensory consciousness, they are not its extensive representational content: “But that object is an internal cognition of consciousness which appears as if external, because it is the nature of cognition and the condition of that [external object].” *yadantarjñeyarūpaṃ tu vahirvadavabhāsate / so 'rtho vijñānarūpatvāttatpratyayatayāpi ca* (ĀP 6, cf. Duckworth, et al., (2016: 21-22)).

though, that his *ontology* of relations does, in fact, bear on his *epistemology* of relations, or *vice versa*, one might reasonably question whether Dharmakīrti can really square the strict eliminativism of the SP with his inferential theory of relations as propounded in the PV(SV) and NB.⁹⁸

To anyone remotely familiar with Dharmakīrti’s philosophical system, the notion that Dharmakīrti simply rejected the concept of relations *tout court* is a problematic oversimplification; it is well-known that, building upon (and, at points, contravening) Dignāga’s purely inductive framework⁹⁹, Dharmakīrti sought to ground valid inference in a certain special relational property—the *svabhāvapratibandha*, or the ‘essential/natural’ relation, which is arguably the keystone of his entire epistemological system.¹⁰⁰ As Steinkellner explains, “a *svabhāvaḥ* is that property of something which is not caused by something else, but is thus given with the thing itself” (1974: 123). We can gather that the

⁹⁸ Stcherbatsky touched upon this tension when he noted: “From that point of view from which the Buddhists deal with inference, the problem of relations receives a capital importance, since inference is nothing but the necessary interrelation between two facts and their necessary reference to a point of reality...[But] relations are contingent reality, that is to say, no ultimate reality at all” (1932: 246).

⁹⁹ Much ink has been spilled over the logic of Dharmakīrti’s theory and its improvements over Dignāga’s (see, e.g., Oetke (1991); Steinkellner (1991b); Katsura (2004); and Hayes and Gillon (1991; 2008)). The details need not concern us, but they involve familiar Humean problems *vis-à-vis* induction that Dignāga’s theory failed to address—i.e., he attempted to ground the validity of causal inference based merely on contingent observations of empirical phenomenon.

¹⁰⁰ There are several ways to read this compound: Fukuda (2020) counts three, with (i) instrumental (ii) genitive *tatpuruṣa*, and (iii) locative. Dharmottara cites the first when paraphrasing the compound: *svabhāvena pratibandhaḥ svabhāvapratibandhaḥ* (NBṬ 110,1). However, Fukuda notes Dharmakīrti does not appear to refer to that *pratibandha* in the instrumental case. In particular, Dharmakīrti mentions *pratibandha* with one word in the genitive case and another in the locative case, where the former indicates a possessor of *pratibandha* and the latter indicates an object upon which the possessor of *pratibandha* depends. Fukuda concludes that “One could naturally interpret this compound as meaning that something (X = *liṅga*) has its *svabhāva*, which is dependent upon another thing (Y = *sādhya*); in other words, this would mean that the *svabhāva* of X (*liṅga*) is dependent upon Y (*sādhya*). From these usages of *pratibaddha-svabhāva*, one could conclude that the first component of the compound *svabhāva-pratibandha* is the *svabhāva* of X (*liṅga*) and that the compound is a genitive *tatpuruṣa*. However, and inconveniently, one exceptional passage exists that possibly suggests that *svabhāva* expresses the dependent object. In this case *svabhāva-pratibandha* must be interpreted as a locative *tatpuruṣa*. These examples show that Dharmakīrti was not particularly rigorous in his interpretation of the compound, but that he generally considered *svabhāva* to be a *liṅga* and the compound thus a genitive *tatpuruṣa*.” Given Dharmakīrti’s denial of the genitive relation in the 25th verse of the SP, we can readily grasp how even the semantic parsing of *svabhāvapratibandhaḥ* could come into explicit tension with Dharmakīrti’s eliminativism. (Also see Matsumoto (1981) for a relevant summary of the meaning of *svabhāvapratibandha* in Dharmakīrti’s theory of inference).

svabhāvapratibandha represents a *necessary* property internal to the essential nature of an inferential term. The presence of this relational “*liṅga*” guarantees a formal ‘pervasion’ (*vyāpti*) obtains between inferential relata, and thus overcomes the skeptical pitfalls of Dignāga’s model. Steinkellner accordingly notes that “the *svabhāvapratibandha*...is an invariable concomitance between the concepts of probans and probandum only when based on factual identity (*tādātmya*) or causality (*tadutpatti*) as relational features in reality” (2021: xvi).¹⁰¹ So, in this case, the ‘rule’ determinative of both causal and identity ‘relations’ is not established merely through contingent observations, but is a necessary ‘feature’ of reality grounded in the intrinsic properties of the inferential terms.¹⁰²

Now, consider Katsura and Steinkellner’s debate over whether Dharmakīrti intended for ‘*svabhāva*’ to mean a relational feature ‘in reality’ or a mere logical *concept*. Based on the eliminativism of the SP, Katsura originally took the position that Dharmakīrti could only have

¹⁰¹ Recall that in the Buddhist system, the concept of an essential, or ‘natural’ relation means that only two modes of dependence can guarantee validity, which correspond to the two forms of affirmative evidence (*vidhi*); *kāryahetuḥ* or evidence from effect, and *svabhāvahetu*, or evidence from essential nature/property. These represent the only types of inferential relations formally accepted in the Pramāṇavāda system: “Only due to the natural/essential relation does the probans (*hetuḥ*) make the probandum (*sādhyaṃ*) known. And [the relation] is characterized either by *identity* or *causality*. That necessary relation is revealed by both [positive and negative] examples.” *tasmāt svabhāvapratibandhād eva hetuḥ sādhyaṃ gamayati / sa ca tadbhāvalakṣaṇas tadutpattilakṣaṇo vā. sa evāvinābhāvo dṛṣṭātantābhyāṃ pradarśyate* (PVSV 17, 12-14. cf. Katsura, 1992). Our license to make valid inferences, therefore, must be grounded on knowledge of causal relations that entail one term originates from another, or an identity relation that signify a purely conventional designation whose manifold “relata” ultimately refer to conceptual properties of a single factual referent. In this way, Dharmakīrti sought to overcome the deficiencies of Dignāga’s theory of inference, insofar as the kind of restriction (*niyāmaka*) required to ensure validity is ‘analytically’ established by the relational properties/natures of the relata *themselves*, rather mere *ex post facto* forms of inductive observation.

¹⁰² See Dunne (153-74) for an extended conversation about the two different senses of *svabhāva*, interpreted as either an entity’s ‘properties’ or ‘nature.’ In a relevant critical passage, Dharmakīrti stipulates: *kāryakāraṇabhāvād vā svabhāvād vā niyāmakāt / avinābhāva-niyamo adarśanān na na darśanāt / avāśyaṃbhāva-niyamaḥ kaḥ parasya anyathā paraiḥ / artha-antara-nimitte vā dharme vāsasi rāgavat*. “The fact that things stand in the relationship of cause and effect or that one thing is a property-*svabhāva* of some other thing are restricting relationships (*niyāmaka*); therefore, effect and *svabhāva* evidence are qualified by the rule (*niyama*) of unaccompanied non-rising. That rule is not determined from not seeing the evidence in heterogenous cases and seeing it in homologous cases. Otherwise, how could one arrive at the rule that one thing, namely a cause, necessarily exists because certain others, which are the effects, exist? Or how could one arrive at the principle if an attribute that is a *svabhāva* of the evidence has a cause that is different from the evidence’s cause? This would be like inferring that something is red because it is a cloth” (PV 1.31-32, trans. in Dunne (149); cf. Steinkellner’s study of the passage (1997: 642)).

meant a *conceptual notion* of *svabhāva*.¹⁰³ Indeed, given the doctrine of momentariness and denial of relations as real existents, one would reasonably assume that such ‘relations’ cannot be genuine ontological referents, but rather psychological interpretations thereof. Steinkellner whimsically dubbed this position ‘*vyāptivāda*,’ while his alternative, ‘*sambandhavāda*,’ affirms that the essential property of the *svabhāvapratibandha* is not a mere concept, but a relational ‘feature’ of reality itself. In these terms, Hayes and Gillon appear to be staunch ‘*sambandhavādins*’ when they explain that the purpose of the *svabhāvapratibandha* was to ensure that the cognition of invariable concomitance between ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ was an *objective feature of reality* that conveyed analytic necessity—not mere ‘accidental’ correspondences.¹⁰⁴ While the *svabhāvapratibandha* may represent a robust ontological property in this limited inferential context, they remark that “the issue of whether or not [other] universals exist outside the mind as features of the world to be discovered is *far in the background*. It becomes relevant later on in the PVSV, mostly as an aspect of the issue that Dharmakīrti’s conceptualism must somehow be reconciled with his wish to find a firm grounding in reality for our judgements that take the form of universal propositions” (ibid., [emphasis mine]).¹⁰⁵ Although Katsura himself also later ‘converted’ to *sambandhavāda*¹⁰⁶, I

¹⁰³ He recounts: “Although Steinkellner explicitly states that *svabhāva* in this compound can only have the ontological meaning viz. essence, I would rather take it to mean “concept,” the second meaning of *svabhāva* used in logical contexts as pointed out by Steinkellner himself. According to Dharmakīrti’s ontological conviction that everything is momentary, a relation or connection is possible not in reality but only in the conceptual universe because only concepts, being understood as “exclusion of others” (*anyāpoha*) can have the nature of the “universals” (*sāmānya*) of other systems of Indian philosophy. Thus *svabhāva* in the *svabhāvapratibandha* primarily denotes “universal” as exemplified by smoke-ness or fire-ness conceptually constructed by *anyāpoha*; in other words, the concept of smoke or fire” (1986: 27).

¹⁰⁴ As they write, “*svabhāvapratibandha* is a principle that Dharmakīrti has invented to explain why two properties have been observed to be in a pervasion relation; it is invoked to show that our observation that one property always occurs in the presence of another is not accidental but rather is the function of how things in the world really are” (1991: 45-6).

¹⁰⁵ Note that Hayes and Gillon identify the problem of relations for Dharmakīrti with the problem of *universals* (“the issue of whether or not *universals* exist outside the mind as features of the world to be discovered is far in the background.”) But this defense already implicitly deals Dharmakīrti the very hand he needs for his play—namely, that a genuine ‘relation’ ontologically corresponds to *nothing other than a type of universal*. The Pratyabhijñā will

want to suggest here that neither view may ultimately serve to reconcile the central tension of Dharmakīrti’s systematic treatment of relations—which is to say, how his inferential theory of relations in, say, the PV and NB jibes with his ontology of relations in the SP. Recall, in particular, that Dharmakīrti’s theory of radical momentariness entails that the essential properties of instances are not actually distinct from the instances themselves.¹⁰⁷ On Dharmakīrti’s own account, Steinkellner’s ‘ontological’ interpretation of the *svabhāvapratiḅandha* would still have to reduce to a property or ‘feature’ of momentary existents—it could never qualify as an irreducible categorical referent with a real *dviṣṭha* form. Accordingly, in an earlier article, Steinkellner hedges that any talk of ‘relations in reality’ is actually ‘only elliptic’:

The relation of causality...may be considered as ‘derivatively real’ in the sense that the properties of the entities observed and referred to by the terms ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ are ‘essential properties’ (*svabhāva*) and their cognition is a result of the activities of the ‘essences’ (*svābhava*) experienced...If Dharmakīrti’s denial of the reality of relation is taken into account, our usual manner of explaining his

press the case that such a defense of Dharmakīrti really just begs the question, insofar as it is precisely this identification that allows Dharmakīrti to relegate relations to an ultimately unreal, purely conceptual existence in the moment of *vikalpa*, rather than a condition for the possibility of intentional states.

¹⁰⁶ Katsura writes: “During the second International Dharmakīrti Conference held in Vienna, June 1989, we had a debate on this topic and came to realize that there were at least two opposing positions; namely, one held that *svabhāvapratiḅandha* represented the state of affairs in reality (how things are and how they are connected with each other) and the other held that the term meant a logical concept, i.e. the necessary connection between the probans and probandum (thus, somewhat synonymous with *avinābhāva/vyāpti*). Steinkellner playfully named the former *sambandhavāda* and the latter *vyāptivāda*. Then I supported the *vyāptivāda*...[but] I came to realize that I had to be converted to the *sambandhavāda*” (1992: 36-7).

¹⁰⁷ More specifically, since Dharmakīrti views universal predicates and relations as hypostasized entities, all conceptual properties imposed upon a thing must emerge and perish at the same instant as the nominal thing itself; the causes that bring the thing into being are also responsible for the perception of its effects: *na hi tasmin niṣpanne aniṣpanno bhinnahetuko vā tatsvabhāvo yuktaḥ* (PVSV 20,20-21. Cf. Dunne: 96). “It is not correct that when something is established, an unestablished property is a property of that thing; not can there be [a property] with distinct causes from the nature of thing that is a property of that thing.” This causal closure between properties and nominal particulars plays an important role in proving the existence of momentariness for Dharmakīrti. For instance, in the PV 1.54, Dharmakīrti uses the same sorts of regress arguments of the SP against the Vaiśeṣika to show that the capacities attributed to the universal predicates of an object cannot ultimately be distinct from the object itself: *dharma upakāra śaktinām bhede tās tasya kiṃ yadi / na upakāras tatas tāsām tathā syād anavasthitih*. “If those capacities that assist the properties are distinct [from the property-possessor], how could they belong to the [capacity-possessor] if it does not assist them? There would be infinite regress.” The Vaiśeṣikas are singled out according to Śākyabuddhi, who writes in the PVT: *yang bye brag pa rnam ni spyi don gzhan gyis dngos po rnam mtshungs par ‘dod de / de yang bsal ba ‘i phyir don gzhan yang zhes bya ba la sogs pa smos te*. “And the Vaiśeṣikas accept a similarity amongst real entities because of a separate universal (*spyi don gzhan*)....” (taken from Eltschinger, et al., 2018: 32)

theory of an ‘ontological’ foundation for the logical connection by saying that he grounds the latter on ‘relations in reality’ is, therefore, only elliptic (1996: 628-9).

Even for Steinkellner, then, the *svabhāvapratibandha* is still just a *way of describing* constitutively *unrelated things*, or a mere conventional shorthand for inferential judgments exhaustively based on existential properties internal to the appearance of *distinct* terms. The *impression* of a causal ‘relation’ is still not ‘real’ in any *ultimate* sense—i.e., as a continuous ‘distribution’ over two different moments. Following Steinkellner’s lead, many contemporary Dharmakīrti scholars deal with the tension between the admittance of necessary relations in his theory inference and their ontological reduction via the conventional/ultimate distinction; although we can *conventionally* refer to necessary forms of ‘pervasion’ between terms—*ultimately* speaking—these ‘relations’ do not exist in the way they appear.

Notwithstanding Steinkellner’s invaluable contributions to the study of the logical form of the *svabhāvapratibandha*, I believe his claim that the ‘reality’ of the *svabhāvapratibandha* is ‘only elliptic’ may belie some of the fundamental *pragmatic* problems that confront Dharmakīrti’s theory of relations—problems that are not ‘far in the background’ for us, as they are for Hayes and Gillon, but rather front and center. For even if Steinkellner’s position retains the ‘necessary features’ of inferential terms that Dharmakīrti requires to save face for Dignāga, Dharmakīrti still nevertheless endorses a tendentious reduction of the practical recognition of necessary relations to the intrinsic *properties* of essentially *discontinuous* occurrences.¹⁰⁸ So

¹⁰⁸ The basic problem is hence similar to that of the contemporary trope theorist, insofar as they must explain our comprehension of universal entities purely on the basis of things that do not intrinsically instantiate these universal referents. In lieu of universal entities, trope theorists typically maintain that while tropes of blueness denote constitutively particular occurrences (they are ontologically and numerically distinct from one another) they nevertheless resemble each other through joint participation in a certain “resemblance class.” What makes any particular blue is that it resembles all blue particulars, what makes any particular square is that it resembles all square particulars, and so on (Rodriguez-Pereyra 2002). Sofia-Maurin (2018) explains that “according to standard trope theory, two objects, *a* and *b*, ‘share’ a property—*F-ness*—if at least one of the tropes that make up *a* belongs to the same (exact) resemblance class as does at least one of the tropes that make up *b*” (cf. Campbell 1990: 31f; and Lewis 1986: 64f). Here ‘resemblance’ typically denotes an intimate formal equivalence that is symmetrical, reflexive, and transitive: “Because it is an equivalence relation, exact resemblance partitions the set of tropes into

how does Dharmakīrti reconcile the *practical* efficacy of relational judgments within an ontology that denies anything like them *actually* exists? How can we be certain that, when it comes to the knowledge of the *necessary* ‘pervasion’ of inferential terms, Dharmakīrti is not simply trying to have his relational cake and eat it too?

Some Dharmakīrti scholars have recognized this problem; consider, e.g., Dunne’s remark apropos Dharmakīrti’s 5-step explanation of inductive knowledge: “The basic problem...is that a sequence of perceptions and nonperceptions cannot provide evidence of a causal relation without the tautological assumption that the perceptual judgements in question are already correct about the causal characteristics of the entities in question” (192, fn.72). In other words, Dharmakīrti seems to assume that some sense of internal relations has already been cognitively established for any sequence of discrete perceptions to grant *practical knowledge* of them as instantiating such and such a dyad. This observation also echoes Trilocana’s realist critique of Dharmakīrti’s theory of inference: Perceptual judgment is not entitled to take a mere sequence of particular existents themselves as evidential knowledge of any distributed universal referent unless it already has some correct understanding of the way in which the latter applies to the distinct terms in question.¹⁰⁹ Dharmakīrti therefore appears to

mutually excluding and non-overlapping classes. Exact resemblance classes of tropes, thus understood, function more or less as the traditional universal does. Which is why proponents of this view think the problem can be solved with reference to them” (ibid.). Thus, ‘resemblance classes’ purportedly explain the practical appearance of universals without having to refer to anything real other than the natural properties of particular tropes. N.b., in this sense, the equation established through the notion of ‘resemblance classes’ finds an analogue in the Buddhist nominalist theory of *apoha*, in the sense that it partitions the world into mutually-exclusive classes according to natural properties of particular objects. The mutually-exclusive classes generated through these natural properties *are practically indistinguishable from ‘universals,’* even though no such positive entity actually exists independently of the natural properties of particular existents themselves. However, a realist would insist that the practical recognition of formal similarity implies a general understanding of its *conceptual contrast* with *difference*. It is thus unclear how merely stipulating a practical equivalence between ‘resemblance classes’ and universals deals with the more basic transcendental problems we are scouting.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Lasic’s (2003) paper on the utilization of causality as a basis of inference. Here, he cites Trilocana’s criticism of Dharmakīrti: “Based on the assumption that the relation between *sādhya* [probandum] and *hetu* [probans] must be one between universals (*sāmānya*) Trilocana questions how a proponent of the opinion that perception and non-perception have nothing but particular things (*viśeṣa*) as their object can claim that this relation can be grasped

simply help himself to a practical knowledge of necessary, or internal relations in a universe exhaustively comprised of distinct atomic particulars, yet it remains ultimately unclear just how Dharmakīrti actually pulls this relational rabbit out of his non-relational hat (recall, in this regard, the monistic critiques of Russell theory of the verbal noun *qua* means of propositional unity).

Given that the *svabhāvapratibandha* is never even *mentioned* in the SP, this entire topic only goes to show how staunchly Dharmakīrti intended to distinguish between the epistemic application of relational concepts and their ultimate ontological significance. Despite this effort, though, it would nevertheless appear that his system has difficulty consistently accounting for the way we come to understand the general notion of internal relations in a world of constitutively externally related particulars. Insofar as his theory of inference is not merely an *a priori* exercise in the analytic entailments of essential properties (*svabhāvas*), but rather a system of concepts we recognize in the temporal exercise of practical reason, his reduction of the knowledge of causal relations to a *post hoc* inference does not explain the initial apprehension of these relational ideas, nor their normative application in conventional experience. The basic upshot is that knowledge of relations as manifest within practical judgment requires a primary experience of continuity that an ontology of radical momentariness does not forthrightly yield.

precisely by perception and non-perception” (189). In other words, how is it possible that one could apprehend a common, distributed universal based on perceptions of unique, disconnected particulars? Jñānaśrīmitra’s response to Trilocana’s criticism utilizes a well-known idea that a *sāmānya* does not necessarily denote a distributed entity in individual things, but the individual things themselves are apprehended through mutual differences that are not *directly* determined. We do not wish to explore the cogency of this argument here, which would take us too far afield for now. The important point for our purposes is that “Jñānaśrīmitra evidently shares Trilocana’s opinion that according to Dharmakīrti, the knowledge that each and every case of smoke is an effect of fire is gained by perception” (ibid). Jñānaśrīmitra draws upon an idea of Dharmottara and Mokṣākaragupta, who explain that every valid cognition may have two objects, the *grāhya-viṣaya*, or immediately grasped object, and the *adhyavaseya-viṣaya*, or indirectly grasped object (NBT 71.1). (See Dreyfus (1997: 199-200) for a discussion of Dharmottara’s innovation in more detail, and also Chapter VI, where we discuss the SS critique of the Buddhist who claims that *sambandha* is ‘closely attached’ to the appearance of the object.)

CHAPTER IV

RELATIONAL ELIMINATIVISM IN THE *SAMBANDHAPARĪKṢĀ*

In themselves, existents are unmixed; conceptual construction mixes them.

-Dharmakīrti (SP: v.5)

Introduction

The *Sambandhaparīkṣā* [SP] (*Analysis of Relation*) is a terse, 25-verse treatise in which Dharmakīrti attempts to disprove the ultimate reality (*vastubhūta*, *vāstava*, *bhāvika*, *pāramārthika*, etc.) of all relations (*sambandha*).¹ This chapter translates² and reconstructs the arguments of the SP and its primary commentary, the SPV (*Sambandhaparīkṣāvṛtti*) of his disciple Devendrabuddhi.³ Since Dharmakīrti argues that relations are solely conceptual constructions (*kalpanā*) with no genuine correspondence to the actual world of momentary particulars,⁴ its primary claim is often identified in the fifth verse of the treatise that I chose for the epigraph—“in themselves, entities are unmixed; conceptual construction mixes them.”⁵

¹ Dharmakīrti does not explicitly mention the purpose of his treatise, but we can take our bearings from Devendra’s incipit: “In order to refute relation as a real (*vastubhūtam*) entity, it is said...” (see also SPT 1b2–2a3 in Eltschinger 2021: 102-3).

² All Sanskrit translations of the SP(V) draw from Steinkellner’s recent (2022) critical edition. I am obliged to acknowledge Dan Arnold’s generous assistance going through the SP and SPV with me. All errors are my own. Other translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

³ Steinkellner notes that, despite contrasting accounts of the authorship of the *vṛtti* in the Tibetan manuscripts, it is probably “a text written down by Devendrabuddhi following a teaching by Dharmakīrti.” Steinkellner opines that, although it is unlikely that Dharmakīrti wrote the commentary based on the rather inelegant prose and pedantic style, that does not mean it does not contain his own words or direct teachings. For instance, he notes that “there are a number of objection-and-response extensions in the *Vṛtti* that do not explain only the text of the *kārikās* (as on k.1), but elaborate on their content or offer additional explanations (as on kk. 2, 13, 19). Such extensions might be seen as the result of the teacher’s dealing with questions raised in the class which were, then, also noted down by Devendrabuddhi, but could, at least concerning the responses, reflect the teacher’s” (2022: xiv-xv).

⁴ Dharmakīrti’s relational eliminativism, as often noted, shares striking affinities with Humean skeptical empiricism. Consider this passage from his *Treatise*: “[O]bjects, which are variable or interrupted, and yet are supposed to continue the same, are such only as consist of a succession of parts, connected together by resemblance, contiguity, or causation. For as such a succession answers evidently to our notion of diversity, it can only be by mistake we

While Dharmakīrti does not explicitly segment the SP according to any thematic criteria, the broad strokes of the chapter’s organization follow Steinkellner’s recent outline (2022: xxxv-xxxviii). He segments the text into two primary sections: The first 6 verses (here glossed in Section 1) represent ‘refutation in general,’ while 7-24 shift to ‘refutation in particular,’ which includes ‘causal relations’ and ‘other relations.’ Though I follow Steinkellner’s segmentation of general arguments from the rest, I add further subdivisions in the latter: With respect to the causal relation, I divide verses 7-11ab into a refutation of its *ontological* status (Section 2), while I view 11cd-18 as offering an *epistemological* account of its conventional impression (Section 3).⁶ I also distinguish verses 19-25 as a shift into a consideration of *grammatical* relations (Section 4), and, in particular, those of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika.

As Dunne (44–5) and Phillips (1998: 23) have both noted, Dharmakīrti’s arguments in the SP hinge on characterizing relations (*sambandha*) in hypostatized terms—that is, as the same sort of ‘critter’ as the relata. Like Bradley, Dharmakīrti argues that, if relations truly exist, they should be *independent* terms on equal footing with the self-standing nature of the relata. Accordingly, in Kapstein’s description of the Buddhist denial of relations, he draws attention to the close conceptual connection between external and causal relations in the Buddhist system: “[i]t seems clear that, from the perspective of the Buddhist logicians, external relations are all and only causal relations” (1989: 54). Since particulars are fundamentally independent of one another, one might infer on this basis that Dharmakīrti is committed to some sort of ‘doctrine of external relations’; viz., one where the absolute differences between real entities would

ascribe to it an identity...[T]he relation of parts, which leads us into this mistake, is really nothing but a quality” (I. iv. 6, 254-255).

⁵ Utpaladeva references this line several times in the SS—which is significant insofar as he rarely quotes his interlocutors directly (cf. McCrae: 2016).

⁶ The question of the epistemic status of the causal relation ties into broader debates over the ontological status of *svabhāvapratibhandha* as a relational property that we touched upon in the previous chapter.

counterfactually instantiate the only genuine form of relation that could possibly obtain at an ultimate level of description.

However, I want to suggest below that the SP conveys a somewhat different picture; here the notion of ‘external relation’ is not synonymous with *causal* ‘relations’, but rather tantamount to being *unrelated simpliciter*. I claim that for Dharmakīrti, that is, any ‘external *relation*’ that supposedly obtains *between* self-standing causal particulars resolves upon logical analysis into a mere conventional *way of speaking about* a contrast of conceptual *properties*. Specifically, the doctrine of radical momentariness effectively renders the property of symmetrical exclusion tantamount to the vacuity of any necessary form of relation: For the essential nature of each entity remains *utterly indifferent* with respect to whether any other entity—synchronically or diachronically—even happens to exist.⁷ Accordingly, we invariably find that the symmetrical independence of particular entities remains the primary culprit behind the elimination of every single relational form entertained in the SP (e.g., *kāryakāraṇabhāva*, *ekābhisambandha*, *samavāya*, *saṃyoga*, *apekṣā*); in all cases, the fully actualized nature of momentary particulars (*svalakṣaṇas*) can be exhaustively characterized without necessary reference to any other existent.

Among other things, we find that this nominalist mindset leads Dharmakīrti to treat the dyadic form of *semantic* or *referential dependence* as reducible to the *causal* or *existential*

⁷ Here, one might recall the ‘peculiarity’ of particulars as expressed by Russell in Lecture 2 of *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*: “Particulars have this peculiarity, among the sort of objects that you have to take account of in an inventory of the world, that each of them stands entirely alone and is completely self-subsistent. It has that sort of self-subsistence that used to belong to substance, except that it usually only persists through a very short time, so far as our experience goes. That is to say, each particular that there is in the world does not in any way logically depend upon any other particular. Each one might happen to be the whole universe; it is a merely empirical fact that this is not the case. There is no reason why you should not have a universe consisting of one particular and nothing else. That is a peculiarity of particulars.”

dependence that obtains between two particular existents.⁸ Predictably, then, the eliminativist arguments that Dharmakīrti deploys to dispatch with the sorts of *intentional relations* of conceptual judgement (e.g., ‘knowing, observing, expecting, desiring, regarding’) do not substantially differ from the kinds of relations that *would* obtain in the world of causal particulars—that is to say, if such ‘relations’ *actually* existed. Since both forms of dependence represent subsets of a single type of relational notion—namely, necessary dyadic dependence—disproof of this relation amongst momentary particulars suffices to establish the concomitant unreality of *all possible relational forms*.⁹ Whether this eliminativist move is finally a non-sequitur will become especially salient in the relational analysis of Utpala’s SS.

⁸ Indeed, while neither Dharmakīrti, nor Devendrabuddhi, explicitly associate these relations with any particular schools, it appears some of these arguments against dependence relations were originally deployed to refute the Mīmāṃsāka relation of word and meaning (*vācya-vācakabhāva sambandha*)—which is curiously not even mentioned in the SP or the SPV! Here is a relevant passage in the PV(SV) (113, 23): *katham śabda-artha-sambandhāḥ puruṣeṣu vṛtteḥ / na amiśrāṇām siddhānām kaścit sambandho abheda-prasaṅgāt anapekṣaṅc ca / artha-viśeṣa-samīthaapreritā vāg ata idam iti viduṣaḥ sva-nidāna-ābhāsinam arthaṃ sūcayati iti buddhi-rūpa-vāg vijñaptyor janyajanakabhāvaḥ sambandhaḥ / tataḥ śabdāt pratipattir avinābhāvāt / tad-ākhyānaṃ samayaḥ / tataḥ pratyāyaka-sambandha-siddheḥ sambandha-ākhyānāt / na tu sa eva sambandhaḥ*. “[Objection:] But how can the relation between speech and meaning be a convention, since [it is] a function of men? [Reply:] In regard to discrete existents (*amiśrāṇām*) already established (*siddhānām*), there is not any relation, because it would result in their non-distinction (*abheda*), and because [an existent already] established does not depend [on anything]. Impelled by the wish to [communicate] a distinct meaning, the word thus indicates to one who knows that it comes from this [intention], an object having the appearance of the original cause [i.e., the initial intention of the speaker]. Thus, the relation [between signifier and signified] consists in a cause and effect of two pieces of information—the intention and a verbal form [respectively]. Therefore, the knowledge that comes from the word is from a correlation, [and] the convention communicates this. Thus, there is the establishment of a relation that is caused to be known from the communication of this correlation, but this is not a [real] relation” (for alternative trans., see Eltschinger 2007: 248–250). The fact that Dharmakīrti appropriated arguments against this semantic relation to diffuse relations between particulars in the SP supports my overall contention that he viewed the dyad of signifier-signified in basically the same way he viewed dyadic relations between any two particulars. This, no doubt, is due in large measure to the time-lag of the doctrine of momentariness we saw in the previous chapter: if the world consists of momentary particulars, and the objects of perceptual cognition are the causal effects of these nominal instances, there cannot be any *real relation* between a signifier and signified for the same reason that two momentary particulars cannot *really* be ‘dependent’ upon one another; namely, there is never any *direct connection* between the supposed external *svabhāva* of the object and its conceptual designation; or, more to the point, there is no *real continuity* between the *pratyakṣa* of a particular and its conceptual elaboration in the state of *vikalpa*.

⁹ See Hayes (1994), Taber (1998), Westerhoff (2009), and Arnold (2021b) on similar considerations in light of perceived fallacies of equivocation (Hayes), or lack thereof (Taber and Arnold) in Nāgārjuna’s argumentation in the MMK 1.1–3, which isolates a set of verses bound up with issues of symmetrical independence. Westerhoff summarizes the problem: “The ‘mutual dependence’ of father and son that Nāgārjuna postulates is based on two different dependence relations, the son depending existentially on the father, the father notionally on the son. For Nāgārjuna’s argument, however, it is necessary that the two entities be related by a symmetric dependence relation...[t]he failure to distinguish between existential and notional dependence has resulted in considerable

The concluding section pivots to a consideration of Yogācāra receptions of the SP with Śāṅkaranandana’s commentary, the *Sambandhaparīkṣānusāriṇī* [SPAN] serving as a prototypical Yogācāra reading of the SP.¹⁰ The SPAn suggests that the SP promotes a *vijñāptimātra* doctrine because it chiefly intends to undermine subject-object duality and establish the selflessness of *dharmas* in accord with *kṣāṇikavāda*. The text therefore testifies to the fact that Buddhist commentators understood the potential idealist entailments that attend Dharmakīrti’s rejection of *semantic dependence* based on the incoherence of *causal dependence*; just as relations between a momentary cause and effect cannot obtain in reality, so too is the apparent duality of the *intentional* relation between ‘internal’ subject and ‘external’ object another wholly conceptual construction. As we will see in the next chapters, the SP’s assimilation of semantic and existential relations not only paves the way for Yogācāra idealist *interpretations* like Śāṅkaranandana’s, but also potentially renders it susceptible to certain Śaiva idealist *critiques*. For while the former holds that the elimination of semantic dependence undermines the apparent dualism of intentional consciousness—and thus serves to establish a *vijñāptimātra* doctrine—the latter will maintain that Dharmakīrti mistakenly throws the concrete baby of existential relations out with the abstract bathwater of dyadic dependence.¹¹ Indeed, the Pratyabhijñā thinkers will

confusion in the contemporary commentarial literature, primarily in connection with the so-called *principle of co-existing counterparts*” (28-9, fn. 40). This principle, originally defined by Taber as a potential fallacy committed by Nāgārjuna, is “that a thing cannot be a certain type unless its counterpart exists simultaneously with it” (1998: 216), or, in other words, exists in a symmetrical relation of existential co-dependence. Westerhoff goes on to claim, though, that notional and existential dependence may not be as distinct as they first appear, insofar as causes “depend for their existence on us, because it is our cognitive act of cutting up the world of phenomena in the first place which creates the particular assembly of objects that constitutes a causal field” (2009: 98). We will see that such a view—which Arnold (2021: 16, f. 35) attributes to the Madhyamaka thinkers in defense of Nāgārjuna’s claims in the MMK—is also basically endorsed by the Pratyabhijñā school, and especially Utpala in the SS. On my reading, then, the ‘idealistic’ assimilation of existential dependence into referential dependence (not *vice versa*, as Dharmakīrti does in the PV(SV)) would signify one interesting point of transcendental comparison between Madhyamaka and Pratyabhijñā.

¹⁰ Eltschinger (2021) provides historical and exegetical details of Śāṅkaranandana’s Yogācāric interpretation of the SP, which represents our primary source for this closing section of the chapter.

¹¹ On this note, Arnold (2008) argues that the difference between Sautrāntika and Yogācāra is not that one is “epistemic idealism” and the other isn’t, because *epistemic* idealism is precisely what the two perspectives have *in*

wager that any *metaphysical idealism* worth its salt *must* rest upon a form of relational *realism*. Rather than *prove* a robust form of non-dual ‘idealism,’ then, Utpala and Abhinava will claim that Dharmakīrti casts asunder the very *objectivity* of mind that any non-dualist project ought to establish. In comparative terms, then, these contrasting idealist reactions to the SP disclose important and interesting rifts between epistemic and objective idealism quite redolent of those that characterized the debate between Bradley and the classical pragmatists.

1. *The General Critique of Dependence (1-6)*

a. Existential Dependence

As mentioned, Steinkellner (2022: xxxvi) sequesters the opening verses (1–6) as Dharmakīrti’s refutation of relation ‘in general’, as opposed to refutation ‘in particular’ that comprises the critique of the *kāryakāraṇabhāva* (7–18) and ‘other relations’ (19–24). If we treat the SP independently of the SPV (which one might want to do, since Dharmakīrti likely did not write the latter himself as a *svavṛtti*) and the other commentaries, his conclusion comes on the heels of only four-and-a-half dense, highly elliptic verses in which a few general definitions of ‘*sambandha*’ are (i) suggested, (ii) questioned (in a way that merely hints at a full argument), and (iii) subsequently discarded.¹² The opening verses of the SP can thus be said to consolidate and

common. The difference, for Arnold, is that Yogācāra can be aptly characterized as a *metaphysical* idealism, while Sautrāntika stops short of this thesis. Here we will be concerned with the question of whether Yogācāra can *ever* offer a robust sort of *metaphysical* idealism, just insofar as such a view is predicated on the Sautrāntika ontology of momentariness and thus the denial of real relations. (See Ratié (2014) on the distinction of these idealisms within the Śaivic context.)

¹² On a historical note, as we survey the core text of the SP, we should keep in mind that it was likely written, not as a detailed *defense* of Dharmakīrti’s arguments against relations, but rather as an encapsulation of the relational conclusions of his system (likely for mnemonic recitation given its form). He therefore does not overtly entertain any *pūrvapakṣin* objections in the verses, but moves from rejecting one candidate to the other without skipping a beat. Since Dharmakīrti was aware that the acceptance of these verses depends on unpacking these arguments, we can safely assume he must be asking his disciples and opponents to refer to a *vṛtti* to establish each conclusion. Despite its brevity—or maybe because of it—the short text received several commentaries (in chronological order): the *Sambandhaparīkṣāvṛtti* (SPV) by Devendrabuddhi (c. 630-690), the *Sambandhaparīkṣāṭīkā* (SPT) by Vinītadeva

distill the general relational arguments of the PV(SV) to advance the characteristically Sautrāntika-Yogācāra conclusion that relations are purely conceptual and ultimately unreal.

Indeed, Dharmakīrti seems to imply in the very first verse that he has refuted the idea of all real ‘relations’ due to the patent incoherence of existential/material dependence (*pāratantryam*). Devendra’s prolepsis buttresses this reading:

In order to refute relation as a substantial [or real] (*vastubhūtam*) entity, it is said—[in regard to] **dependence**, etc....

1. *For if relation is dependence, what dependence could there be in regard to an [already] actual relatum? Therefore, in reality, there is no relation between any existents.*¹³

Dharmakīrti’s introductory denial of the ultimate reality of relation—or, at least, what amounts to the same thing, any relation between *real existents*—based on a refutation of dependence is unsurprising given his Buddhist commitments, where *causal* dependence is the paradigmatic relational form. He therefore likely opens the SP with the notion of dependence because it is a sufficient condition for most—if not all—other dyadic properties in the Buddhist universe.¹⁴ Hence, although Dharmakīrti technically takes aim at different relations, he will subsume them throughout under a single relational form: dyadic dependence. For this reason, in refuting the

(c. 645–715), and the *Sambandhaparīkṣānusāriṇī* (SPAN) by Śāṅkaranandana (c. 9th-10th century). The Jain author Prabhācandra (c. 11th century CE) wrote a commentary called *Sambandhaparīkṣāvyaḥyā* (SPVy) that has accompanied the root text in two Sanskrit publications so far; Shastri (1972) and Jha (1990), who took Prabhācandra’s commentary also from the *Prameyakamalamārtanḍa*.

¹³ *vastubhūtaṃ sambandhaṃ nirākartum āha—pāratantryam ityādi. pāratantryam hi sambandhaḥ siddhe kā paratantratā / tasmāt sarvasya bhāvasya sambandho nāsti bhāvataḥ* (SPV: 1).

¹⁴ Indeed, based on Dunne’s discussion of *tādātmya* (203–22), one could make the case that Dharmakīrti might ultimately give a causal account of the *tādātmya* relation as well. According to this interpretation, only the *tadutpatti*, or causal relation, really makes sense as (conventionally) real. This argument hinges on Dharmakīrti’s analysis of the asymmetrical nature of inference that supposedly invokes an identity relation; does it make any sense to consider the relation between a tree (*vrkṣa*) and a kind of fruit-tree (*śiṃśapā*) a relation of “identity”? For identity is a *symmetrical* relation (viz. If “*A* is *B*” then “*B* is *A*”) while inductive inference only works in *one direction* (viz., we are warranted to infer that “this is a *vrkṣa*, because it’s a *śiṃśapā*,” but not the inverse, “this is a *śiṃśapā* because it’s a *vrkṣa*”). Dunne highlights that the application of either concept (*vrkṣa* or *śiṃśapā*) would, according to Dharmakīrti, have to be founded on the same causal characteristics of the individual. In other words, the capacity to take a particular *as* a “tree” or “fruit-tree” will in either case be based on one’s causal interaction with the same particular. The analytic ‘necessity’ of the relation thus only obtains in one direction, despite the fact that its conception is caused by the same object. *Nota bene* that the notion of identity is a purely *nominal* sense of dependence in any case, since the relation in question is a conceptual construction rather than a concrete internal relation.

objective form of necessary dependence, he takes himself to have effectively dispatched with all real relations. Accordingly, as will become clear below, the arguments against the other general relational forms—i.e., (ii) fusion of forms (iii) reference-to-another (*parāpekṣā*) and (iv) a single relationship (*ekābhisambandha*; viz., an objective referent like *samavāya*)—essentially reduce to the case of dependence in one way or another.

Devendra’s *vṛtti* explicates the reasoning behind Dharmakīrti’s eliminativist conclusion:

Dependence is being dependent on another. That [state of dependence] is a **relation** which would obtain for a relatum that is actual, or for one that is non-actual. Because an unactual entity has the nature of absence, the relation is not a substantial existent. But even if [the relatum] is **actual, what is ‘being dependent’?** This is nothing at all; thus, there is no relation.

[Opponent:] Even for what is actual, though, there is something not yet actual.

[Reply:] When that [entity] is actual, dependence also does not obtain, because this does not escape either the faults and errors that go with the actual, or those that go with the non-actual (*anatikramāt*). Further, one thing does not possess two forms, i.e., actual and non-actual. Since (*yatas evaṃ*) in this manner there is no dependence in regard to what is actual or otherwise [i.e., not actual], it follows that **in reality there is no relation between any existents**. There is no refutation (*apratishedha*) of conceptually elaborated entities [like ‘relation’] because they are not realities.¹⁵

To fully understand Devendra’s reasoning, we must keep in mind the so-called ‘identity principle’ of Buddhist logic, which dictates that a real entity *x* must be either strictly the same as or strictly different than a real entity *y* (Eltschinger and Ratié 2013: 195).¹⁶ The Pramāṇavāda tradition generally took this to entail that two entities *x* and *y* are *related* iff *x* cannot exist without *y* (*avinābhāva*) (Dreyfus: 174). In accord with stark disjunction between particulars and universals, this definition extends exclusively to cases of causal dependence (*tadutpatti*) or conceptual identity (*tādātmya*); i.e., while *tadutpatti* applies to two distinct particulars, *tādātmya*

¹⁵ **pāratantryam** parāyattatā. sā **sambandhaḥ** sambandhinaḥ siddhasyāsiddhasya vā bhavet. asiddhasyābhāvarūpatvān na vastubhūtaḥ sambandhaḥ. siddhe ‘pi sambandhini **kā paratantratā**. naivety asambandhaḥ. siddhasyāpi kiñcid asiddham astīti. tatsiddhau pāratantryam api na saṅgacchate, siddhāsiddhabhāvidoṣavikalpānatikramāt. na caikasya niṣpannāniṣpanne rūpe staḥ. yata evaṃ na niṣpannasyetarasya vā pāratantryam. **tasmāt sarvasya bhāvasya sambandho nāsti bhāvato** vastutaḥ. vikalpanirmitasyāpratishedho ‘vastutvāt (SPV: 1).

¹⁶ Cf. Vinītadeva, in his commentary on the SP, who states that the expressions “related to another”, “dependent on another”, “supported by another”, “subject to another’s will” are synonymous (Stcherbatsky: 247). Devendrabuddhi notes as well that ‘the rest [of these relations] are to be addressed like [the case of] dependence (*śeṣaṃ pāratantyavad vācyam*) (SPV 3).

pertains to the conceptual or inferential properties of a single entity.¹⁷ The latter, then, reflects conventional sorts of relational predications or designations; one conceptually *constructs* these relations to describe situations in which (1) *x* must be distinct (*bhinna*) from *y* but the same entity as *y*, and (2), it must be impossible for *x* to exist if *y* does not exist (Dreyfus: 175).¹⁸

In the first verse, Dharmakīrti reasons that a dependence relation could only obtain between actual entities or unactual entities. But something already actual does not ultimately *depend upon anything else* to do so—that is, it does not require any causal *assistance* merely to *exist*, because, *ipso facto*, it already does! This notion is expressed in the SP and PV as the characteristically nominalist principle that all real entities ‘reside in themselves.’¹⁹ With respect to the property of causal dependence, this principle entails that once an ultimately real existent comes into being, it is a self-standing, autonomously intelligible entity.²⁰ An actual entity does not require any other entity to exist, although it may *seem* that entities ‘require’ or ‘refer’ to

¹⁷ Cf. Eltschinger 2010: 414-5, and with Ratié 2013: 96, f.148-98, f.151.

¹⁸ We can frame this idea in terms of the intension and extension of distinct concepts; the canonical Buddhist examples are “being impermanent” and “being produced.” These have distinct intensional meanings, but the class of objects to which they apply are identical. Thus, they are identical because they are practically indiscernible, and as such only have a conceptual basis for their individuation (cf. Dreyfus (174–5), who provides an extended discussion of the Tibetan reception of this distinction). See Dunne (203–22) for a description of the role of the *tādātmya* relation in Dharmakīrti’s theory of inference. In the context of Dignāga’s *apoha* theory, the conceptual form of identity explains our practical capacity to predicate a single object with multiple characteristics. On this note, it is worth mentioning that we should be wary of the associating *tādātmya* vs. *tadutpatti* with the distinction between internal vs. external relations, respectively. For although the *tadutpatti* applies to the kind of independence that individuates the essential properties of causal particulars, much like external relations; and *tādātmya* entails a sort of analytic relation that holds only between *concepts* rather than physical objects, much like internal relations; only *external* relations ever have ontological salience in a description of the nature of the ultimate constituents of the world. Thus any such correspondence would be facile, because in Dharmakīrti’s nominalist framework all possible forms of internal relatedness formally reduce to *conceptual properties* of independent particulars—they have no concrete ontological referent.

¹⁹ This principle traces back to the Abhidharmic tradition, which held that all real particular entities are essentially individuated from one another because they are ‘established in their own natures’ (see previous chapter). The independence of real entities accords with the identity principle expressed, for instance, in PV 40: “Since all existents essentially abide in their own essence, they partake in the exclusion between [themselves and other] similar and dissimilar things.” *sarve bhāvāḥ svabhāvena svasvabhāva-vyavasthiteḥ / svabhāva-parabhāvābhyām yasmād vyāvṛtti-bhāgināḥ* (see Dreyfus (1997: 69), Wayman (197) and Eltschinger (2018: 29-30) for alternative translations).

²⁰ See Chapter I on Lewis’s nominalist metaphysics of ‘Humean Supervenience,’ which he describes as “the doctrine that all there is to the world is a vast mosaic of local matters of particular fact, just one little thing and then another” (Lewis 1986: ix).

others at a *conventional* level of description (e.g., through a *tādātmya* relation). Contrariwise, if something has yet to arise, or has already perished, then, *ipso facto*, it cannot provide or require dependence with respect to anything else.

Devendra's commentary includes an implied objector who retorts that 'some' (*kiñcid*) of an actual entity could be considered unrealized; presumably, they mean a being may have 'actual' as well as some 'unactual' aspects, modes, or properties. But Devendra curtly dismisses this idea; no *real relation* can obtain between what already exists and what does not exist, as the former in no wise logically depends for its existence on the latter. Furthermore, the identity principle stipulates that a single actual entity cannot bear an incompatible dyadic form that straddles actual and non-actual 'parts.' We can infer from Devendra's analysis that Dharmakīrti's metaphysical scheme precludes graded levels of concrete realization; any actual existent bears no internally differentiated structure apropos actual and non-actual *modes* of existence (which, *ipso facto*, would be relational). Notions of ingressive potentiality, or graded processes of virtual realization, do not apply to actual existents: actualization comes *all at once*, or *not at all*.²¹

This reading of the SP's opening verses accords with the atomistic interpretations of the Jain commentators, Prabhācandra and Vādidevasūri, who bring attention to the mereological and nominalist foundation of Dharmakīrti's arguments:

²¹ As we will see, this point becomes crucial for the Pratyabhijñā critique of Dharmakīrti, who identify the ultimate reality with an active process of manifestation. But we can also contrast this all-or-nothing Buddhist ontology with Peirce's conception of 'objective possibility': "We certainly have the notion of objective possibility, whether there be such a thing or not. It may be defined as that mode of being which is not subject to the principle of contradiction since if it be *merely* possible that A is B, it is possible that A is not B...How can the principle of contradiction fail to apply to anything? By something being held in reserve and not expressed" (MS[R]: 96). The rejection of 'objective possibility,' as it is construed here, represents a primary motivation for Peirce's critique of traditional nominalism. For nominalism 'subjectivizes' the significance of possibility as relative to the degree of human knowledge, rather than a feature of chance built into the structure of nature: "The nominalistic definition...that that is possible which is not known not to be true in a real or assumed state of information is, like many nominalistic definitions, extremely helpful up to a certain point, while in the end proving itself quite superficial. It is not that certain things are possible because they are not known not to be true, but that they are not known not to be true because they are, more or less clearly, seen to be possible" (DPP 2: 313-314; CP 6.364-367).

Since the conception of gross objects is misguided—viz., insofar as it depends on the unreality of relations of atoms to one another like iron shards²²—how could there be something with those [atoms] as its nature based on such a [relation]? That is, would the relations [between] objects be characterized by dependence or characterized by a fusion of form? In the first case, would that relation [obtain for] two actualized [i.e., self-existent and particular] *relata*, or unactualized *relata*? Yet the *relata* cannot be unactualized, because [in that case] their nature is non-existent, like the horns of a horse and hare. And in the case of actualized *relata*, because no dependence [obtains], surely there is no relation [thus, it is said...].²³

The takeaway is that although Dharmakīrti does not explicitly address the way in which atomic (*paramāṇu*) metaphysics underwrites the presuppositions concerning dependence relations in the SP, the Jain commentaries highlight a single trajectory of mereological analysis between Vasubandhu’s Vś and Dharmakīrti’s SP. In the context of the SP, Vasubandhu denies extended sensory wholes based on the fact that their independent constituents *cannot actually function as conjunctive relata*.²⁴ So the *a priori*, mereological arguments that lead to Vasubandhu’s ‘representationalism’²⁵ already implicates a certain eliminativist conception of *relations*; namely,

²² This phrase does not appear in the SP or SPV, but appears twice in the SS. This suggests that both the Śaivites and the Jains viewed Buddhist relational arguments as consonant with their atomistic ontology, as chiefly exemplified in the independence of two adamantine ‘iron shards’ or ‘particles’ (*ayaḥśalākayoḥ*). Eltschinger (2021: 116, fn.26) also refers to the TSP 38,9 on TS no. 42: Here “*ayaḥśalākās* are an example of all individuals being combined/mixed/related by conceptual construction...*vyaktayaḥ sarve kalpanāmiśritātmikāḥ* explains *ayaḥśalākā* as *ayomayyaḥ śalākāḥ parasparam asaṅgatāḥ*, ‘bars made of iron that are mutually unconnected.’”

²³ *nanu cāñūnām ayaḥśalākākalpatvenānyonyam sambandhābhāvataḥ sthūlādipratīterbhrāntatvāt katham tadvasāt tatsvabhāvo bhāvaḥ syāt? tathā hi—sambandho'rthānām pāratantryalakṣaṇo vā syāt, rūpaśleṣalakṣaṇo vā syāt. prathamapakṣe kimasau niṣpannayoh sambandhinoḥ syāt, aniṣpannayorvā? na tāvadanīṣpannayoh; svarūpasyaivā'sattvāt śaśāśvaviṣāṇavat / niṣpannayośca pāratantryābhāvādasambandha eva / uktaṅca* (SVR: 1).

²⁴ That is, even the spatial relations responsible for the perceptual aggregate of material atoms come to reflect conceptual forms of mental representation: “If the atom does not possess [any] relation, whose [relation] is this when aggregated?” *paramāṇor asamyoge tatsaṅghāte 'sti kasya saḥ* (Vś 13ab). In other words, spatial relations responsible for gross aggregation presuppose that *parts* of atoms exist, as extensive atomic relations would presumably depend upon their being sides along which contiguous atoms are mutually affixed. But, since parts of atoms, *ipso facto*, cannot exist, these external relations, like the distribution of other universals, have nothing to actually relate—and, as Bradley also emphasized, there cannot be any relation if no *relata* exist.

²⁵ Kachru (2021: 36-9) has recently decried the historical employment of the term ‘representation’ to describe Vasubandhu’s ‘idealistic’ worldview. This distinction is vital to Kachru’s project, considering his “desire to eschew anything suggestive of relations between awareness and some variety of a countably separate item. And representations, typically, involve an appeal to something like a relation between items.” Thus “to call something a ‘representation’ in the early modern period feels not so much like a first-order description of the fact of being aware of something; rather, it is part of a theoretical attempt to describe being aware in a way that suggests a mechanism by which one is aware” (37). Kachru’s ‘ecological’ interpretation of Vasubandhu resonates in certain compelling ways with our reading of Utpala’s objective idealism (as will become clear later on). But his casual use of the term *relation* here does not suite the general incisiveness of his project. For it betrays the (admittedly common) conflation at the heart of Utpala’s critique of Dharmakīrti; the co-extensive identification of the general term ‘relation’ with what are, in fact, just *one sort* of relation—i.e., dyadic relations between nominal particulars upon which the early

that the conceptual appearance of extensive and durational forms ontologically supervenes upon fundamentally unrelated atomic constituents—which, *ipso facto*, utterly lack the capacity for any distributed form of dyadic ‘dependence.’

In the second verse, Dharmakīrti addresses the alternative of “fusion of natures/forms” (*rūpaśleṣa*), which stands in monadic contrast to the dyadic relation of alterity in the first verse:

2. *For how could relation be a fusion of forms if there are two? Therefore, in reality, there is not any relation on the part of things with distinct natures.*

[Opponent:] Then **relation is a fusion of forms**, not dependence.

[Reply:] This is not so. **Given the twoness** of the relata, **how could this be**, i.e., a fusion of forms characterized as a *single* form? Surely it could not. Even in the case of unity, there is no existence of two relata, so what relation is there? For that [relation] is situated in two terms.

[Opponent:] It could be [said that] fusion is not a unity of natures.

[Reply:] What then?

[Opponent:] Being without interval.

[Reply:] So be it! What is then negated? Being without interval is just *absence* of interval, and thus there could be no relation that exists as a real thing. And if being *without* interval is accepted as a relationship, why isn’t being *with* interval? For either way, there is no difference from the condition consisting of the natures of the two relata. Also, union²⁶ (*prāpti*), etc., possess the same meaning as being without an interval; thus they need not be mentioned (*utghuṣ*). In this way, since relation is not characterized by a fusion of forms either, **therefore, in reality, no relation obtains with respect to things with distinct natures** (i.e., all entities) other than those superimposed by conceptual construction.²⁷

modern period’s preoccupation with representationalism thrives. In terms of the present project, at least, Kachru could potentially reframe his description of Vasubandhu as one in which the worldly manifestations of one’s *karma* are *internally related* to one’s intentional self-consciousness *of* that *karma*. That is to say, the relation between the *presentation* of *karmic content* (effect) and the *karma itself* (cause) cannot be expressed as one of representation—which is among the distinctions, I take it, that Kachru wants to overcome in his ‘phenomenological’ re-reading of Vasubandhu’s conception of mindedness.

²⁶ Steinkellner (2022: 2) takes “union” or “contact” (*prāpti*) to refer to the refutation of the *sambandha* in the NBh (on NSū 2.1.52-54).

²⁷ rūpaśleṣo hi sambandho dvitve sa ca katham bhavet / tasmāt prakṛtibhinnānām sambandho nāsti bhāvataḥ. **rūpaśleṣo hi sambandhaḥ**, na pāratantryam iti cet, tan na. **dvitve sambandhinoḥ sva...sa svarūpaśleṣaḥ svabhāvaikātmialakṣaṇaḥ katham bhavet. naiva bhavet. aikye ’pi tayoh sambandhinor abhāvāt kaḥ sambandhaḥ, dviṣṭhatvād asya. syād etat – naikasvābhāvyaṃ śleṣaḥ. kin tarhi. nairantaryam iti. bhavatu. kaḥ pratiṣedhaḥ. kevalam nairantaryam antarābhāva iti vastubhūtaḥ sambandho na syāt. yadi ca nairantaryam sambandhaḥ, sāntaratā kin na sambandha iṣyate, ubhayatrāpi sambandhinoḥ svabhāvasthiter abhedāt. prāptyādayo ’pi nairantaryārthasamāveśina ity anudghoṣyāḥ. yata evaṃ na rūpaśleṣalakṣaṇo ’pi sambandhaḥ, **tasmāt prakṛtibhinnānām sarvabhāvānām sambandho nāsti bhāvato** ’nyatra kalpanāsamāropitāt (SPV: 2).**

Devendrabuddhi claims that it makes no sense to speak of relation as a fusion of forms, because a true *fusion* of forms is, *ipso facto*, just *one form*.²⁸ And relation, by definition, must obtain between at least *two* members—it is ‘*dviṣṭha*,’ or something situated in two places. But a single thing cannot occupy two places simultaneously. Hence a fusion of forms or natures cannot be a relation between two distinct entities. The opponent changes tactics: he suggests, not fusion, but simply ‘lacking an interval’ is a relation. But Devendra claims that to lack an interval is not a genuine relation. Or, more generally, the negative prefix denotes an *absence* and thus does not itself indicate any *positive* entity—it is, rather, purely conceptual. The opponent is free to consider ‘being without interval’ a “relationship,” but this kind of talk is just so much hot air. We can thus infer that Dharmakīrti does not accept any Western analogue of ‘external relations’ as a real kind of *relation*: To be *independent* or discontinuous *relative to* some real existent is just to be *unrelated* to said existent—not *related* in some specific way.²⁹

²⁸ Vālidevasūri comments that *rūpaśleṣa* is synonymous with identity (*tādātmya*): *paramānūnām anyonyaṃ sambandhābhāvataḥ sthūlākārapratīter bhrāntatvāt katham tadvaśāt tadātmakam vastu syāt / sambandho hi svarūpeṇaiva tāvan na sambhavati / tathā hy arthānām pāratantryalakṣano vā syāt tādātmyāparaparyāyarūpaśleṣa lakṣano vā / prathamapakṣe kim asau niṣpannayoḥ sambandhinoḥ syād anīṣpannayoḥ vā / na tāvad anīṣpannayoḥ / svarūpasyaivāsattvāt turagakharaviṣāṇavat / niṣpannayoś ca pāratantryābhāvād asambandha eva / tad āha kīrtiḥ*. “Since [those of our] cognitions with a gross form (/aspect) are an error because atoms are not related to each other, how could [any] entity consist of those [atoms] on the basis of such a [relation]? For, to begin with, a relation is not possible by its very nature. To explain, [such a relation] could consist either in the [mutual] dependence of things or in a fusion of [their] natures, *which is synonymous with identity*. In the first hypothesis, would there be [a mutual dependence] of two already existing correlates, or of two nonexistent correlates? To begin with, [there could be] no [mutual dependence] of two already existing [correlates], for their very nature does not exist, like a horse’s or a donkey’s horn. But since two already existing [correlates] do not depend [on anything any longer], there is strictly no [such] relation [between them]. This is what [Dharmakīrti] says [in the following]” (SVR 812, 8-13, trans. in Eltschinger 2021:116). While plausible, it may be that Vālidevasūri is mistaken here; for, as discussed, *tādātmya* in Buddhist logic invariably obtains between two *predicates* that characterize the same referent (prototypically cases of *sāmānādhikarāṇya*). Here, though, the constitutive asymmetry of *tādātmya* entails a conceptual *difference* between the terms whereby the inductive inference works in one direction but not another (as per Dignāga’s *apoha* theory). But this is just the sort of real *difference* that is denied in the monadic notion of *rūpaśleṣa*, which refers to a single entity. On the other hand, it’s also possible that *tādātmya* need not *necessarily* refer to predicates of a single entity—the specialized usage of Dharmakīrti, that is, need not exclude the lexical definition *ekyam*. In this case, however, Vālidevasūri’s comment is ambiguous with respect to the meaning of *tādātmya*.

²⁹ Consider Hartshorne’s description of whether an external relation is “only nominally a relation ‘of’ the term to which it is external. . . It is not that certain terms externally have no relations, but that certain relations have terms, in such fashion that the terms, some of them, do not really ‘have’ the relations” (1948: 65). Recall that for Hartshorne, the significance of external relations involves the existential *independence* of the *future* relative to the present, and thus the objective reality of indeterminacy. Such independence, however, must characterize a relatum that does not

The opponent then inquires: if being *without* an interval could be a “relationship,” then, why couldn’t the state of being *with* an interval (*sāntaratā*) be accepted as a potential relation? Devendra explains that the presence or absence of any so called *sambandha* does not impact the essential natures (*svabhāva*) of the relata. That is, whether the ‘relation’ between two ‘relata’ consists in the property of them *having* or *lacking* an interval, their intrinsic properties would remain the same. In terms more germane for our purposes, the point is that, regardless of whether or not we take relationship as a state of ‘continuity’ (i.e., being ‘without-an-interval,’ *nairantarya*) or ‘discontinuity’ (i.e., being ‘with-an-interval’ *sa-antaratā*), *there would be no difference in regard to the intrinsic natures of the ‘relata’*.³⁰ In the first circumstance, we actually only have *one* thing, and thus no real *relation* between *two* things; on the other hand, the essential properties of two particulars that could instantiate a state of *dviṣṭha* are, *ipso facto*, fully independent of one another, and therefore no dependent form of ‘relation’ could obtain. The opponent can talk about a superfluous entity ‘relation’ until blue in the face, but since its presence or absence makes no difference to any real existent, it reduces to a purely conventional form of designation.

Once again, the Jain commentators afford a glimpse of the way in which the Sautrāntika aspects of Vasubandhu’s mereological atomism implicitly motivate Dharmakīrti’s understanding of *rūpaśleṣa* and *nairantaryam*. For instance, after Prabhācandra rehashes some of the same points that Devendra states in the SPV, he adds an additional section in his commentary:

Moreover, this fusion of forms would be with the whole or [only a] part. If there is a fusion with a whole, a mass of atoms would become merely a single atom. But if there is a fusion with a part, are these individual parts identical or different? If they are identical, there is no fusion with a part, due to the non-existence of that part. [Alternatively], if they are different, then that very question [arises]

actually exist—and thus it could not possibly represent any ‘relation’ among real entities that Dharmakīrti would take seriously (cf. Arnold (2021: 17) and Taber (1998: 217) on Nāgārjuna and Hartshorne).

³⁰ Obviously, to translate ‘*nairantarya*’ as ‘continuity’ simply begs the question for Dharmakīrti. In other words, we are assuming that things that *seem* continuous are actually not just one thing or many things taken conceptually in aggregate.

again—[namely], is the fusion of the atoms with those parts also in regard to individual parts or the whole? In that case, there would be an infinite regress.³¹

In terms familiar from Vasubandhu, Prabhācandra explains that a merging of two things would either occur between two distinct wholes, or a whole and some part of a different whole. If two or more externally related atoms merge into the space of a single atom, then there are no longer two things—there is just a single atom (which is partless, irreducible, and itself defined in virtue of its external relations to other particles). This single atom has one form, and thus no *relation* of ‘merging’ takes place between two or more entities in this case. On the other hand, if form *A* fuses with a part *p*¹ of another form *B*, and becomes part *p*² of *B* once this fusion takes place, are these parts *p*¹ and *p*² the same, or distinct? If the former, once again, there is no ‘part ‘to be fused with, because it is just the single form *p*. And if the latter, we have a regress, because we can once again ask whether the fusion occurred between a part of *p*¹ or all of *p*¹ (since, if it did not merge with the whole, it must have merged with only a part, in which case *p*¹ itself necessarily supervenes upon an aggregate of externally related parts—and then turtles all the way down.) So Dharmakīrti’s interpretation of the two truths doctrine rejects the possibility that any synthetic unity among distinct entities could be *real*, i.e., that something could actually exist *as* a real entity and simultaneously bear a distributed or dependent nature. As Devendra affirms, any state where relational unity appears to obtain *between* two *separate* things reflects an ‘imposition of conceptual construction onto something other.’

b. Referential Dependence

³¹ *kiñca-asau rūpaśleṣaḥ sarvātmanā, ekadeśena vā syāt. sarvātmanā rūpaśleṣe aṅūnāṃ piṇḍaḥ aṅumātraḥ syāt / ekadeśena tacchleṣe kimekadeśāstasyātmabhūtāḥ, parabhūtā vā. ātmabhūtāścet; na ekadeśena rūpaśleṣastadabhāvāt / parabhūtāścet; tairapyāṅūnāṃ sarvātmanaikadeśena vā rūpaśleṣe sa eva paryanuyogaḥ, anavasthā ca syāt* (SPVy 2).

The ramifications of these nominalist commitments really come into clear view in the third verse, which investigates the relation of *parāpekṣā*. Importantly for our purposes, there is some disagreement in the literature about the precise meaning of *parāpekṣā*, in particular relative to what exactly it adds to the category of *pāratantrya* in Dharmakīrti’s system. Eltschinger writes that in the PVSV, “Dharmakīrti does not distinguish between *pāratantrya* and *parāpekṣā*, his commentators trying to read the SP triad into the PVSV dyad” (2021: 116; f.18). Hence these two verses take aim at a very *similar* conception of ‘relation’ in Dharmakīrti’s view—which, we want to suggest here, is quite revealing in regard to his univocal conception of *necessity*. Monier-Williams, for instance, defines *apekṣā* as ‘necessity’ and ‘the connexion of cause and effect,’ and thus *apekṣā* can clearly function as synonymous with *pāratantrya* in certain cases.³² But it can also mean ‘expectation, hope, regard, reference, consideration, reliance’ etc. Indeed, the primary verbal root *īkṣ* means ‘to see,’ and can thus connote a range of basic *intentional* states (e.g., ‘to think about, to observe, to behold,’ etc.). Thus, while *apekṣā* can mean *dependence*, it typically suggests a semantic or intentional idea, which is captured by standard translations of *apekṣā* as ‘expectation,’ ‘desire,’ ‘need,’ etc.” From this perspective, *parāpekṣā* signifies the “need” or “reliance” that agents reflexively adopt *vis-à-vis* the sensed alterity of the implied referents that define semantic content. For this reason, I have deliberately chosen to translate the term as ‘reference’(-to-another), which captures the intentional or semantic range of *īkṣ*.

In the verse, we find Dharmakīrti invoke the same basic reasoning that prompts his rejection of dependence (*pāratantrya*) in the first verse; in both cases, the ‘relation’ in question

³² Jha translates *parāpekṣā* as ‘dependence on another’ and it seems that Steinkellner originally agreed in his edition of the Sanskrit (2022a: xxxv). But in his recent unpublished ‘trial translation’ (Steinkellner 2022b: 3) he adopts Eltschinger’s (2021 f.18) translation of the term as ‘reliance.’ While both terms technically work, I think the translation of ‘reference’ captures the important *semantic* differences that could be in play between these two verses. I should also note that Matthew Kapstein, in a personal communication, also chose to translate the term as ‘reference.’

vanishes upon analysis because the essential nature of an actual entity remains utterly unaffected or indifferent thereto:

3. Then, surely, relation is reference-to-another; [But] as a non-existent entity, how does it refer? And how does an existent entity, being indifferent to all, refer to [anything else]?

Then [atha] “**surely, relation is reference-to-another**, not a fusion of forms.” In this case, too, if relation is reference with respect to another that is referring, [then] the referring [entity] refers as either existent or non-existent. If non-existent, **how does a non-existent entity refer?**³³ For a being whose nature is not complete in itself (*anabhinivṛtta*), there could be no property that is ‘reference’ of [another] being. What, therefore, is this relation *of*? **And as existent, being indifferent to all**—i.e., its own nature not referring to the nature of anything else—**how could [an entity] refer** such that the reference could be relation? The rest [of the argument] is to be addressed like the case of dependence.³⁴

As Devendra makes clear, Dharmakīrti extends the reasoning of the first verse on *pāratantrya* to the case of *apekṣā*: The fact that actual existents do not depend (*pāratantrya*) on anything means that the essential nature (*svabhāva*) of any given particular is what it is regardless of the presence or absence of any other existent; likewise, an actual being that is ‘referring to’ another being either exists or doesn’t exist. If it doesn’t exist, it clearly can’t *refer* to anything, for it cannot

³³ This same basic question also arises for Buddhist thinkers interrogating the grammatical sense of “*pratītyasamutpāda*” (cf., e.g., Candrakīrti’s *Prasannapada* (in MacDonald 2015: I. 120-133)). Buddhist philosophers have long noted that this compound counterintuitively involves a gerund as its first member: *pratītya*, which means “*having depended*.” Yet a gerund is an infinite verbal expression that can factor only into a dependent clause, one necessarily subordinate to a finite verbal predicate that refers to the same subject as the gerund. The point is the dependent clauses that involve gerunds concern temporally *prior* states of affairs. In the context of Madhyamaka analysis of this compound, Salvini explains that this grammatic expression is “employed in reference to the same *agent* as the agent of the main action, but in reference to a prior time...if we accept the sense of strict succession between the act of depending upon (*pratītya*) and the act of arising (*samutpāda*), it would follow that the same agent should be able to perform the first action (depending upon) before having come into existence” (2011: 231-2). Arnold (2021b: 25) explains the problem: “How could there be the arising of something that must, if it is to make sense as first ‘having depended’ on something, *already exist*?” Both Salvini and Arnold suggest that the temporal features of causation render the grammatical form of *pratītya-samutpāda* intelligible only in light of a relevant distinction between semantic and existential forms of relational dependence. (It is worth mentioning that Arnold proceeds to single out Candrakīrti’s rejection of *momentariness* as among the upshots of his own Madhyamaka analysis of the compound: “Why, then, worry about whether things like foam and heaps are momentary or nonmomentary? Occurrent in dependence upon whole collections of causes and conditions, they lack anything real at their core.” *ataḥ phenapiṇḍādīnāṃ hetupratyayasāmagrīm prāpya pratītya samutpannānām sāravastuvigatānām kutaḥ kṣaṇikākṣaṇikacittīti* (trans. in Arnold (2021b: 26) [from La Vallée Poussin 1970: 549 8–9])).

³⁴ *parāpekṣā hi sambandhaḥ so ’san katham apekṣate / saṃś ca sarvanirāśaṃso bhāvaḥ katham apekṣate // atha parāpekṣā hi sambandho na rūpaśleṣa iti. atrāpi parasyāpekṣamāṇasyāpekṣayā sambandhitve ’pekṣamāṇaḥ san vā ’pekṣate ’san vā. yady asan so ’san katham apekṣate. svayam anabhinivṛtta svabhāvasya bhāvasyāpekṣā na dharmāḥ syād iti kaḥ kasya sambandhaḥ. saṃś ca sarvanirāśaṃsaḥ sarvasvabhāvasvabhāvānapekṣo bhāvaḥ katham apekṣate yenāpekṣā sambandhaḥ syāt. śeṣaṃ pāratantryavad vācyam (SPV: 3).*

bear any properties whatsoever; but if it does exist, it does not, *ipso facto*, genuinely ‘refer’ to anything outside of itself, in the sense that its *actual nature* would somehow remain ‘incomplete’ *sans* this supposedly distinct ‘referent’.

Implicit in Devendra’s analysis is the presupposition that particulars are wholly individuated in virtue of the actual properties that define their intrinsic nature. For Dharmakīrti, then, the reason actual entities have no real *causal* relations is identical to the reason sentient beings cannot genuinely *refer* to a separate object; once something is actualized and self-existent, there is no form of relation that could possibly characterize it. Regardless of whether relations appear as existential or intentional forms of ‘dependence,’ that is, they make no rational sense apropos actual existents. And, since the entire concept of relation is synonymous for Dharmakīrti with states of dependence, the constitutive *independence* of particulars means that *all forms relation* are fundamentally illusory impositions for one and the same reason; nothing extrinsic to a real entity can *change* its essential nature.

The immediately relevant upshot is that *Dharmakīrti’s nominalist commitments force him to regard all necessary or internal relations as bearing the same essential logical form, and thus he does not treat the relational structure of material causation differently than intentional forms of semantic or referential dependence.* In Peircean terms, they are both (mistakenly) regarded strictly as *dyadic* functions, or ‘Seconds.’ Insofar, though, as Dharmakīrti could be seen as conflating distinct senses of ‘dependence’, he lies open to the critiques that the process philosophers levelled at Blanshard and Bradley as discussed in Chapter I: Dharmakīrti is not sufficiently careful in distinguishing between abstract and concrete forms of internal relatedness.³⁵ Not only does this help explain the shared eliminativist conclusions of the monists

³⁵ One of the strong affinities that Bradley shares with Dharmakīrti in this regard is the employment of *reductio ad absurdum* arguments based on the incoherence of binary relational alternatives. As discussed, Bradley’s reductive

and nominalists, but we will also see this issue raised again, for similar reasons, in Utpala's temporal critique of Dharmakīrti in Chapter VI.³⁶

c. The Denial of Monadic Relations

In the fourth verse, Dharmakīrti proceeds to attack the notion of relation as a distinct, unitary form (*ekābhisambandha*). This leads to a regress argument much like the one that Bradley would go on to formulate centuries later.³⁷ Devendra also offers his most robust commentary in the SP on this verse:

4. If a relation between two [terms] is due to a relationship with one [other thing], what is the relation of the two [relata] with that [one]? Furthermore, there is an endless regress; thus, there is no sense of relation.

Lest this problem be met, if one assumes that **relation is due to a single relationship between two relata**—viz., due to a relation with a single conjunction (*saṃyogena*), which is known as a distinct referent called a quality (*guṇa*), or with some real existent (i.e., an inexpressible property (*dharma*))

method in AR postulates some *prima facie* metaphysical concept that we find intuitively plausible (viz., the existence of qualities and relations), and then shows through a procedure of 'intelligibility conditions' that this plausible idea turns out to be *a priori* incoherent.

³⁶ Consider Utpala's remark in the SS that, in conventional terms, we might say 'the sprout *refers to/requires* (*apekṣā*) the seed' (*aṅkur bījam apeṅte*) (SS: 2). While we might also mean the sprout materially depends upon the seed, Utpala argues that an insentient sprout cannot *literally* know itself as '*reliant*' upon a seed that no longer exists. The distinction becomes noteworthy because Utpala intends in this section of the SS to show that insentient existents have no capacity for *apekṣā*—indeed, the *semantic* notion of 'dependence' has *meaning only from a personal and sentient perspective*. While Dharmakīrti might agree with this, Utpala will ultimately argue that this notional form of 'dependence-*qua*-reference' should take explanatory precedence over 'dependence-*qua*-causation.' This is because causal dependence only pertains to momentary existents that, *ipso facto*, cannot establish the appearance of a 'metaphorical' relation between *temporally distinct events*—viz., a *conceptual* relation between an *actual* sprout and *non-actual* seed. Hence, in regard to the Śiva's dissection of Buddhist causality, Lawrence (1998: 600) notes that "the Śaivas elaborate some of the same basic syntactic considerations to produce an interesting refutation of the Buddhist logicians' understanding of causation as 'dependent origination.' According to it, causality is a mere regularity of succession between evanescent entities, without any continuous or substantial 'connection' between them. The Śaivas interpret the regular priority and posteriority expressed with the locative construction as a sort of expectation (*apekṣā*) between the moments. They contend that such an expectation could not exist between disreent entities that in themselves lack recognitive synthesis (*anusamdhāna*).” So Dharmakīrti's attempt to collapse *parāpekṣā* into *pāratantrya* is quite telling; to the extent that Utpala's argument against Dharmakīrti entails the epistemic priority of the former over the latter, Utpala would resist their coextension or assimilation into the single category of *pāratantrya*—as done, at least, in the PVSV.

³⁷ The regress is particularly important for our purposes because, as we will see, it speaks to the same relational logic that prompts Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's adoption of self-awareness as the *pramāṇaphala*. (Technically, the first Buddhist to employ regress arguments in favor of reflexive awareness was Harivarman (c.350) in the *Satyasiddhiśāstra* (see Sastri 1975: 278bc)).

that is not a distinct thing (*anarthāntareṇa*)³⁸—, then in the case when it is not a distinct [thing] [i.e., the second *pakṣa*], the two ‘relata’ would be conceived as isolated (*kevala*). Therefore, there is not any relationship. Furthermore, this is because the two relata are one, insofar as they are not distinct from the relation; and a real thing, even if inexpressible, cannot reasonably transgress the alternatives of being either a distinct or a non-distinct entity. In the case when [relation] is *not* a distinct entity, there cannot be any relation or relata. That is to say, let it be the case that a relation is separate or otherwise [i.e., not separate], then **what is the relation of those two with that**, i.e., what is the relationship of those two relata with that one [relation]? There is no such relation. For just as there is no relation between two relata because of the errors just mentioned, so too there is also no relation of the relata with that [relation]. Otherwise, why deny the case [above] of a relation between two ‘relata’ that are isolated?³⁹

Moreover, if one assumes that there is a relation on account of a relation with a single object, then a relation with a single object would also have to obtain for the relation and the relata. In accord with this acceptance of relation, in this case there would be a further relation to a single object; hence, there would be an **endless regress**. And thus, a relation to a single object is nowhere established. **Therefore**, if there is no relation anywhere, **there is no determination of a relation**. The idea of a relation does not correspond to a real thing if it could not come to rest [in a particular object]. If there is some conceptual construction of relation without a relation to a single object, there could be no [such] relation because the relation to a single object would also [obtain] with respect to the initial two relata. Yet, if there is a relation of those two relata taken as isolated, the errors have [already been] stated. This also addresses the conception of other properties such as ‘not having an interval’ etc.⁴⁰

An implied interlocutor opines that the problems with *rūpasleṣa* as a possible relation (namely, it isn’t *dviṣṭha*) can be avoided if we consider relation itself as a singular, distinct object. Devendra’s comment—whether this object be an ‘inexpressible *dharma*’ or a *guṇa* like ‘conjunction’—implies this retort is deployed against the Vaiśeṣikas, who viewed *samavāya* as a distinct irreducible category (*padārtha*), and *saṃyoga* as a type of quality, or *guṇa*. His

³⁸ Steinkellner takes the *vā* here as distributive, such that one gets three distinct referents: “on account of a relation with a single connection (*saṃyoga*) said to be a quality that is something distinct, or with a property that is not something distinct, or with something inexpressible real [*sic*]...” (2022b: 4).

³⁹ *dvayor ekābhisambandhāt sambandho yadi taddvayoḥ / kaḥ sambandho ’navasthā ca na sambandhamatis tathā // mā prāpad ayaṃ doṣa iti. dvayoḥ sambandhinor ekābhisambandhāt—ekenārthāntareṇa guṇākhyena saṃyogenānarthāntareṇa vā dharmenāvācyena vastubhūtena sambandhāt kāraṇāt – sambandho yadiṣyate, tadā ’narthāntarapakṣe sambandhināu kevalau kalpitau syātām iti na kaścit sambandhaḥ. tato ’pi vā sambandhāt sambandhinor avya-tirekeṇaikatvāc ca, vastubhūtasāvācyasyāpi nyāyato ’rthāntarānarthāntara-vikalpānatikramāt. anarthāntarapakṣe na sambandhaḥ sambandhī vā kaścit. bhavatu vā sambandho ’rthāntaram anyo vā, tathā taddvayoḥ kaḥ sambandhaḥ, tenaikena dvayoḥ sambandhinoḥ kaḥ sambandhaḥ. na iva. yathā sambandhinor yathoktadoṣān na sambandhaḥ, tathā ’nenāpi sambandhinor asambandhaḥ. anyathā kevalayoḥ sambandhinoḥ sambandhe kaḥ pratiṣedha iti (SPV: 4).*

⁴⁰ *kiñ ca. yady ekārthasambandhāt sambandha iṣyate, tadā sambandhasambandhinor apy ekārthasambandhena bhavitavyam. tathā sambandhābhyupagamāt punas tatraikārthābhisambandha ity anavasthā bhavet. tataś ca kvacin naikārthasambandhaḥ sidhyati. asambandhe sarvatra na sambandhamatis tathā. na vastvanupātinīnsambandhabuddhir anavasthāyāṃ satyām. kvacid ekārthābhisambandham antareṇa sambandhakalpanāyāṃ prathamāyor api sambandhinor ekārthasambandhāt sambandho mā bhūt. kevalayor api sambandhe doṣa uktaḥ. etena nairantaryāder dharmāntarakalpanāpi pratyuktā (SPV: 4).*

reasoning is very similar to the preceding verse: if the two relata are united with the object, then there really is not any relation *between* them. On the other hand, if they are all distinct from each other, then no real relation obtains, as they are all self-contained and independent terms.

In the second paragraph, he explains that if you attempt to unite these independent objects through *additional* relations, we end up with a vicious regress. This is the familiar consequence entailed by the hypostatization of external relations as substantial terms, which (more or less) mirrors Bradley's chain of reasoning.⁴¹ Both thought that since relations could only be self-enclosed terms *themselves*, they either cannot *actually* connect anything, or, if they did have some objective nature, they would require further relations to relate them to their relata, *ad infinitum*. There is no utility, then, in adding another existent to try and connect a relation to two other things, because this is like trying to cement together two bricks with another brick. Note, though, that for this argument to have any rational purchase, Dharmakīrti, like Bradley, also must establish *why* independent relations cannot be thought to relate. It is simply taken for granted that independence entails complete self-containment. This stems from the idea that particular relations by nature cannot actively stand both *between* and *within* distinct loci or terms.⁴² Recall Bradley: "If it [relation] is to be real [i.e., actually relating], it must be somehow

⁴¹ It is worth mentioning that, aside from Dharmakīrti, Śrīharṣa basically employs the same sort of argument against the Nyāya realists (Phillips: 221). As we mentioned in Chapter II, Gaṅgeśa and his followers embraced the reflexive self-linkage (*svārūpa sambandha*) relation to stop the regress—that is, at least one term in the relational structure must have the reflexive property (i.e., an internal relation) for the capacity to link itself to another term. Note that if we extend the basic argument here to refer to those intentional relations between cognition and its extrinsic perceptual content, this is similar to the argument put forward by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti for the intrinsic reflexivity of *awareness*. For Dharmakīrti "argues not only that the doctrine of *svasaṃvitti* does not...open up an infinite regress, but that it represents the only way to *foreclose* a regress" (Arnold 2013: 182).

⁴² We should note here that apart from Russell's dual-theory of relations, some Western philosophers took a "brute fact" approach to the question of 'how do *independent* relations relate?' This typically takes the form of a claim to the effect that some category error has been overlooked in Bradley's mode of theorizing. Blanshard, for instance, wrote *contra* Bradley that "*R* is not the same sort of being as its terms. It is neither a thing nor a quality. It is a relation, and the business of a relation is to relate" (1986: 215). Likewise, Grossman insists that Bradley's arguments demonstrate that "it is really an argument not against relations, but against the assumption that relations need to be related to what they relate" (1992: 55). Accordingly, complexes are facts that definitionally unify their own constituents, and do not require any 'things' such as relations to do so. But some philosophers (e.g., Vallicella:

at the expense of the terms, or, at least, must be something which appears in them or to which they belong. A relation between *A* and *B* implies really a substantial foundation within them” (AR: 18). Presumably, then, what Dharmakīrti denies here is that anything could be *internal* to the terms *as a dependent form of relation*, while *simultaneously* standing *external* to the terms *as another sort of independent term*. This, for Dharmakīrti and Bradley, is patently absurd.

d. Conclusion: Relations are Conceptual Constructions

With these short verses, Dharmakīrti concludes that relations are merely conceptual constructions imposed upon otherwise completely self-standing existents:

5. And those two relata, along with [something] other than those, all remain on their own. Thus, in themselves, existents are unmixed; conceptual construction mixes them.

Since such a conception of relation is also insufficient (*jyāyān*), **all of these**, therefore — i.e., **the two relata** admitted as being in relation, **as well as [something] other than those**, known as the ‘relation’ —, as explained, **remain each one in its own nature**. For this reason, **existents themselves**, remaining in their own nature, are **unmixed**, that is, unrelated. How, then, do they have forms that are indicated depending on such and such relations? There is no relation as a real entity. Those existents are only unmixed, and **conceptual construction mixes them**. And that [construction] arises by causing something to appear *as though* possessing the forms of dependence.⁴³

Dharmakīrti states that a particular relation, if it did exist, could only be a self-enclosed particular like its relata, and thus could not function as a relation, i.e., as *dviṣṭha*. An interlocutor inquires in response that if all existents are really unmixed, why do we call cases of dependence as instances of the term ‘relation’? He responds that these are all cases of conceptual

2002) have found the brute fact approach insufficient because it does not satisfactorily address the question of *how* relations relate. Dharmakīrti would, no doubt, not have found opinions like Blanshard’s feasible, because the Buddhists only accepted the existence of the particular and the universal, and each should be considered on its own terms, as ontologically distinct in nature from the other. The philosophy of *bhedābheda* in Vedānta and Śaivism is partly intended to overcome precisely these sorts of relational problems.

⁴³ *tau ca bhāvau tadanyaś ca sarve te svātmani sthitāḥ / ity amiśrāḥ svayaṃ bhāvās tān miśrayati kalpanā // yata evam api sambandhavikalpo na jyāyān, tasmāt, tau ca bhāvau sambandhitvenābhimateu tadanyaś ca sambandhākhyāḥ sarve te yatho-ktāḥ svātmani sthitāḥ svasmin svasmin svabhāve sthitā iti tasmād amiśrā asambaddhāḥ svayaṃ svātmanā bhāvāḥ. katham tarhy āyattarūpās tais taiḥ sambandhair vyapadiśyanta iti cet, na bhāvato ’sti kaścit sambandhaḥ. kevalam tān bhāvān amiśrān api miśrayati kalpanā. sāpi parāyattarūpān iva kenacin nimittenopadarśanty utpadyate (SPV: 5).*

construction whereby some ‘sign,’ or ‘mark’ (*nimitta*) makes things appear *as though* dependent. Thus Dharmakīrti effectively states here that some sense of “sameness” or “relation” may obtain, but it’s just the product of *kalpanā*.

Dharmakīrti concludes the ‘general’ critique of relations with allusion to the practical sphere to which this conceptual construction applies:

6. *And by those [people] conforming to precisely this [conceptual construction], words that signify actions and their instruments are employed to comprehend differences among entities.*

And by those people conforming to precisely this conceptual construction, words that signify actions and their instruments (i.e., that denote actions and their instruments) **are employed**, i.e., introduced as such: ‘this [word] is the designation of the action’ and ‘this [word] is the designation of its instrument.’ **The purpose is to comprehend a difference among entities**, viz., for the sake of demonstrating (*pratīyānāya*) that the distinction between entities is the exclusion of others. However, the relationship between an action and its instruments is not a real thing.⁴⁴

Since relations cannot abide as self-standing referents, the upshot of the preceding refutation of the ‘general’ definitions of relation is twofold for the Buddhists: (i) all ideas of relation are a conceptual imposition, and (ii) that, in conventional terms, the designation is employed only when we want to introduce a conceptual distinction (*vikalpa*) to recognize the mutual exclusion that defines real entities. The distinction between action and its instruments therefore does not reflect the real existence of a ‘relation’, but a nominal designation for the state of mutual exclusion that defines real particulars. Dharmakīrti’s appeal to the real mutual “exclusion” of entities thus portrays the inherence of an action ‘in’ its instruments as purely *notional*, with *anyāpoha* representing the cognitive mechanism whereby such ‘relational notions’ are so constructed. The absence of a real substantive connection between action and its instruments

⁴⁴ *tām eva cānurundhānaiḥ kriyākāra-kāvācīnaḥ/ bhāvabheda-pratītyartham saṃyojyante ’bhidhāyakaḥ // tām eva ca kalpanām anurundhānaiḥ puruṣaiḥ kriyākāra-kāvācīnaḥ kriyākāra-kābhidhāyinaś cābhidhāyakaḥ saṃyojyante, ayam kriyā bhidhāyīyam kāra-kābhidhāyīti niveśyante. bhāvabheda-pratītyartham. bhāvānām bhedo ’nyāpohaḥ, tasya pratīyānāya, na punar vastubhūtaḥ kriyākāra-kasambandho (SPV: 6).*

naturally segues into a rejection of the relation between cause and effect (*kāryakāraṇabhāva*), the next thematic portion of the SP.⁴⁵

2. *The Ontology of the Causal Relation (7–11ab)*

a. The Cause-and-Effect ‘Relation’ is Not Ultimately Real

Dharmakīrti and Devendra have just argued that the apparent ‘inherence’ of an action to its instrumental or substantial bearers is not a *bona fide* existent, but merely a way to conceptually designate an entity through the cognitive operation of *anyāpoha*. Likewise, when we want to distinguish between a cause and effect, Dharmakīrti insists that we do so on purely conventional or conceptual grounds, not with reference to an objective state of ‘dependence’ that involves two intrinsically independent terms. In verses 7-18, Dharmakīrti turns his attention to the relation of cause and effect. Here the idea of a causal *relation* is refuted (or, at least, depicted as purely conceptual) because the conventional temporal distinction between cause and effect cannot pertain to momentary entities. I will split the analysis of the causal relation into two subsections below; the first (*a*) distinguishes the *a priori* arguments against an *ontological* interpretation of

⁴⁵ Prabhācandra’s commentary on this verse explicitly captures the *temporal* considerations that begin to come into focus when Dharmakīrti pivots from the general concept of relation in verse 6 to the particular ‘relation’ of causal efficacy in the next verse: “Hence, even when no relation actually exists between those [relata], conventional speakers, adhering solely to that construction, speak words expressing things like action and agent to distinguish entities from one another—for instance, ‘Devadatta, drive the white cattle with a stick!’ and other such expressions. In reality, there is no relation between action and agent, because it is impossible for an actor to exist at the instant when the action occurs in virtue of momentariness.” *ata eva tadvāstavasambandhābhāve’pi tāmeva kalpanām anurundhānairvyavaharṭṭbhirbhāvānām bhedo’nyāpohaḥ, tasya pratyāyanāya kriyākāraḥ divācināḥ śabdāḥ prayojyante -‘devadatta gāmahyāja śuklām daṇḍena’ ityādayaḥ / na khalu kāraṇānām kriyayā sambandho’siti; kṣaṇikatvena kriyākāle kāraṇānāmasambhavāt* (SPVy: 5). Prabhācandra thus identifies that Dharmakīrti’s denial of relations is predicated on the kind of binary reasoning endemic to his momentary logic; *either* something exists *completely* at the very moment it arises, *or* it does not exist *at all*—i.e., it has perished or has yet to arise. In this sense, the Buddhist momentary universe dictates that the purported agent of an action cannot exist along with the action itself, because once the action occurs, the agent who supposedly sets it into motion no longer bears any real continuity with said action.

the causal relation (7-11ab), while the next section (b) represents the complementary *epistemological* explanations for the appearance of the causal relation (11cd-18).

Devendrabuddhi's commentary on verse 7 clarifies the way in which temporal considerations—particularly the doctrine of momentariness—come into play with respect to the unreality of causal relations. More specifically, the temporal asynchrony of the *relata* ensures that the semantic condition of *sambandha* as *dviṣṭha* cannot logically obtain:

7. How is the cause-and-effect relation even established as something situated in two [places], since the two do not occur together? [Alternatively], if something is not situated in two [places], how is it a relationship?

Then the relation would be established as one of cause and effect (*setsyati*). This is not correct, for **how** (i.e., not in any way), **could the relation of cause and effect even be established** as a *relationship*? What kind of [relation] is it?

[Opponent:] A relation situated in two [places].

[Reply:] Why? **Since these two [places]**, i.e., cause and effect, **do not occur together**. For when the cause is present, there is no effect—and, at the time of that effect, there is no cause, as it doesn't make sense for both cause and effect to exist at the same time. Further, because non-momentary things do not exist, there is no existence of cause and effect or a simultaneous existent. Even reference to the doctrine of non-momentariness does not apply in this case, since two real things that occur at the same time could not be found such that there would be a present relation between the two. Alternatively, if something **is not situated in two [places], how is it a relationship?** Not at all. A relation distinguished by cognition would [only] be constructed by conceptualization.⁴⁶

Devendra elaborates upon Dharmakīrti's straightforward mode of argumentation: Cause and effect cannot establish any *real* relation, since the cause is present when the effect has not yet arisen—and, conversely, the effect is present when the cause has already perished. Insofar as momentary causes and effects necessarily don't occur *at the same time*, they cannot influence or condition one another. The tokenized form of the causal 'relation,' in other words, cannot exist for basically the same reasons that the general form of dependence cannot exist: (a) The

⁴⁶ *kāryakāraṇabhāvo 'pi tayor asahabhāvataḥ / prasidhyati katham dviṣṭho 'dviṣṭhe sambandhatā katham // 7//* kāryakāraṇabhāvaḥ sambandhas tarhi setsyati cet, tan na, ya-smāt **kāryakāraṇabhāvo 'pi sambandhaḥ katham**, naiva, **prasidhyati**. kimbhūtaḥ. **dviṣṭhaḥ**. kiñ kāraṇam. **tayoḥ** kāryakāraṇayor **asahabhā-vataḥ**. tathā hi yadā kāraṇam tadā na kāryam, tatkāle vā na kāraṇam, tulyakālam kāryakāraṇānupapatteḥ. akṣaṇikānām apy abhāvātvan na kāryakāraṇabhāvaḥ sahabhāvo vety akṣaṇikavādodāharaṇam apy atrāyu-ktam, yato na vastubhūtau sahabhāvināu vidyete yena dvayor vartamānaḥ sambandhaḥ syāt. **advīṣṭhe** ca bhāve **sambandhatā katham**. naiva. buddhyā vyākṛtya sambandho vikalpena nirmitaḥ syāt (SPV: 7).

svabhāva of a particular entity is independent of all others through its intrinsic instantiation of a self-defined character that corresponds to the conceptual property of mutual exclusion, and; (b) a relation must be distributed in a *dviṣṭha*-sense. Regardless, that is, of whether we are speaking in temporal or spatial terms, the intrinsic properties that define a particular can be exhaustively described without reference to any other existent.

The next two verses (8-9) deal with similar considerations germane for our purposes, as they indirectly highlight the way in which Dharmakīrti assumes a univocal conception of ‘dependence’ regarding causal and semantic relata. Here Dharmakīrti undermines conceptions of relation as something that could manifest ‘in a sequence,’ or ‘gradually’ (*kramaṇa*):

8. *A thing occurring sequentially in one [entity], regardless of the other, is not a relation that occurs in one, because it exists even when [the other] does not exist.*

[To say] ‘the relation occurs sequentially (*kramaṇa*) in either the cause or effect’ is also not proper. Namely, even **sequentially, a thing occurring** (*varṭamāna*) **in one** (i.e., in the cause or the effect), called a ‘relation,’ obtains **regardless of the other**.⁴⁷ Being present when the cause is, it has no relation to an effect; being present when the effect is, it has no relation to a cause. Therefore, [something] successively occurring in the two [viz., in one and then the other] is not a relation between them. What **is occurring in one [entity]** (i.e., being successively in the cause or effect) regardless [of the other] cannot be a relation thereof, **because it exists even when the other does not exist** (i.e., since the object called a relation exists even in the mutual absence of the cause or effect).⁴⁸

9. *If this [relation], with reference to one of the two, engages in the other, then the referent would certainly be an assisting [factor]. But how could a non-existent [entity] assist?*

Lest such a problem obtain, it is assumed that **this relation engages successively in the other** (i.e., in the cause or effect) **with reference to one of the two** (i.e., the cause or effect), [and] thus is certainly based on two in virtue of ‘requiring’ (*saṣṭhena*). In that case, the referent must be an assisting [factor]. Why? Because then **the referent would certainly be an assisting [factor]**, i.e., not anything else.

[Opponent:] Then [simply] let the referent be an assisting [factor]!

⁴⁷ [lit. ‘does not desire another’ (*anyaniṣṭrahaḥ*) (see comments below)]

⁴⁸ *kramaṇa bhāva ekatra varṭamāno ‘nyaniṣṭrahaḥ / tadabhāve ‘pi tadbhāvāt sambandho naikavṛttimān. kāraṇe kārye vā kramaṇa sambandho varṭata ity apy ayuktam. tathā hi kramaṇāpi bhāva ekatraikasminn api kāraṇe kārye vā varṭamānaḥ sambandhākhyo ‘nyaniṣṭrahaḥ. kāraṇe varṭamānaḥ kāryānapekṣaḥ kārye varṭamānaḥ kāraṇanirapekṣa iti dvayoḥ kramaṇa varṭamāno na tatsambandhaḥ. yo yasmin niṣṭraho na tasyāsau sambandho bhavaty ekavṛttimān, kramaṇa kāryakāraṇabhāvī, tadabhāve ‘pi bhāvāt, kāryakāraṇabhūtaḥ parasparābhāve ‘pi sambandhākhyasyārthasya sattākāraṇāt (SPV: 8).*

[Reply:] **But how could a non-existent [entity] assist?** When at the time of the cause, what is called ‘the effect’ does not exist, and at the time of the effect, what is called ‘the cause’ does not exist, there can be nothing that assists because it lacks the capacity.⁴⁹

Devendra argues that a relation cannot operate in any step-by-step manner because we wind up with similar existential dilemmas *vis-à-vis* the fundamental independence of actual existents: If some relational property *R* of a real entity *a* represents its capacity to engage with some subsequent real object *b*, then *a* would designate an assistant causal factor in the production of *b*, and thus logically and temporally *precede b*. But then when *R* is supposedly *occupied* in this engagement with *b*, its substantival ground, *a*, no longer exists, and thus cannot ‘bear’ *R* (or anything else for that matter). Alternatively, at the time of *a* and *R*, *b* does not yet exist. So, *R* does not enable *a* to function in the capacity of an ‘assistant’ causal factor in either case, because there is no *real* future object *b* *about which* some present entity *a* could *actually* (viz., not *metaphorically*) ‘intend.’ Given the doctrine of momentariness, when the causal *capacity* for assistance is *actually* being discharged, any *relational* form that supposedly obtained between its nominal ‘bearer’ and some other ‘relatum’ is rendered ontologically void and thus merely notional.

Note the 9th verse also harkens back to verse 3, which denies the capacity of cause or effect to ‘refer to’ or ‘rely upon’ (*apekṣā*) one another. Here Devendra reinforces the ambiguous form of ‘dependence’ in play through the curious choices of ‘*saspr̥ha/niḥspr̥ha*’—literally ‘with/without desire/longing’—to describe the *causal* status of particular, impersonal existents, which again serves to underscore the univocal conception of *dependence* that drives Dharmakīrti’s deconstructive method. For the atemporal status of concrete *causes* and *effects*

⁴⁹ *yady apekṣya tayor ekam anyatrāsau pravartate / upakārī hy apekṣyaḥ syāt katham copakaroty asan // mā bhūd eṣa doṣa iti. yady apekṣya tayoh kāryakāraṇayor ekam kāryam kāraṇam vānyatra kārye kāraṇe vāsau sambandhaḥ krameṇa pravartata* iti saspr̥hatvena dviṣṭha eveṣyate; tadā tenāpekṣyamāṇenopakārīṇā bhavitavyam. kiṁ kāraṇam. yata upakārī hy apekṣyaḥ syān nānyaḥ. apekṣyamāṇam upakāry astv iti cet. **kathaṁ copakaroty asan.** kāraṇakāle kāryākhyo ’san kāryakāle kāraṇākhyo ’san naivopakaroty asāmarthyāt (SPV: 9).

cannot be said to ‘relate’ to each other *just in case* they also cannot involve a *strictly metaphorical* ‘desire for’ one other: When the particular *cause* actually exists, there is no future *effect* ‘towards which’ it could possibly ‘intend,’ and *vice versa*; or, more poetically, particular causes do not *longingly hope for* their subsequent effects, and particular effects likewise do not ever *yearningly pine for* their prior causes.⁵⁰ The denial of necessary ‘requirement’ in these verses thus deliberately encompasses its *causal* and *semantic* sense in a manner that accords with Dharmakīrti’s ultimate philosophical and soteriological agenda: To theoretically reduce the personal perspective of a world comprised of conceptual or temporal relations with recourse to an impersonal level of description exhaustively characterized by atemporal, non-relational occurrences.

b. The Impossibility of a Single Causal Relation

In the next one and a half verses (10-11ab) Devendra’s arguments analyze the *ekābhisambandha* of the 4th verse in the context of the cause and effect. We can gather at this point, then, that in these verses on causation Dharmakīrti proceeds by applying each relational form attacked in the general critique to the case of particular entities (aside from a fusion of forms, which *ipso facto*, does not apply to the distinct cause and effect). Here, the refutation of relation as some connection of two relata to a single ‘thing’ or ‘referent’ (*ekārthābhisambandha*) demonstrates

⁵⁰ Compare Peirce on the temporal and semiotic structure of Secondness vs. Thirdness: “Let me remind you of the distinction...between dynamical, or dyadic, action; and intelligent, or triadic action. An event, A, may, by brute force, produce an event, B; and then the event, B, may in its turn produce a third event, C. The fact that the event, C, is about to be produced by B has no influence at all upon the production of B by A. It is impossible that it should, since the action of B in producing C is a contingent future event at the time B is produced. Such is dyadic action, which is so called because each step of it concerns a pair of objects” (CP 5.472). Triadic action is alternatively exemplified in a transitive relation such as ‘A gives B to C’ (EP 2 170-171), or, more pressingly, “action, or influence, which is, or involves, a coöperation of three subjects, such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant, this tri-relative influence not being in any way resolvable into actions between pairs” (EP 2 411). In this sense, we can see that Dharmakīrti treats the relation of cause and effect in strictly dyadic terms, effectively rendering our semiotic or intentional stance toward the indeterminacy of the future bereft of any ultimate ontological validity.

that the temporal nature of causality cannot be conceived or grasped as anything akin to a single abstract property (*dharma*) with a general conceptual form:

10. *If the fact that these two are effect and cause is due to a relationship to one [other] thing [i.e., a single property], it would likewise obtain with respect to the right and left horn of a cow because of their relation to properties such as twoness.*

11ab. *For a relation is something situated in two places; there is no definition other than this.*

[*vṛtti* on 10] Further, **if** one assumes that **for the two relata**, i.e., the cause and effect, that **causality exists** because of a **connection with one [other] thing [viz., a relational property]**, then the cause and effect also **obtains for the right and left horn of a cow**, because of relation to their being two, e.g., which is known as their number. And that [relational property] is not admitted, lest it be allowed in other cases, too. The mention of the words “**such as...**” includes [e.g.,] due to the relation of distance, proximity, hornness, etc...

[*vṛtti* on 11ab] [Opponent:] There is no relation due to a relation with anything singular.

[Reply:]: How then?

[Opponent:] By a single [thing] characterized as a relation.

[Reply:] This is not correct. **For a relation** means **something situated in two [terms]; other than this** i.e., other than a thing had by two relata, **there is no possible definition** by means of which a distinction such as number, etc., could be determined.⁵¹

The point here, I take it, is that if one says a causal relation obtains in virtue of an *ekārthābhisambandha* (viz., some sort of unitary entity or unary property) it cannot account for the purported dependence that characterizes the nature of causality. For if any pair could be related as cause and effect merely *in virtue of their relation to a single other property*, then *any* commonly instantiated property of *synchronous* relata could count as a “cause-effect” relation. But the mere fact that a cow’s horns number *two* does not entail that a cause-and-effect relation

⁵¹ *yady ekārthābhisambandhāt kāryakāraṇatā tayoh / prāptā dvitvādisambandhāt savyetaraviṣāṇayoh. dviṣṭho hi kaścīt sambandho nāto 'nyat tasya lakṣaṇam.* [*vṛtti* on 10:] kiñ ca. **yady ekārthābhisambandhāt** kāraṇāt **kāryakāraṇatā tayoh** kāryakāraṇatvenābhimatayoh, tadā saṅkhyākhyena **dvitvādinā sambandhāt prāptā** kāryakāraṇatā **savyetaragoviṣāṇayor** api. na ceṣyate, tadanyatrāpi mā bhūt. ādigrahaṇena paratvāparatvaviṣāṇatvādinā sambandhāt. [*vṛtti* on 11ab:] na yena kenacid ekena sambandhāt sambandhaḥ, kin tarhi sambandhalakṣaṇenaikeneti cet, tan na. **dviṣṭho hi kaścīt** padārthaḥ **sambandhaḥ. nāto** 'rthadvayābhisambandhino 'rthād **anyat tasya** sambandhasya **lakṣaṇam** upapadyate, yena saṅkhyādes tasya viśeṣo vyavasthāpyeta (SPV: 10-11ab).

of *dependence* obtains *between* them. For this reason, a shared relation to a singular property does not suffice to render causation intelligible.⁵²

In this respect, Devendra’s inclusion of mutually defined *spatial* properties at the end of the *vr̥tti* on 10—such as the distance or proximity between the two horns—illustrates how a certain abstract conception of symmetrical relational properties between synchronous entities underwrites Dharmakīrti’s rejection of the particular causal relation. Specifically, causality cannot denote a mere relational *property* because the dyadic independence of spatial relata need not exhibit the purported asymmetry of causal dependence. The fact that Dharmakīrti implicitly denies the instantiation of asymmetrical relational properties based on the symmetrical independence of synchronous terms betrays the by-now familiar nominalist tendency to spatialize the relationship of temporal referents.

This puts him right into the crosshairs of 20th century process thinkers like Hartshorne in the first chapter, who explicitly criticized Indian and Western relational theorists alike based on their shared failure to comprehend the concrete temporal asymmetry of causal relations. For Dharmakīrti assumed that the causal relation—if it were to exist at all—would have to be a property akin to other distributed universal properties (e.g., twoness or distance). But, in that case, it suffices for a causal relation to obtain just in case both ‘relata’ abide *independently* of one another (‘like the right and left horns of a cow’). For Hartshorne, such a view imposes the

⁵² Prabhācandra’s commentary on this verse helps clarify that the ensuing half pada 11ab should be taken as a conclusion to this line of reasoning (cf. Jha: 25): *kiñca-yadyekārthābhisambandhāt kāryakāraṇatā tayoh kāryakāraṇabhāvatvenābhimatayoh; tarhi dviivasamkhyāparatvāparatvavibhāgādisambandhāt prāptā sā savyetaragoṣṇāyorapi na yena kenacidekena sambandhāt seṣyate; kiṃ tarhi? sambandhalakṣaṇenaiveti cet; tanna, dviṣṭho hi kaścītpadārthaḥ sambandhaḥ, nāto'rthadvayābhisambandhādanyat tasya lakṣaṇam yenāsyā samkhyāderviśeṣo vyavasthāpyeta.* “[Objection]: Moreover, that the state of being cause and effect on the part of two relata - which are supposed in virtue of the existence of cause and effect - obtains from a relationship to a single object. [Reply]: In that case, that [causal relation] would also obtain for the left and right horns of a cow, due to their relationship with the number two-ness, farness, nearness, distinctness, etc...[Objection]: It is not agreed that [causality] is due to a relation with any one object.[Reply]: Then what [do you mean]? [Objection]: [We mean a relation obtains] only when there is the ‘characteristic of a relation’. [Reply]: That is incorrect. For any category that is relational is dualistic; aside from this relationship between two objects, there is no other definition of [relation] in virtue of which one could determine particularities such as enumerability, etc...”(SPVy: 10).

symmetry of spatial relations onto the asymmetrical form of temporal relata. He conjectures that Buddhist thinkers—again, like the Western monists Bradley and Blanshard in Chapter I—were misled by the nominal symmetry of the *difference* relation: If *A* differs from *B*, then *B* differs from *A*. If we insert this notion into the identity principle of Buddhism, it yields: If a real entity *x* must be either the same as or different than a real entity *y*, then *y* must *equally* be the same as or different than a real entity *x*. However, as we have already seen, this analysis arguably conflates *existential* and *semantic* forms of dyadic dependence: The semantic *property* of ‘being a father’ depends upon *reference* to his son—but clearly the *existence* of the father does not so depend.⁵³ Insofar as Dharmakīrti treats concrete causal *relations* as akin to a symmetrical relational *property* of each of the relata taken on its own, though, one might insist that he fails to account for the directional asymmetry of existential dependence in contradistinction to mere notional or semantic forms of referential dependence.

3. The Epistemology of the Causal Relation (11cd-18)

a. The Cause-and-Effect Relation as Invariable Concomitance

Given the non-existence of the causal relation, Dharmakīrti proceeds to dedicate several verses of the middle of the SP to unpacking the conceptual mechanisms behind its conventional appearance. This involves reducing the semantic content of the notion of a causal ‘relation’

⁵³ See Hartshorne on Nāgārjuna and Bradley: “I find a common fallacy in these widely separated thinkers. A relation between two terms is really two relations, the one of *A* to *B*, and the one of *B* to *A*. Neither Bradley nor Nāgārjuna take this duality into account” (1988: 104). Although Hartshorne addresses Nāgārjuna here, the same relational critiques translate, *mutatis mutandis*, to the kinds of arguments propounded by Dharmakīrti in the SP. Although the object of Hartshorne’s critique might ultimately come down to how one chooses to systematically interpret the knotty claims of Madhyamaka: Most pressingly, as Matthew Kapstein pointed out to me, since Madhyamaka replaces a substance ontology with a world of pure process, some Joe at *t*₁ before the birth of his child is not the same entity as Joe at *t*₂ following the birth of his child; for Joe-*t*₂ has at least one significant property that Joe *t*₁ lacks (i.e., fatherhood), and this property is not merely a secondary attribute of a substantial entity, but potentially constitutive thereof. In this case, the distinction is not merely semantic, and thus one might argue that Hartshorne has tacitly imposed on Nāgārjuna an ontology he outright rejects—indeed, Nāgārjuna may have much more in common with Hartshorne than he seems to acknowledge (see concluding chapter in this regard).

merely to a conceptual description of actual existents that bear no intrinsic relationship to one another. More specifically, according to Dharmakīrti, the impression of a relationship between cause and effect takes the form of a *post hoc* inference of one existential property (i.e., presence or absence) of a term based on the concomitant experience of a property (i.e., presence or absence) of another term:

11cd-12. If being cause and effect is a union with the qualities of presence and absence, then why aren't just those two qualities of union the state of cause and effect? If it is due to a difference [between them], then this expression surely depends on the speaker.

[*vyrtti* on 11cd:] [Opponent:] Some *x* exists when *y* is present, and *x* does not exist when *y* is absent. The distinctive feature of the two—presence and absence when there is the presence and absence of those two—is that relation which is a union. **If being cause and effect is a union of the qualities of presence and absence**, that is not *every* relation.⁵⁴

[*vyrtti* on 12:] Then **isn't it the case that being cause and effect is just these two**—i.e., presence and absence, which are the two **qualities of the union**— such that there is construction of an unreal relation that has no consequence? **If it is [said] because there is a difference** [between *anvayavyatireka* and the cause-and-effect relation], then that would mean “*x* exists when *y* is present and *x* does not exist when *y* is absent”—[in which case,] there are many terms expressed by a statement that designates a single term, i.e., the “[relation] of cause and effect.” And thus, it is improper for those [many things] to be the object of that [single referent]. Therefore, presence and absence are not considered the state of cause and effect. **In that case, this expression surely depends upon the user**, i.e., a person. Since this expression depends upon the user, just as a word is employed,

⁵⁴ Note that there are two ways to translate the meaning of this verse that hinge on the final interpretation of the ‘*na sarvaḥ sambandhaḥ*.’ Namely, this could be the Buddhist stating his *own siddhāntin* position, i.e., that the conjunction of the qualities of presence and absence just *are* the causal relation. In this case, the ‘*na sarvaḥ sambandhaḥ*’ would mean “there is not *any* [real] relation.” Or, conversely, this could be the *pūrvapakṣin* conceding that, yes, *in some circumstances*, the causal relation can be expressed as a conjunction of presence and absence. Here, though, the ‘*na sarvaḥ sambandhaḥ*’ would translate, in context, as, ‘if cause and effect are the conjunction of the qualities of presence and absence, it is not *every* relation.” If we take into account Prabhacāndra’s commentary, I think it finally makes sense to consider the ‘*na sarva*’ in the ‘every’ sense, and then take the commentary on 12 as a continuation of the *pūrvapakṣin* in 11cd: *kasyacidbhāve bhāvo'bhāve cābhāvaḥ, tāvupādhi viśeṣaṇaṃ yasya yogasya sambandhasya sa kāryakāraṇatā yadi na sarvasambandhaḥ; tadā tāveva yogopādhi bhāvābhāvau kāryakāraṇatā'stu, kimasatsambandhakalpanayā? bhedāccet 'bhāve hi bhāvo'bhāve cābhāvaḥ' iti bahavo'bhidheyāḥ katham kāryakāraṇatetyekārthābhidhāyinā śabdenocyante? nanvayaṃ śabdo niyoktāraṃ samāśritaḥ | niyoktā hi yaṃ śabdaṃ yathā prayunkte tathā prāha, ityanekatrāpyekā śrutirna virudhyate iti tāveva kāryakāraṇatā.* [Objection]: When some *x* comes into existence, *y* comes into existence, and when *x* does not exist, neither does *y*. If those two particular qualifiers are [constitutive] of conjunction - i.e. relation - that is the state of cause and effect, but it is not every relation. [Reply]: In that case, if it is granted that those two qualifiers of existence and non-existence are the state of cause and effect, why construct a non-existent relation? If [one suggests] it is due to the distinction ‘when *x* exists, then *y* exists, and when *x* does not exist, *y* does not’, how [does one explain the] numerous meanings designated by the singular statement ‘cause and effect’? Well, [we hold that] this expression depends upon the speaker. For a speaker employs a statement in that manner which suits their expression. Hence there is no problem with a single statement bearing multiple meanings; those two [qualifiers] are indeed the causal relation (SPVY: 11-12 (cf. Jha (27))). Steinkellner’s recent 2022 translation supports this reading (12)).

so too is the way it is expressed. Consequently, there is no objection to a single word for many [objects].⁵⁵

Devendra clarifies that the second half of verse 11 already takes into account the implied Buddhist *siddhāntin* position: In light of the preceding verses, the Buddhist position is that a cause and effect ‘relation’ reflects nothing more than the conceptual judgment of two qualities (*upādhi*); namely, the presence and absence of invariable concomitance (*anvayavyatireka*) that some phenomenon *x* instantiates (viz., in the presence of *x*, *y* is observed, and when *x* is not present, *y* is not observed).⁵⁶ Here the so-called relation *between* cause and effect amounts to a primitive conceptual *inference* in which *two* fundamentally distinct terms become conventionally associated when apprehending the causal properties of a *single* term. For the Buddhist, then, ‘conjunction’ does not *presuppose* the apprehension of a real *dyadic* form, but is rather meant to *explain* our *post hoc* conceptual *impression* of a single nominal referent *called* the causal ‘relationship.’

As per the commentary, the ending of 11cd portrays a *pūrvapakṣin* that questions whether this equation can account for *all* meanings of the causal relationship. The initial response in 12, accordingly, states that once this *pūrvapakṣin* *concedes* that the conception of causal ‘relation’ *just is* the concomitant qualities of presence and absence, then *there is no point* in positing an extra conceptual entity ‘relation’ above and beyond the inferred concomitance of these qualities, for it lacks causal efficacy and therefore does no ultimate explanatory lifting. The opponent

⁵⁵ *bhāvābhāvopādhir yogaḥ kāryakāraṇatā yadi // yogopādhī na tāv eva kāryakāraṇatātra kim / bhedāc cen nanv ayaṃ śabdo niyoktāraṃ samāśritaḥ*. kasyacid bhāve bhāvo ‘bhāve ‘bhāvaḥ, tayor bhavator abhavatoś ca yau bhāvau ‘bhāvau tāv upādhir viśeṣaṇaṃ yasya yogasya sambandhasyāsau **bhāvābhāvopādhir yogaḥ kāryakāraṇatā yadi**, na sarvaḥ sambandhaḥ. tadā yau tau **yogopādhī** bhāvābhāvau **tāv eva kāryakāraṇatātra na kim**, yenāsato ‘phalasya sambandhasya kalpanā. **bhedāc cet**, syād etat – bhāve bhāvo ‘bhāve ‘bhāva iti bahavo ‘bhidheyāḥ, kāryakāraṇateti caikārthābhīdhāyīnā śabdena vācyaś tadviṣayā ayuktā iti bhāvābhāvau na kāryakāraṇateṣyate. **nanv ayaṃ śabdo niyoktāraṃ** puruṣaṃ **samāśrita** iti niyoktṛsamāśrayād yaṃ śabdān asau yathā prayaukte sa tathā prāhety anekatrāpy ekā śrutir ity aparihāra eva (SPV: 11cd-12).

⁵⁶ See Hayes (1988) and Katsura (1979; 1991) on Dignāga’s approach to inference and the formalization of the *anvaya* and *vyatireka* within the Pramāṇavāda tradition, and Kajiyama (1963), Inami (1999), Lasic (1999; 2003) for Dharmakīrti’s five-fold procedure for the determination of causal relations on this basis. On the problem of inductively establishing causal relations in Dharmakīrti’s work, see Gillon (1991) and Tillemans (2004).

alternatively suggests that we should posit this relation due to the recognized distinction between cause-and-effect and *anvayavyatireka*; for the latter refers to a conjunction of several terms (i.e., “*x* exists when *y* is present, and *x* does not exist when *y* is absent”) while the latter refers to knowledge of a single general referent (i.e., the causal relation). But the Buddhist sees no problem with this discrepancy. Indeed, he leverages it to his advantage: The conventional employment of the many terms of *anvayavyatireka* to describe a singular referent testifies to the fact that the meaning of ‘causal relation’ depends upon the conceptual *intentions* of the speaker.⁵⁷ The term does not designate, that is, any objective *referent*, but merely reflects a product of human convention, which may describe a general situation in different ways depending on the practical context.

In the next two verses, Dharmakīrti explains what he means when he speaks of knowledge of the causal ‘relation’ as a mere conceptual conjunction of the twin qualities of presence and absence:

13. Upon observing one [thing]—i.e., when something [that was previously] unseen is [now] seen, and is not seen when that [other] is not seen—a person infers ‘effect’ even without teachers.

Therefore, it makes sense that only those two, i.e., presence and absence, are the state of cause and effect. Since, **observing one** (i.e., known as ‘cause’), **something [that was] unseen is seen** (i.e., known as ‘effect’ [and] characterized by perceptibility)—seeing which, in that case, one has seen [the effect].⁵⁸ [And] **when that [cause] is not seen, then not seeing** the so-called ‘effect’, **one infers an effect**, i.e. “this comes from that,” **even without a teacher**, (viz., even without another person instructing “this arises because of that”). That one understands due to convention is also worthless. For even granting convention, nothing other than presence or absence is understood. Thus, the meaning of that [cognition] is the understanding of *x* when there is the understanding of *y*. So, for example, there is [universal] whiteness (*śauklyam*), based on the understanding of white, when there is the

⁵⁷ See Dreyfus (1997: 200-227), Dunne (2004: 31), Arnold (2006; 2013) and Coseru (2016) on the ‘psychologism’ of Dharmakīrti’s account of linguistic reference and its potential problems.

⁵⁸ The Sanskrit here is awkward to render (*darśane sati yat paśyan dṛṣṭavān*), but Prabhācandra’s commentary on this verse is considerably more lucid than Devendra’s: *yasmāt paśyann ekam kāraṇābhimatam upalabdhi-lakṣaṇaprāptasyā dṛṣṭasya kāryākhyasya darśane sati tadadarśane ca satyapaśyatkāryam anveti ‘idamato bhavati’ iti pratipadyate janaḥ ‘ata idam jātam’ ityākhyātrbhirvināpi*. “[Existence and non-existence are the causal relation] since, in observing the one considered the cause, there is sight of what is called ‘the effect’—i.e., what was unseen but has obtained the characteristic of perception—and in not observing that effect when there is no such [cause], one infers ‘this results from that’, and concludes ‘this is produced from that’, even without the explanations of another person” (SPVy: 13; cf. Jha 1990: 29).

understanding of a white cloth. And insofar as one understands presence and absence, one understands the fact of being effect and cause. Therefore, the referent is based [only] on the idea of being effect and cause, nothing else. [One might alternatively say that] presence and absence is the premise (*sādhnam*), while the cause and effect to be proved (*sādhyam*) is something else.

[Reply:] If it (i.e., the *sādhyam*) is different, why is its form not indicated?

[Opponent:] In this case, the form is the relation of producer and produced.

[Reply:] Then is there a distinction of referents, due to another name, in virtue of which this can be asserted? For the relation of the producer and the produced, the relation of generator and generated, and the relation of cause and effect, etc... are all synonyms.⁵⁹

14. *Because the idea of an effect is impossible without reference to seeing and not seeing, in this case even words such as 'effect' etc., are used for the sake of simplicity.*

Therefore, **because the idea of an effect is impossible without reference to seeing and not seeing**, i.e. presence and absence due to the indication of the object by the subject, **in this case even words such as “effect,” etc..., are employed for the sake of simplicity** in conventional life, i.e. in reference to presence and absence, lest people express (*abhidadhyāt*) such a string of words on each individual occasion.⁶⁰

According to Dharmakīrti, we conceptualize a causal ‘relation’ whenever we observe that some *x* exists when some *y* also exists (*anvaya*), and, conversely, do not observe *x* when *y* is not present (*vyatireka*).⁶¹ The conceptual determination of an absent cause is retroactively attributed to whatever term the subject chooses to regard as a so-called ‘effect,’ whose causal properties are conventionally defined in terms of some invariable concomitance *vis-à-vis* another respective term. For instance, through the conceptual conjunction of the observations ‘when there is the

⁵⁹ *paśyann ekam adṛṣṭasya darśane tadadarśane / apaśyan kāryam anveti vināpy ākhyātrbhir janaḥ. tasmāt tāv eva bhāvābhāvau kāryakāraṇatā yuktā. yasmāt paśyann ekam kāraṇābhimatam upalabdhilakṣaṇaprāptasyādṛṣṭasya kāryākhyasya darśane sati yat paśyan dṛṣṭavāms tadadarśane sati apaśyan kāryābhimatam kāryam anvetīdam ato bhavatīti pratipadyate vināpy ākhyātrbhir janaḥ, ata idaṃ bhavatīty ākhyātāram antareṇa janaḥ. saṅketād anvetīty api vārttaḥ. tathā hi na bhāvābhāvābhyām anyat saṅke- te ‘pi pratipadyate. tasmād yatpratipattau yatpratipattiḥ, sa tasyārthaḥ. tad yathā śuklapaṭapratipattau śuklapratipatteḥ śauklyam. bhāvābhāvau ca pratipadyamānaḥ kāryakāraṇatām pratipadyata iti bhāvābhāvau kāryakāraṇatāpratipatter arthaḥ, nānyaḥ. syād etat— bhāvābhāvau sādhnam anyā kāryakāraṇatā sādhya. anyā cet, kin na tasyā rūpaṃ nirdiśyate. utpādyotpādakabhāvas tarhi rūpaṃ. tat kin nāmāntarād arthabhedo yenaivam ucyate. tathā hy utpādyotpādakabhāvo janyajanakabhāvāḥ kāryakāraṇabhāva ity evamādayaḥ paryāyāḥ (SPV: 13).*

⁶⁰ *darśanādarśane muktva kāryabuddher asambhavāt / kāryādīrutir apy atra lāghavārthaṃ niveśitā. tasmād darśanādarśane viśayiṇā viśayapradarśanād bhāvābhāvau muktva kāryabuddher asambhavāt kāraṇat kāryādīrutir apy atra bhāvābhāvayor mā lokaḥ pratipadam iyantīm śabdāmālām abhidhād iti vyavahāralāghavārthaṃ niveśiteti (SPV: 14).*

⁶¹ It is worth noting that J.S. Mill’s “Method of Agreement and Difference” has been profitably compared to the Indian model of *anvayavyatireka*. As he writes in *A System of Logic*, “If two or more instances in which the phenomenon occurs have only one circumstance in common, while two or more instances in which it does not occur have nothing in common save the absence of that circumstance; the circumstance in which alone the two sets of instances differ, is the effect, or cause, or a necessary part of the cause, of the phenomenon” (1843, vol. I. (in Parker: 463 [https://www.gutenberg.org/files/26495/26495-pdf.pdf]). Cf. also Matilal (1998: 17) and Tillemans (2004: 265–269) on this connection.

presence of rain, the sidewalk is wet’ and ‘when there is not rain, the sidewalk is not wet,’ one infers that some necessary causal ‘relation’ exists between the subject rain and predicate wetness.⁶² The point here is that the properties of ‘presence and absence’ upon which the assertion of relation is based are not themselves *actually co-present*—since the presence of an absent term does not make sense. Instead, they are alternatively conceptually contrasted in dependence upon the practical context, namely, for the sake of making a warranted inference or remembering the initial impartation of a specific convention.

However, given the fact that the inferential properties upon which one judges a causal relation—viz., presence and absence—are baked into the bare conceptual apprehension of a particular existent, we are entitled to practically infer ‘this effect comes from that cause’ without anybody having to explicitly *explain* the relational form of causal judgments. In other words, the properties that provide the inferential basis for the conceptual judgment of a causal ‘relation’ coextend with the designation of something that is *merely present* as the so-called ‘effect’ of some correlative absent ‘cause.’⁶³ In every case, grasping the relational form reduces to merely grasping a certain *conceptual contrast* inherent in the conventional determination thereof—not a self-standing, objective *thing* in the world we can point to and say ‘here’s the causal relation.’ Hence the judgment of a relational ‘thing’—one we presumably interpretively construct to *make sense* of the impermanent nature of real occurrences—does not bear any semantic *content* over and above the conceptual association of the existential properties of two different terms.

⁶² This is a condensed expression of a more comprehensive theory of inferential knowledge based on moments of perception and non-perception. More specifically, knowledge of the *kāryahetu*, viz., a causal ‘co-incidence’ between two distinct signs, is a 3 or 5 step theory of ascertainment (cf. Kajiyama: 1989). Gillon summarizes: “[A] sequence of five simple non-relational observations results in relational knowledge. For example, one observes (1) first that a place has neither smoke nor fire; (2) then, when fire is brought, that place has fire yet no smoke; (3) next, that the place has both smoke and fire; (4) then, when the fire is removed, that the place has smoke yet no fire; and (5) finally, that the place has neither smoke nor fire” (1991: 58). According to Dharmakīrti, we can thus validly infer the existence of fire based on smoke when these five observational criteria are fulfilled.

⁶³ Obviously, for the Buddhist, it is soteriologically critical that this is not a logically necessary relational construction.

In the ensuing discussion in Devendra’s commentary (absent in the SPVy (cf. Jha: 29)), he entertains an objector, who claims that even if this concept of the causal ‘relation’ does not require another person to indicate it, we can still infer (*anveti*) that it exists. The Buddhist emphasizes that this just means the notion of relation is no different from the notion of a universal property: Just as we understand the concept of white for conventional purposes, though no general fact of ‘whiteness’ exists above and beyond the apprehension of a particular cloth, so too do we infer a *kāryakāraṇabhāva* when no actual relation obtains between a particular existent and its causal properties.⁶⁴ A relation is thus always indirectly apprehended; one does not *directly* perceive it, that is, but infers something *like it* must exist on the basis of observing *something else* whose actual nature does not ultimately correspond to a *dviṣṭha*-thing. Accordingly, general terms like ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ are only employed to ease communication, such that we do not need to describe the logical form of *anvayavyatireka* in detail with respect to each instance of presence and absence.

Tellingly, in the latter part of the *vṛtti* on 13, an interlocutor suggests that maybe presence and absence represent a premise in a syllogism, while the entailment of cause and effect represent ‘something else’; in other words, not a strict *identity* between the nature of cause and

⁶⁴ Consider, in this regard, the fact that Dharmakīrti’s theory of radical momentariness entails that all the essential properties of instances are not actually distinct from the instances themselves. More specifically, since Dharmakīrti views universal predicates and relations as hypostasized entities, all conceptual properties imposed upon a thing must emerge and perish at the same instant as the thing itself; the causes that bring the thing into being are also responsible for the perception of its effects: *na hi tasmin niṣpanne aniṣpanno bhinnahetuko vā tatsvabhāvo yuktaḥ* (PVSV 20, 20-21; cf. Dunne: 96). “It is not correct that when something is established, an unestablished property is a property of that thing; not can there be [a property] with distinct causes from the nature of thing that is a property of that thing.” This causal closure between properties and nominal particulars plays an important role in proving the existence of momentariness for Dharmakīrti. For instance, in the PV 1.54, Dharmakīrti uses the same sorts of regress arguments of the SP against the Vaiśeṣika to show that the capacities attributed to the universal predicates of an object cannot ultimately be distinct from the object itself: *dharmā upakāra śaktīnām bhede tās tasya kiṃ yadi / na upakāras tatas tāsām tathā syād anavasthitiḥ*. “If those capacities that assist the properties are distinct [from the property-possessor], how could they belong to the [capacity-possessor] if it does not assist them? There would be infinite regress.” (The Vaiśeṣikas are singled out according to Śākyabuddhi, who writes in the PVT: *yang bye brag pa rnam ni spyi don gzhan gyis dngos po rnam mtshungs par ‘dod de / de yang bsal ba’i phyir don gzhan yang zhes bya ba la sogs pa smos te*. “And the Vaiśeṣikas accept a similarity amongst real entities because of a separate universal (*spyi don gzhan*)...” (cf. Eltschinger, et al., 2018: 32))

effect and the conceptual conjunction of presence and absence, but rather an inference that leads *from* a certain premise *to* a conclusion with a distinct logical form. But Devendra argues that this inferential form still just represents an analytic entailment—no extensional distinction obtains between the two descriptions such that a separate logical form could be practically indicated. He therefore emphasizes that the relation of cause and effect is effectively synonymous with the existential relation between producer and produced, or generator and generated—that is, empirical notions predicated on the successive presence and absence of distinct terms. For Dharmakīrti and Devendra, the conceptual content associated with a particular causal ‘relation’ and the general concomitance of presence and absence are semantically coextensive. Or rather, there is *nothing else* to the *actual referent* of a particular causal ‘relation’ *other than* a general idea inferred based on the concomitant presence and absence of two intrinsically distinct terms. Hence these verses serve to highlight Dharmakīrti’s implicit assimilation of *causal relations* to a kind of *universal concept* that could, in principle, function as a categorematic referent; or, at the very least, he endorses the notion that the same type of cognitive mechanisms that generate the apprehension of *universals* (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) are also responsible for the impression of causal relations. Much like Bradley in Chapter I, for Dharmakīrti, relations are not concretely or directly felt as causally efficacious or substantive existents.

b. The Conceptual Construction of Causal Relations

Dharmakīrti proceeds to explain that the relative term ‘effect’ represents a conceptual designation for something simply present to the senses. In the same way that we perceive particular characteristics and then conceptually construct the general idea of a ‘cow,’ so too is the

relative notion of something being the ‘effect’ of a distinct ‘cause’ a sort of general ‘whole’ predicated on the observation of distinct ‘parts’:

15. *Whatever idea of ‘effect’ of that [object] is described due to the presence of that [other] existent⁶⁵ is designated an object of convention. This is just like the idea of a ‘cow’ based on a dewlap, etc.*

[Opponent:] If it is said that cause and effect is nothing other than positive and negative concomitance, then how is that [idea] established [merely] in virtue of presence and absence?

[Reply:] **The idea of ‘effect’ of that [object] due to the presence of that [other] existent** (i.e., due to inferring the idea of an effect of that [object] on account of presence when that [other] exists)—viz., **whatever is described** as “this is the effect of this cause”—**is designated an object of convention.** What is described by ‘that which exists when that is present’ is just the conventional object of cause and effect, not a different referent. What is this like? **Just like the idea of a cow based on a dewlap, etc.,** i.e., just as when the object of the expression “cow” is indicated by expressions such as “this is a cow because it has a dewlap and so forth.”⁶⁶

Devendra’s interlocutor suggests that if the cause-and-effect relation solely amounts to an inference based on positive and negative concomitance, then we still have the problem of how this prior conventional conception comes about through mere existential properties of terms that have no necessary logical relationship. Devendra maintains that a certain inferential sign, or reason (*liṅga*), leads one to the relative quality of a particular existent (*bhāva*), which can be exhaustively defined with sole reference to the bare presence of said existent—in other words, not a concomitant presence *and* absence of a correlative ‘cause.’ The mere perception of a present existent, then, conceptually marks the object in a manner that corresponds to the predicative judgment ‘this is an *effect* of such-and-such cause.’ But this relational form

⁶⁵ Despite the general concord between Shastri (1972) and Jha’s (1990) edition vs. Steinkellner’s recent (2022) critical edition of the SP and the SPV, one egregious discrepancy brought to light occurs in this verse. In particular, the former reads “tadbhāvābhāvāt,” whose full verse Jha renders as “You have explained that in the presence *and* absence of cause one gets the knowledge of (presence and absence of) effect. This is nothing but the object of *saṅketa* (for usage) as cow is understood on the basis of (the *saṅketa* of) *sāsnā*, etc” (33). Steinkellner’s edition, however, reads a short ‘a’ in the compound (i.e., tadbhāvabhāvāt), thus reading (as I have rendered it) “*described due to the presence of that existent.*” Devendra’s commentary corroborates the legitimacy of this reading (**tadbhāve bhāvāl** *liṅgāt*) as opposed to Shastri’s edition (*tadbhāvābhāvāt*). Clearly, not only is this gloss incorrect, but the entire semantic content of the verse hinges on this distinction.

⁶⁶ *tadbhāvabhāvāt tatkāryagatir yāpy anuvarṇyate / saṅketaviṣayākhyā sā sāsnāder gogatir yathā. nānyā ‘nvayavyatirekābhyāṃ kāryakāraṇatā. nānyā cet, katham bhāvābhāvābhyāṃ sā prasādhyate. tadbhāve bhāvāl liṅgāt tatkāryagatiḥ, yasya bhāve bhāvas tasya kāryasya gatiḥ, yāpy anuvarṇyate asyedaṃ kāryaṃ kāraṇaṃ ceti, saṅketaviṣayākhyā sā. yad etad anuvarṇanaṃ tadbhāvabhāvātvena kāryakāraṇasaṅketaviṣayākhyānam etad, nārthabhedāḥ. kim iva. sāsnāder gogatir yathā. yathā gaur ayaṃ sāsnādimattvād ity anena govyavahārasya viṣayaḥ pradarśyate (SPV: 15).*

represents a formal whole abstracted from the separate observations of distinct occurrences, just like the conventional notion of a ‘cow’ is based on the observation of its constitutive parts; the causal relation is not a distributed referent in the objective world that metaphysically ‘straddles’ properties of presence and absence.⁶⁷

Devendra frames the next verse in terms of another implied objector, who pushes back against identifying the causal *relation* with mere perception of the presence and absence of an entity; reference to a *single thing* bearing the qualities of presence and absence does not entitle one to infer that it is a respective ‘effect’ of any separate *cause*. The employment of causal language therefore has some other rational basis, because if we predicate the relative quality (*upādhi*) of ‘presence’ or ‘absence’ to any one term, the distinct predicates still represent attributes of a *single entity*—not correlative referents. The object itself is not, strictly speaking, a cause or effect, because these are constitutively relative terms based on *two sets of properties*: The qualities of presence and absence as predicated of both the particular ‘cause’ and the particular ‘effect’ (e.g., rain and wetness). Hence the properties of presence and absence associated with a particular phenomenon do not themselves reflect either the cause or the effect exclusively, but rather the presences and absences of both taken *together*.

Devendra proceeds to explain that the self-contained ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ each bear *their own* respective qualities of presence and absence; neither exclusively bears either property, and thus the notion of a ‘relation’ can still rationally coincide with a sequence of perceptions and non-perceptions in accord with the presence and absence of single terms:

⁶⁷ We can consider this verse in relation to the well-known equivocation that occurs in the third book of the PV 3.333, which we discussed in the previous chapter. If Dharmakīrti’s system slides from Sautrāntika to Yogācāra, the middle verses of the SP can be viewed as a positive affirmation and extension of his noncommittal conclusion (‘*astu yathā tathā*’); that is to say, insofar as we conventionally take it that causality consists of a *relation* between two events, the debate over whether Dharmakīrti viewed causality as merely conventional or not is decisive in favor of the former.

16. Through perception and non-perception, the presence of that [cause] when that entity [i.e., effect] comes into being, and the coming into being [of the effect] only when that [i.e., cause] is present, establish [the properties of] ‘cause’ and ‘effect.’⁶⁸

It could be said that if presence and absence are [the properties of] being cause and effect, [then] ‘cause-ness’ and ‘effect-ness’ refer to a presence and absence situated in both of them. Otherwise, how could mere *presence* be a cause or effect? [The qualities of] cause or effect are not situated in both the presence of an existent and absence of a non-existent, but would have to be the state of [relation of] cause and effect.

[Reply:] That is not correct. Even if situated in both, the earlier presence and absence—which is a particular presence and absence of a successor—is the ‘cause,’ [and] the subsequent presence and absence—which is a particular presence and absence of the earlier—is the ‘effect.’ For **when that existent comes into being**, i.e., when that being possesses the character of existence, **there is the presence of that**, i.e., the existence of the supposed ‘cause.’ The condition that [the effect appears] ‘**only when that [cause] is present**’ obtains in this case as well. Thereby the distinction [between the two] is indicated. **And the coming into being** of the supposed ‘effect’ **when there is** the supposed ‘cause’ is the [property of] ‘effect-ness’; thus, ‘**cause**’ and ‘**effect**’ are established through **perception and non-perception**. For this very reason, presence and absence are [the qualities of] cause and effect, nothing else.⁶⁹

The locatives here indicate that the critical point for Devendra involves the discrete temporality of the causal sequence: the observation of presence and absence attributed to the ‘cause’ only refers to the self-contained properties of a particular entity; likewise, the successive ‘effect,’ bears *its own properties* of presence and absence *independently* of those previously attributed to the supposed cause. It is not, therefore, that absence corresponds to ‘cause’ and presence to ‘effect,’ such that causality (*qua anvayavyatireka*) *actually* reflects an existentially relative

⁶⁸ Cf. Steinkellner’s translation of this verse: “Dharmakīrti clearly points out in SP 16a-c that being cause and being effect are conventionally known as ‘the presence of that (entity) when an entity is to come about, and the character of coming about only when (this entity) is present’ (*bhāve bhāvini tadbhāvo bhāva eva ca bhāvitā*)” (2022: xx). He claims that this verse refutes Torella and Frauwallner, who both thought, following Utpala’s summation of the SP in ĪPK I 2.10cd (*nānyo ’sti sambandhaḥ kāryakāraṇabhāvataḥ*) that Dharmakīrti exempts the causal relation from his deconstruction. (“Daher gibt es keine andere Verbindung als das Verhältnis von Ursache und Wirkung” (Frauwallner 1962: k.15, p.34); “There is no relation other than that of cause and effect” (Torella 1994: 95).) However, Steinkellner (citing personal communications with Ratié (f.34)) argues that this interpretation is incorrect. He proposes that we should thus read ĪPK I 2.10cd as, “There is no other relation than the presence (*bhāva*) of (either) cause (or) effect” or as “than being (either) cause (or) effect” (2022: xx). The content of SS supports this reading, for Utpala’s defense of the causal relation (albeit on typical *idealistic* grounds) makes clear that he did not believe Dharmakīrti exempted it from his relational eliminativism.

⁶⁹ *bhāve bhāvini tadbhāvo bhāva eva ca bhāvitā / prasiddhe hetuphalate pratyakṣānupalambhataḥ*. syād etat—bhāvābhāvayoḥ kāryakāraṇatve kāraṇatvaṃ kevalam kāryatvaṃ cobhayagatabhāvābhāvāpekṣam. anyathā katham bhāvamātraṃ kāraṇam kāryam vā. na ca bhavator abhavatoś ca bhāvābhāvāv ubhayagatau kāryatvaṃ kāraṇatvam vā. kāryakāraṇatā tu syād iti. tan na. ubhayagatatve ’py uttarabhāvābhāvaviśeṣaṇau pūrvasya bhāvābhāvau kāraṇatvam. pūrvasya bhāvābhāvaviśeṣaṇāv uttarasya bhāvābhāvau kāryatvam. tathā hi **bhāve bhāvini** bhavanadharmiṇi bhāve **tadbhāvaḥ** kāraṇābhimatasya bhāvaḥ. **bhāva evetīhāpy** avadhāraṇam. anena vyatireka ākṣiptaḥ. kāraṇābhimatasya **bhāva eva ca bhāvitā** kāryābhimatasya kāryatvam iti **prasiddhe pratyakṣānupalambhato hetuphalate**. yata evaṃ bhāvābhāvāv eva kāryakāraṇatā, nānyā (SPV: 16).

determination at rock-bottom. Instead, each existent bears its own internal properties of presence and absence that conventionally mark it as a relative cause and/or effect in certain practical contexts. For Dharmakīrti, then, using the method of *anvayavyatireka* to establish a causal correlation between two objects is all good; but it is a fool’s errand to search for some kind of *ontological* connection between the objects that appear from one moment to the next.

The final two verses on the epistemology of the causal relation summarize Dharmakīrti’s eliminativist results apropos its conceptually constructed nature.

17. In virtue of objects that are real merely to this extent, conceptual constructions, whose scope is cause and effect, make things appear as if connected with unreal referents.

Therefore, [it is said] **in virtue of objects that are real merely to this extent**: ‘Merely to this extent’ [means the qualities of] presence and absence, [which belong to] that referent whose true state is just these two [qualities], [and so] is real merely to this extent. Those conceptual constructions with such an object have a referent that is real merely to this extent. Why? [Because] **the scope of cause and effect** have as their basis merely this: These [conceptualizations] **make things** that are not related **appear as if connected**, i.e., as if they were related. And, on account of this [conceptual] manner of connection, the **referents are unreal**.⁷⁰

18. If they are separate, what is the connection? And if they are not separate, how is there cause and effect? For even if some other [term] were present, how could those two disjuncts become conjoined?

[Opponent:] Is it the case that an unreal relation is shown by those [conceptions] which [show] false objects?

[Reply:] That is indeed so. Since here there are two [possible] conceptualizations: [that is,] things being connected as a cause and effect would either be *distinct* or *not distinct*. If distinct, **what connection can exist if they are distinct?** There is none, because each abides in its own nature. On the other hand, if they are *not* distinct, how could there even be a **cause and effect [relation] when [things] are not distinct?** Due to the absence of something incomplete, i.e., something to be done, it is distinct from the cause. So how again is there a connection between those two?

[Opponent:] It could be that there is no relationship between what is either strictly distinct or not distinct.

[Reply:] How then?

[Opponent:] On account of a relationship with a single (entity) called “a relation.”

[Reply:] Even in this case, **given the real existence of another** called ‘a relation’, **how would these two disjuncts**, supposedly ‘cause’ and ‘effect,’ **become joint?** It could not be. That very thing called a

⁷⁰ *etāvanmātratattvārthāḥ kāryakāraṇagocarāḥ / vikalpā darśayanty arthān mithyārthā ghaṭitān iva. tenaitāvanmātratattvārthāḥ. etāvanmātraṃ bhāvābhāvau. tāv eva tattvaṃ bhūtaṃ yasyārthasyāsāv etāvanmātratattvaḥ. so ’rtho yeṣāṃ vikalpānāṃ ta etāvanmātratattvārthāḥ. kim. etāvanmātrabījāḥ kāryakāraṇagocarāḥ. te darśayanti ghaṭitān iva sambaddhān ivāsambaddhān arthān. evaṃ ghaṭanāc ca mithyārthāḥ* (SPV: 17).

relation would be something different. Again, given the existence of some other [term], there can be no union of natures—thus, how could there be a real relation?⁷¹

The language here strongly echoes Bradley’s intelligibility conditions for relation: Whether separate (when ‘abiding in their own nature’), or unified (when ‘there is nothing incomplete to be done’) an objective notion of ‘relation’ simply makes no sense. And if we add a third thing called ‘relation’ into the mix to render the situation conceptually tractable, we wind up with the characteristic regress. Hence the causal relation is not real. Note, however, that in the case of *causal* relations *specifically*, no relation obtains from the perspective of a ‘cause’ because the effect *does not exist* relative thereto: “Due to the absence of something incomplete, i.e., something to be done, it is distinct from the cause.” It is not, that is, because the relata are self-contained *actualities* in this case, but rather because there is *literally* no ‘other’ place whereby a dyadic relation could possibly be situated. Devendra thus once again reminds us that Dharmakīrti intends to treat external relations between synchronous terms in the same way he treats external relations between actual and non-actual relata: namely, as implicitly symmetrical relations, just insofar as the intrinsic natures of the particulars do not change in either case. Whether the ‘cause’ or ‘effect’ abides with other synchronous *actualities*; or whether we choose to conceptually regard a present existent relative to some asynchronous *future*; in neither case does the internal constitution of the actual ‘cause’ *depend upon* the proposed relatum. And, as we have seen, it is precisely for this reason that the ‘effect’ of an impersonal *cause* and the conceptual ‘referent’ of a sentient *agent* represent similarly incoherent forms of necessary dyadic dependence. In other

⁷¹ *bhinne kā ghaṭanā ’bhinne kāryakāraṇatāpi kā / bhāve hy anyasya viśliṣṭau śliṣṭau syātām katham ca tau.* kim abhūtaḥ sambandhaḥ pradarśyate tair yena mithyārthāḥ. evam etat. tathā hy atra dvayī kalpanā. sambadhyamānaḥ kāryakāraṇabhūto ’rtho bhinno ’bhinno vā syāt. yadi bhinnāḥ, **bhinne kā ghaṭanā.** naiva, svasvabhāvavyavasthiteḥ. athābhinnas, **abhinne kāryakāraṇatāpi kā.** naiva, anīṣannasya kartavyasya kāraṇād vyatiriktasyābhāvāt. kutaḥ punar dvayor ghaṭanā. syād etat — na bhinnasyābhinnasya vā kevalasya sambandhaḥ, kin tarhi, sambandhākhyenaikena sambandhād iti. atrāpi **bhāve** sattāyām **anyasya** sambandhākhyasya **viśliṣṭau** kāryakāraṇābhimateau **śliṣṭau syātām katham.** naiva. sa eva sambandhākhyo ’paraḥ syāt. na punas tadbhāve ’nyasya kasyacit svabhāvasamsarga iti kuto bhāvataḥ sambandhaḥ (SPV: 18).

words, they both ‘depend’ in a purely notional or conceptual sense because in *ultimate* terms there cannot be any *real* state of *virtual* ‘incompletion’—viz., or a real ‘intentional’ expectation (*apekṣā*) towards something *to be done*—, for this simply contradicts the thoroughgoing *actuality* of real existents.

4. Grammatical Relations (19-25)

a. Inherence and Predication

In the next set of SP verses, Dharmakīrti implicitly takes aim at the grammatical realists like the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, asserting that the results of the previous arguments apply equally to the relations of inherence (*samavāya*) and conjunction (*saṃyoga*) (19-22). He also investigates the logical concept of ‘semantic compatibility,’ or ‘suitability’ (23-24) that was developed and utilized by grammatical philosophers to explain a causal conditions for understanding the modal structure of sentential content. And, in the final concluding verse (25), he dispatches with the genitive relation (*śaṣṭhī*), which I have chosen to include here among ‘grammatical relations’ just insofar as it represents a form that only shows up in the context of language.

In the second chapter, we discussed that ‘conjunction’ (*saṃyoga*) and ‘inherence’ (*samavāya*) represent the two relations the Vaiśeṣika accepted. Technically speaking, though, only *samavāya* was a *padārtha*, or fundamental ontological category, as *saṃyoga* denoted a type of *guṇa*, or quality, which was its own category of dependent properties. To appreciate Devendra’s commentary, one should keep in mind that *samavāya* here represents a type of *causal* relation. Specifically, inherence is a relation of producer-produced—e.g., ‘that cloth [producer] *is* white [produced].’ The qualified form of the cognition of whiteness depends upon the concrete substance of the cloth for its instantiation and transmission. Predictably, then, the

Buddhist reduces predication to a relation between a substantial producer and its produced properties, and then proceeds to dispatch with inherence according to the same reductive treatment levelled against the causal relation in the previous verses:

19. *Something conjoined, inherent, etc., are all considered in this manner because there is neither mutual assistance nor any such relatum.*

‘**Something conjoined, inherent, etc.**’: By the mention of ‘etc.’ here, the possessor-possessed relation, e.g., is included. **All [relations] are considered in this manner** (i.e., by what was just expressed in the passage of the general rejection of relations); there is no actual relation that consists in conjunction, etc. First of all, inherent things are not in a state of relation, like the white quality that is inherent in a cloth, **because there is neither mutual assistance** on the part of those two (i.e., because there is no producer-produced relation) **nor is there any such relatum** that consists of something inherent, viz., as there is no assister, nor anything assisted. What is assisted by something refers to that which assists it, and what it refers to has a relationship thereof; but the white and the cloth are not like this, because they are established in themselves. There is also no relation of subject and predicate (*ādhārādheyabhāva*) with respect to what isn’t cause and effect, and when there is a relation of cause and effect, that [same] error obtains. If there is a relation of cause and effect, the conceptualization of a relation between white and cloth is also improper, due to the relation of subject and predicate. That is to say, there is no general (*laukika*) relation of these two *qua* subject and predicate. And, if the subject-predicate relation were characterized by producer and produced, it would not be a relation characterized by inherence that obtains between a universal and its substrate, which are not mutually assisted nor assisting.⁷²

Given that inherence is a causal relation, Devendra denies *samavāya* on the grounds that no ‘assistance’ really obtains between the supposed relata, as the abstract *guṇa* (‘whiteness’) and the particular *dravya* (‘cloth’) are self-contained, mutually oppositional categories for the Vaiśeṣika realists. This coextension of inherence with causality enables Devendra to subject the relational unity of the predicate to the same deconstruction already thoroughly established for causal dependence; here, once again, it is the independence of intrinsic nature that ensures the conceptual content of qualified judgment amounts to the same sort of ‘relation’ as the apparent

⁷² *saṃyogisamavāyīyādi sarvam etena cintitam / anyonyānupakārāc ca na sambandhī ca tādrśaḥ // saṃyogisamavāyīyādi. ādigrahaṇena svasvāmyādi. sarvam etenānantaroktena sāmānyena sambandhapraṭiśedhakena granthena cintitam na saṃyogādīlakṣaṇo vastutaḥ sambandho ’stīti. samavāyīnas tāvan na sambandhitā, yathā śauklyam guṇaḥ paṭe samavetam. anayor anyonyam parasparam anupakārād ajanyajanakabhāvāt kāraṇāt samavāyīlakṣaṇo na sambandhī ca tādrśo ’nupakāryānupakārahūtaḥ. tathā hi yo yena upakāryaḥ sa tam apekṣate, yañ cāpekṣate tena tasya sambandhaḥ. na caivam śuklapaṭayoḥ, svarūpasiddheḥ. ādhārādheyabhāvo ’pi nākāryakāraṇabhūtaḥ, kāryakāraṇabhāve ca tadbhāvī doṣaḥ. kāryakāraṇabhāve saty ādhārādheyabhāvāt śuklapaṭayoḥ sambandhakalpanāpy asādhvī. tathā hi na tayor laukika ādhārādheya bhāvo ’sti. janyajanakalakṣaṇe cādhārādheyabhāve sāmānyatadvatoḥ parasparam anupakāryopakārayoḥ samavāyīlakṣaṇaḥ sambandho na syāt (SPV: 19).*

dependence of an ‘effect’ on its previous ‘cause.’ The point is that, for the Buddhist, the fact that the logical form of the causal relation between producer-produced does not differ from the form of predicative judgment only goes to reinforce the purely conventional nature of the causal relation itself; that is, there is no objective or external relational form in this case, because we predicate instances of producer-produced relations in accord with our own practical interests (viz., not an objective reality with its own form).

In the next two verses, Dharmakīrti and Devendra once again appeal to the discrete temporality of causal entities in their rebuttal of *samavāya*, and the fallacies that result when the conventionally dependent status of inherence becomes reified as a categorical referent. Devendra’s commentary fleshes out the implied interlocutor that prompts the verse:

20. *For even if an effect were produced in virtue of a certain inherent [whole] (samavāyin), that [whole] would not be something inherent; [namely,] it would not be [inherent] from that [production] due to the fallacy of over-extension.*

It could be said that there is a certain inherent [whole] which produces the form of [another] partite whole known as ‘an effect.’ Accordingly, since it is not an assistant [i.e., since it produces an independent whole], it is not, in this case, unrelated.

[Reply:] **For even if one assumes an effect is so produced in virtue of some inherent [whole], that [whole] would not be something inherent**, viz., because there is no contact between two [things] due to the incompleteness of what is to be produced at the time of the production; [and] because even when the effect is fully complete, there is the disappearance of a cause; and, if the cause has not disappeared, it is because there is no assistant-assisted relation between two co-occurrent [entities]. Or [simply] let something be inherent! **It would not be**, however, from production (i.e., for the reason [given]). Why? **Due to the fallacy of over-extension**; in this case, even potters and so on would be related due to the production of the pot!⁷³

The initial objector in 20ab suggests that we need not consider inherence a dependence relation like cause and effect. Rather, the ‘effect,’ in this case, is a whole object itself—self-existent and complete in its parts. This means it is not a term whose semantic status *depends* upon the primary

⁷³ *janane 'pi hi kāryasya kenacit samavāyinā / samavāyī tadā nāsau na tato 'tiprasaṅgataḥ // syād etad – asti kaścit samavāyī yo 'vayavirūpam kāryākhyam janayati. tena nānupakārād asambandhiteti. evañ janane 'pi hi kāryasya kenacit samavāyinābhyupagamyamāne nāsau samavāyī tadā, jananakāle janyasyāniṣpatter, dvayor asamavāyāt, niṣpanne 'pi kārye kāraṇasya tirodhānāt, atirobhāve ca samavahitayor upakāryopakārakabhāvābhāvāt. bhavatu vā kaścit samavāyī, na tu tato jananaṭ kāraṇāt. kiṃ kāraṇam. atiprasaṅgataḥ, kumbhakārāder api ghaṭasya jananaṭ sambandhitāpatteḥ (SPV: 20)*

subject of predication (*ākāṅkṣā*). Accordingly, the relational property of being an assistant does not enter the discussion, because two complete wholes do not bear this relatively defined property. Devendra makes clear that Dharmakīrti is implicitly banking on the doctrine of momentariness to refute this notion: For inherence cannot represent a cause-and-effect relation between two compounded wholes insofar as the assister-and-assisted do not exist *at the same time*. And if they are both simultaneously *complete*, then they *ipso facto* do not stand in such a relation of dependence for the ‘effect’ is fully realized. If we entertain the idea that *samavāya* still obtains once a fully formed effect exists on its own, then one winds up with absurdities like a potter that inheres in the pot s/he produces. Insofar as we can reduce the inherence relation strictly to one of cause and effect, the arguments against the *kāryakāraṇabhāva* carry over, *mutatis mutandis*, to the case of inherence.

In the next verse, the *pūrvapakṣa* concedes the *siddhāntin*’s points, but tries to affirm the existence of a form of inherence between two wholes that still exist independently of one another. In this case, the inherence relation is itself a permanent entity that does not disappear after the assistance from its causal factors:

21. If there were [still] a relation even when those two [wholes] do not assist with respect to inherence or another [entity], then everything would be mutually inherent.

Lest this fault be met [the following is said]: **There is [still] a ‘relation’** acknowledged **even when those two** inherent [wholes] **do not** mutually **assist**; and **when** those two relata do not assist **with respect to inherence** due to its permanence; **or** even if those two do not assist **with respect to another [entity]** anywhere. In that case, **everything that exists**, viz., the entire universe that is mutually unrelated, **would be mutually inherent**. But this is not the case. Therefore, in this way, there is no inherence given the assertion of either assistance or non-assistance. And there is no other possible mode [of inherence]. This also addresses the [relation of] conjuncts.⁷⁴

⁷⁴*tayor anupakāre ’pi samavāye paratra vā / sambandho yadi viśvaṃ syāt samavāyi parasparam // atha mā bhūḍ eṣa doṣa iti tayoh samavāyinoḥ parasparam anupa-kāre ’pi, tābhyāṃ sambandhibhyāṃ anupakāre ca samavāye, nityatvāt tasya, tābhyāṃ samavāye ca paratra vā kvacid anupakāre ’pi, sambandho yadiśyate, tadā viśvaṃ sarvaṃ jagat parasparāsambaddhaṃ samavāyi parasparam syāt. na caivam. tasmād evam upakārānupakārapakṣe na samavāyo ’sti. na cānyaḥ prakāraḥ sambhavati. anena saṃyogināv api pratyuktau (SPV: 21).*

Dharmakīrti and Devendra invoke the common-sense rebuttal of Rorty and Moore in Chapter I apropos the absurdity of the present suggestion: For in the absence of any directional parameters *vis-à-vis* the typically unidirectional assistance of producer-to-produced, or subject-to-predicate, there would be no way to restrict the scope of a particular instance of inherence; in which case, the assistance of *samavāya* would obtain between the effect-to-cause as much as the cause-to-effect. Everything in the universe would therefore interpenetrate everything else in a state of absolute symmetrical interdependence. Given the mutual exclusion of real particulars, of course, Dharmakīrti finds this notion patently unacceptable.

b. Conjunction and Motion

The next verse of this section chooses to explicate Devendra’s proleptic remark that the other Vaiśeṣika relation of *saṃyoga*, or spatial conjunction, has thereby also been undermined—for this is type of quality (*guṇa*) of both entities that practically supervenes on *samavāya* in the Vaiśeṣika system.

22. Even if they produce a conjunction, those two are not subsequently accepted as being connected, because of the fault that things like motion, etc., would (also) be connected; additionally, remaining [in place] has been refuted elsewhere.

Moreover, since conjunction is an effect, if these two are both connected due to the production of that [effect], then **even if they produce conjunction, those two are not subsequently accepted as being connected**, i.e., [simply] due to the fact that they produce a conjunction.

[Opponent:] Why?

[Reply:] **Because of the fault that things like motion, etc., would (also) be connected.** If there is also a conjunct due to production of conjunction, motion would also be a state of conjunction. For in that case, conjunction is taken to be produced from the motion of both [or] produced by the motion of either one. By the mention of “**etc.**,” the state of conjunction would also obtain in regard to conjunction [itself] since this is also acknowledged as produced by conjunction.

One might say that there is no state of being a conjunct that results from the production of conjunction; rather, it is “due to remaining in place.”

[Reply:] This is not correct. **Additionally, remaining [in place] has been refuted elsewhere.**

[Namely,] this has been confuted in the *Pramāṇavārttika*, which states that there is no additional ‘remaining’ because the relationship of producer-produced obtains with respect to situating-situated.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ *saṃyogajanane ’pīṣṭau tataḥ saṃyogināu na tau / karmādiyogitāpatteḥ sthitiś ca prativarṇitā //* api ca saṃyogasya kāryatvāt tābhyām tajjananāt saṃyogitā yadi tayoh, tadaivam **saṃyogajanane ’pīṣṭau tataḥ** saṃyogajanāt kāraṇān **na tau saṃyogināu**. kiṃ kāraṇam. **karmādiyogitāpatteḥ**. yadi saṃyoga- jananāt saṃyogī

The verse affirms that if two entities produce a separate state of conjunction, that does not mean that they are thereby really connected, viz., that any real connection obtains *between them* as an independent reality. For there is no status of something's *being* a 'conjunct' above and beyond the perceptual quality of two things coming together via motion. This is not a real relation because there isn't an enduring, distinct 'state of conjunction' that brings these two together other than the *guṇa* of *karma* itself, which can inhere in each of them taken separately. Recall that a sufficient condition to produce conjunction according to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika school is that motion inheres in *at least* one of the relata: e.g., if we consider the cue hitting a stationary ball on the pool table, the conjunction of the two balls was produced from the movement inherent in the cue ball alone. So, if the objector posits that *karma* itself is a conjunct, that becomes absurd, because the quality of conjunction can emerge from the *karma* of one object, or the other, or both. Thus, the perception of motional activity cannot itself be 'conjunction' because it is conventionally attributable to disparate circumstances that share no uniform referent, viz., an irreducible or necessary state of conjunction. When the objector then attempts to salvage 'conjunction' itself as a form of *sthiti* ('abiding,' 'enduring,' 'continuance,' 'placement'), Devendra invokes the PV, where the appearance of *sthiti* is thoroughly deconstructed via radical momentariness.⁷⁶ Here, the relationship of something remaining

karmaṇo 'pi saṃyogitā syāt. tathā hy 'anyatarakarmaja ubhayakarmajaḥ saṃyoga iṣyate. ādigrahaṇena saṃyogasyāpi saṃyogitā syāt, yataḥ saṃyogajo 'pīṣyate 'sāv iti. **na** saṃyogajananāt saṃyogitā, kin tarhi, sthāpanād iti cet. tan na. **sthitiś ca prativarnitā**, sthāpyasthāpakayor janyajanakabhāvān nānyā sthitiḥ iti pramāṇavārttike pratikṣiptā (SPV: 22).

⁷⁶ Dharmakīrti explains the conceptual nature of *sthiti* in several places. See, e.g., PV (II. 63-65) and compare PV (I.145) with PVS (71, 11-72, 10). In the latter, for instance, Dharmakīrti refutes the notion that particular entities produce universals (*sāmānya*) from causing them to be situated (*sthiti*) therein rather than simply producing them outright. On the basis of this analysis, he disproves the inherence of universals (*sāmānya*) in the real entities to which words refer (cf. Frauwallner (1933: 69-71/1982: 424-426) and Steinkellner (2022: 23, fn.7)). Alternatively, and perhaps more saliently, in his introduction of the *apoha* doctrine of conceptual exclusion in the first book of the PV, Dharmakīrti refutes the impression of *sthiti qua* 'duration.' He begins with the familiar refrain that all entities "abide in their own natures" (*svarūpasthiti*) and "do not mix with one another" (*nātmānaṃ pareṇa miśrayanti*). After an extended discussion of how particulars cause the universals associated with conceptual errors, Dharmakīrti

situated relative to a particular act of *situating* reflects nothing other than a conceptual imposition of the same misbegotten form as the real temporal ‘dependence’ of the produced on a producer.

*c. Semantic Suitability*⁷⁷

Since conjunction and disjunction represent the appearance and disappearance of a quality (*guṇa*) of a particular substance, the discussion on *saṃyoga* naturally leads to a consideration of the relation of semantic suitability—the semantic compatibility (*yogyatā*) of subject and predicate—in the next two *ślokas* (23-24). In the Nyāya context, the word ‘*yogyatā*’ means the relation of the qualifier (*viśeṣaṇa*) to the qualificant (*viśeṣya*).⁷⁸ In this capacity, *yogyatā* is

argues that even though a single entity is always apprehended in its entirety, we superimpose qualities onto this perception, as in the canonical example of mistaking mother-of-pearl for silver. In his auto-commentary, he likens this process of error to the imposition of duration onto successive moments: *tasmāt paśyan śukti-rūpaṃ viśiṣṭam eva paśyati / niścaya-pratyaya-vaikalyāt tv aniścinvan tat-sāmānyam paśyāmi iti manyate / tato asya rajata-samāropaḥ / tathā sadṛśā-para-apara-utpattyā alakṣita-nānāvasya tad-bhāva-samāropāt sthito-bhrāntiḥ*. “Therefore, perceiving the form mother-of-pearl, one perceives only its particular nature. But due to the defects of the conditions for [proper] ascertainment, one does not ascertain that [particular nature] and thinks ‘I perceive a commonality with that [silver].’ Therefore, there is the superimposition of silver onto that [mother-of-pearl]. Likewise, in regard to the unrecognized distinction [of successive moments], similar moments appear [rapidly] one after the other; due to the superimposition of the existence of [earlier moments onto later moments], there is the error of duration (*sthiti*)” (PVSV 26: 18-21) (see Eltschinger, et al., (2018)). Here, the impression of duration (*sthiti*) reflects a conceptual error (*bhrānti*) imposed upon a discrete sequence of externally related instants with no intrinsic extension. The refutation of *sthiti* again reinforces the categorical identity between relations and universals in Dharmakīrti’s system; just as we impose the concept of ‘silver’ onto the reality of mother-of-pearl, so too do we falsely impose the notion of ‘duration’ onto the reality of a succession of point-instants. Duration is likened to a static abstract category, one discernible through the causal process of conceptual exclusion. (Also, cf. Stcherbatsky (1932: 86-89) for a still-useful overview of Buddhist arguments for the instantaneousness of perception.)

⁷⁷ It is worth noting that these two *ślokas* and the final closing verse were only recently discovered, and were thus not in Shastri and Jha’s editions of the SP.

⁷⁸ Shaw formalizes the definition of *yogyatā* as conceived in classical Nyāya philosophy: “Let us consider the sentence ‘*a* has *F*.’ The word ‘*a*’ would generate the memory-cognition of *a* under a mode (say *m*) and the word ‘*F*’ would generate the memory-cognition of *F* under a mode (say *n*). Suppose there are three types of relation, namely, *R*, *S*, *T*, and the relation which relates *F* to *a* comes under the type *T*. If we know that neither *R* nor *S* relates *F* to *a*, then the sentence ‘*a* is *F*’ would generate the cognition of a^mTF^n . But the sentence would not generate the cognition of the specific relation with its particularity. The relation *T* which relates *F* to *a* will be cognised under a description. Hence it may be expressed by the definite description ‘The *T* which relates *F* to *a*’. In other words, the *T* will not be cognised as a mode of presentation (*prakāra*) of *F*” (2000: 278).

among the typical causal conditions for understanding the meaning of sentential content in Indian philosophy⁷⁹:

23. *Further, if something unsuitable becomes suitable as a locus for connection, etc., a contradiction obtains with regard to the insufficient [suitability] of [something] whose intrinsic nature is always suitable for connection.*

[Opponent:] If there is an idea of such things as conjunction, etc., without a [real] connection and so on, then the form of two disjuncts would also be that of two conjuncts. In the same manner, the form of the conjuncts is also the form of the disjuncts; likewise with respect to things that abide and do not abide. Why, then, isn't there the idea of conjunction, etc.? But this is not the case. Therefore, motions of separation and connection are the cause of the idea of conjunction, etc.

[Reply:] This is not correct, because the same refutation obtains [in your theory]. [That is,] even for you, isn't there inherence of things like conjunction, etc., in each of the disjuncts, etc., that possess the same form? If there are no disjuncts and conjuncts because the motion that produces them does not exist—well, if that's the case, why not motion and its causes as well? This is unanswerable. Therefore, you yourself would have to say precisely: **Something** with a form that is distinct, etc., **which was previously unsuitable, becomes suitable later on as a locus for connection etc.** Why? Since a **contradiction obtains**—i.e. it contradicts the inability to engage in connections such as conjunction, etc.—**with regard to [something] whose intrinsic nature is always suitable** for engaging in conjunction, etc. And so, we should also state the same—i.e., that a [real] conjunction, etc., is abandoned.⁸⁰

24. *Thus, the nature of that which is designated by 'its suitability' should be explained with words such as 'motion, connection, separation.' What is gained through other [purely conceptual] means of proceeding, etc.?*

Therefore, **the nature** of this object **designated by** the term **'suitability'** **should be explained with words such as "connection and separation"** i.e. by the terms "movement, disjunction and conjunction." So, **what is gained by other** pointless **means of proceeding, etc.,** that are [mere]

⁷⁹ Other conditions for sentential comprehension are the cognition of words, memories of objects, the cognition of the relation between a word and its referent, syntactic expectancy between the words (*ākāṅkṣā*), the co-existence of words (*āsatti*) and the intention of the speaker (*tātparyajñāna*) (cf. Shaw 2000: 173). The relation of compatibility of the qualifier and qualified as one such condition is discussed in Nyāya, Vedānta, and Bhartṛhari. Steinkellner (2022: 24, fn. 8) suggests that Dharmakīrti potentially means to address Bhartṛhari's conception of the relation between word and meaning with reference to the concept of suitability (*yogyatā*) (Cf. VP 3.3.29 and 31; Houben 1995a: 158, fn. 243). But it could also apply, I think, to the classical Nyāya conception of semantic compatibility. In any case, the invocation of *yogyatā* here at least coincides with Steinkellner's hunch that Dharmakīrti means to address grammatical forms of relation in these closing verses.

⁸⁰ *saṃyogādyaśraye yogyam ayogyam tac ca jāyate / nityayogyasvabhāvasya tadvaikalyavirodhataḥ // yadi saṃyogādīm antareṇa saṃyogādibuddhiḥ, vibhaktayor yad rūpaṃ tat samprayuktayor api. evaṃ samprayuktayor yad rūpaṃ tad vibhaktayor api sthitāsthitayoś ceti kin na saṃyogādibuddhiḥ. na caivam. tasmāt saṃyogavibhāgakarmāṇi saṃyogādibuddher nimittam iti cet. na, tulyaparyanuyogataḥ. tavāpi tulyarūpasya vibhaktādeḥ kin na saṃyogādisamavāyaḥ. tajjananakarmābhāvān na saṃyogavibhāgāv iti cet. tad evaṃ sati kinna karmāpi tatkāraṇāni ceti duruttaram etat. tasmāt tvayaitad eva vaktavyam. tad vibhaktādirūpaṃ ayogyam prak paścāt saṃyogādyaśraye yogyāñ jāyate. kiṃ kāraṇam. yato nityasaṃyogādiyogayogyasvabhāvasya tadvaikalyavirodhataḥ, saṃyogādiyogavaikalyam virudhyate. mayāpi caitad eva vaktavyam saṃyogādivarjitam (SPV: 23).*

conceptual constructions? Nothing at all. By the other mention of “**etc.**” [relations] such as non-difference, difference, separation, conjunction, etc., are included.⁸¹

Before the exposition of verse 23, an implied objector sparks a protracted encounter, making an incisive critique of Dharmakīrti’s line of reasoning: If a determinate cognition of the quality of ‘conjunction’ is produced when there are no real conjuncts and no real connection, then there is no difference between a state of conjunction and disjunction—they might as well be the same state! That is to say, neither existent is changed by the presence or absence of the perceptual quality of conjunction, and so there is simply no real difference between disjunction and conjunction. But we obviously don’t perceive this to be the case.

Devendra counters that this same critique applies to the (likely Vaiśeṣika) objector themselves. According to the characteristic realism of the Nyāya system, the property of suitability is not only a logical *condition* for the apprehension of sentential meaning but a relational *property* that is *cognized independently* of the qualifier and qualificand; it’s efficacious nature as *actually relating* the terms of qualified judgment therefore still depends upon the *category* of *samavāya*. Hence Devendra questions the ability of the realist to account for the causal factors that generate the understanding of relations, insofar as conjunction is a *quality* (*guṇa*) that supposedly inheres in each of the relata *whether or not they are actually conjoint or disjoint with anything else*. The Vaiśeṣika must thus explain how a *permanent* entity (i.e., *samavāya*)—that, *ipso facto*, always renders its relata causally ‘suitable’ for qualitative conjunction—‘turns on and off’ with sole empirical appeal to the transient properties of the entity itself. For Devendra, the realist cannot answer this question without grave conceptual difficulties; if the objector tries to weasel out of this conundrum through denying the motion of

⁸¹ *iti tadyogyatāvācyāḥ svabhāvo ’sya nirucyatām / vibhāgayogagatibhiḥ kim anyair gamanādibhiḥ // tasmād yogyatāśabdavācyāḥ svabhāvo ’syārthasya nirucyatām vibhāgayogagatibhiḥ samyogavibhāgakarmaśabdaiḥ. tadā kim aphalair anyair gamanādibhiḥ kalpitaiḥ. naiva kiñcit. ādigrahaṇāntare samyogavibhāgaparatvāparatvādibhiḥ (SPV: 24).*

entities, but still affirms that such relational qualities ‘inhere’ in objects, then Devendra counters that the actual *causes* that precipitate the appearance of conjunction/disjunction cannot be meaningfully distinguished from the supposed presence of the ‘*inherence*’ of these very qualities.

Dharmakīrti and Devendra thus conclude that we can capture the conventional sense of ‘suitability’ perfectly without recourse to any reified conception of relation—i.e., merely through identifying the appearance of conjunction and disjunction with the motional properties of particular entities themselves. Being conjunct and disjunct are thus not *internal* ‘capacities’ of distinct entities (in which case they would always be one or the other), but rather conditional properties that do not bear witness to any permanent objective form. In these verses, then, Dharmakīrti effectively leverages the manifest impermanence of motional states to cast asunder the reality of any separate objective cause of the *semantic judgments* thereof. For him, the ‘relations’ that render sentential content intelligible—and, in more comparative terms, the ‘syncategorematic’ factors or expressions that lend unity to categorematic content (viz. *samavāya* or *yogyatā*)—never represent the cognition of *separate objective referents*, ones that abide as necessary formal properties *prior to the qualification of cognitive content*; rather, the very *notion* of a semantic ‘relation’ that lends propositional unity only appears *ex post facto* as a conventional psychological shorthand for a series of distinct cognitions.⁸²

⁸² Note that unlike the idealistic Vedāntins, who viewed the conditions for sentential comprehension—like ‘syntactical concordance’ (*ākāṅkṣa*) and predicative compatibility (*yogyatā*)—as merely logical “conditions for understanding the meaning of a sentence,” the Nyāya philosophers instead “claim that *their cognitions* are necessary for understanding...a sentence” (Shaw 2000: 273 [emphasis mine]). The separate cognitions of the general intelligibility conditions of sentential content suggests that Nyāya export the modal aspects of judgment—viz., those relational properties that render substantial terms intelligible through predicative attribution—outside of the cognition of its objective content. In the Nyāya case, the content corresponds to cognitions of categorically *distinct* referents (viz., qualities and substances). Since these are fundamentally different, no necessary connection need obtain between them, and thus what *causes their necessary epistemic solidarity* must be *the cognition of some other objective referent* with the same logical form. However, insofar as qualities like motion only practically appear under a certain general relational description, we never come into direct contact with any *particular* relational form. This is one basic problem that Gaṅgeśa later addresses in his defense of *samavāya*.

d. *The Genitive Relation and the Doctrine of Momentariness*

In the final verse of the SP, Dharmakīrti denies any genitive relation between a quality and qualified, and presents the doctrine of momentariness as the theoretical lynchpin of the preceding negative appraisal of relations. Devendrabuddhi glosses this verse with an opponent who questions whether all other hypothetical relations have been included in the previous refutation (i.e., “by the other mention of “**etc.**” [relations] such as non-difference, difference, separation, conjunction, etc., are included”):

25. *Even when those are [conceived as] existent, a relation in the form ‘of this’ is not established. Therefore, this distinction of intrinsic natures is proved for [entities] whose production is momentary.*

Why [are all these other relations useless]? Because **even when those**, i.e., means of proceeding, etc., **are** conceived as **existent, a relation in the form ‘of this’ is not established.** Since relations **such as “dependence, etc.”** have just been refuted in every way, a relationship of the form “movement or conjunction or disjunction of this” is not established. How, then, is the designation [of ‘relation’] based on anything? Just as there is no other relatum with respect to motion, etc., because there is no relation, it is also the same with those [other] supposed [relations]. Since for this reason there are no means of going, etc., based on the relation of motion, etc., therefore, **for [entities] whose production is momentary**—that is, owing to various causal conditions whose basis is the constant production, etc., of existents—**this distinction of intrinsic natures**, such as saying “this is connected, separated, moves” in this way, etc., **is established.** For relations such as connection, etc., are not established with respect to natures that are unitary and stable. Therefore, there is no such entity as ‘relation’ defined as conjunction, etc. Consequently, the intrinsic nature of all existents is unrelated. *Peace.*⁸³

Here we have as clear a statement as any in Dharmakīrti’s corpus of his sweeping eliminativist position. No real dependence obtains between a distinct cause and effect for the very same reason that real entities do not actually ‘bear’ one another in a genitive sense; viz., no *direct connection* ever obtains between the intrinsic natures of momentary existents. In the Sautrāntika

⁸³ *teṣu satsv api tasyeti sambandhasyāprasiddhitaḥ / yuktaḥ svabhāvabhedo ‘yaṃ tat pratikṣaṇajanmanām // kutaḥ. yatas teṣu gamanādiṣu satsv api kalpitesv tasyeti sambandhasyāprasiddhitaḥ. ‘pāratantryam ityādinā sarvathā sambandhasya niṣiddhatvāt, asya karma saṃyogo vibhāgo veti sambandhāsiddheḥ, kutas tannimitto vyapadeśaḥ. yathānyagataiḥ karmādibhir anyasambandhī na bhavaty asambandhāt, tadvad abhimatair api. yata evaṃ na karmādisambandhād gamanādayaḥ, tasmāt pratikṣaṇajanmanām bhāvānām nirantarotpattyāśrayair aparāparaiḥ pratyayaiḥ svabhāvabhedo ‘yaṃ saṃyukto viyukto gacchatīty evamādir yuktaḥ, sasthiraikasvabhāvānām yogādisambandhāsiddher iti na kaścid bhāvataḥ sambandhaḥ saṃyogādilakṣaṇaḥ. ity asambandhāḥ sarvabhāvasvabhāvāḥ. śāntiḥ (SPV: 25).*

universe of the SP, nothing real continues long enough for any unified possessive ‘action’ to take place *from* one thing *towards* something *else*: some x exists at t , and by the time x is apprehended *as F* at t_1 , x *simply no longer exists as an actual entity* (or, at least, x can only be said to still ‘exist’ insofar as it has generated a reflexive cognitive image of *itself* at t_{n+1}). All apparent states of existential limbo—wherein some pattern of being *seems to* remain relatively continuous despite concrete impermanence—betoken a mindset of conceptual delusion brought about through ignorance and finally resolved through wisdom.

In comparative terms, Dharmakīrti, just like Bradley, cleverly exploits the fallacies of a naïve approach to relational realism: If the relative spatial distance between relata is itself simply a separate quality (*guṇa*) that inheres in the objects taken in isolation from one another, Dharmakīrti can practically coextend the semantic content of ‘*external relatedness*’ and ‘*absence of any real relatedness*’—viz., they both describe one and the same circumstance. The conceptual form of the relata in any predicative judgment of dependence ultimately belies the objective independence of their causal constituents. Hence the causal and semantic relations between agent-action, possessor-possessed, subject-object, etc., are all equally conceptual constructions. *Nota bene* that for Dharmakīrti to pull off this maneuver on the naïve realist, both parties must presuppose that external relations and the intrinsic unrelatedness of pluralistic entities are semantically coextensive. But, as already discussed *vis-à-vis* the temporal realism of the processual and pragmatic thinkers, this is not the only way to define the semantic scope of external relations, which can also describe the ontological independence of an actual event relative to a constitutively open future.

Conclusion: Epistemic Idealism and Relational Eliminativism

The purpose of this chapter was threefold: First, to translate, thematically organize, and understand the elliptic verses of the SP and its principal *vṛtti*; second, to constructively frame Dharmakīrti’s arguments in relation to Bradley, and hence convey their sympatico ‘eliminativism’; third, in more critical terms, I wanted to show how Dharmakīrti’s *nominalist* commitments force him to view the objective viability of genuine causal dependence in tandem with conceptual relations, or dyadic ‘seconds.’ This, I suggested, coheres with the Sautrāntika position discussed in the last chapter; namely, that the causal mechanisms behind the apprehension of the category of relation can be subsumed into those that generate *cognitive images of universal entities*; both represent *post hoc* conceptual constructions of the initial real percept, and thus neither ultimately exist.

Before closing, I want to explore the broader *idealistic* implications of the SP—a topic that not only occupied subsequent Indian commentators, but also, I will urge, impacts contemporary debates in Dharmakīrti scholarship. To be sure, neither Dharmakīrti nor Devendra draw explicit attention to the idealistic implications of the SP.⁸⁴ However, the later Kashmirian Buddhist Śāṅkaranandana (9th-10th century), a proponent of the *vijñaptimātra* doctrine, or ‘mind-only’ school, attempted to extend the arguments of the SP to support a form of idealism in his own commentary [SPAN].⁸⁵ In its *maṅgala* verses, he states what he considers the text’s

⁸⁴ For this reason, Steinkellner takes issue with Jha’s (1990) contention that the purpose of the SP is to “establish idealism” (1996: 628). Rather, on Steinkellner’s more restricted reading, the purpose is only to prove the conceptuality of relations. While Steinkellner is technically correct that the goal of the SP is not explicitly idealistic, in Jha’s defense, it is difficult to see *what* the entailments of denying the ultimate reality of ‘relations’ are *other than* the affirmation of *some sort* of idealism; however, just what *kind* of idealism we are entitled to infer from the SP is another matter altogether. We have seen that Jain interpreters of the SP intuitively associated its arguments with the mereological deconstruction of Vasubandhu. So there is some precedent beyond Śāṅkaranandana in the commentarial tradition for associating the SP with Yogācāra thinkers. Yet, neither Dharmakīrti nor Devendra ever bring any direct attention to the central topic of idealism in Buddhism and Yogācāra in the SP, namely, reflexive cognition. Presumably, this only goes to show that Dharmakīrti did not consider reflexivity a *bona fide relational* property of cognition in any genitive sense (likely because it is arguably not *dviṣṭha*, and thus not a real *relation*).

⁸⁵ My primary source in this coda is Eltschinger’s (2021) informative publication on the text. He notes that “the SPAN can by no means be regarded as a genuine Yogācāra treatise in that it nowhere attempts to demonstrate key idealistic doctrines such as mind-only or the store-consciousness, whose terminology Śāṅkaranandana does not even

primary purpose: “[I] pay reverence to the Omniscient One (*sarvajña*) who revealed that the universe (*jagat*), which is devoid of relations, is without self and one’s own (*ātmātmīya*) and subject-object [relationship] (*grāhyagrāhaka*).”⁸⁶ Śāṅkaranandana identifies these two dualities, i.e., the self as locus of inherent qualities and the subject-object dichotomy, as the relational sources of ignorance that impede enlightenment. The purpose of Dharmakīrti’s treatise is thus explicitly soteriological and idealistic; it undermines the notion of personal selfhood because the self is wholly defined in relational terms.⁸⁷ More specifically, according to the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣikā realists, the self represents a permanent substrate of qualities bound together through the dyadic relation of inherence (*samavāya*). Hence, the functions that define the self—that is, autonomy with respect to the enjoyment of karmic fruits and control over the body—depend upon the reality of that relational category. Likewise, if there is no action (or any other quality) that

allude to in this commentary” (ibid.:108). Technically, then, we must place the SPAn in the context of Śāṅkaranandana’s larger corpus for it to qualify as a ‘Yogācāric’ text. Abhinava himself considered Śāṅkaranandana’s writings essentially Yogācāric, as Eltschinger himself notes immediately beforehand: “In the *Prajñālaṅkāra*, Śāṅkaranandana claims that mind-only, which he pretends to have demonstrated, is nothing but the refutation of an external object, and Abhinavagupta situated Vasubandhu’s *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhis*, Dignāga’s *Ālambanaparīkṣā*, and Śāṅkaranandana’s *Prajñālaṅkāra* on the same doctrinal level” (2021: 107); cf. also Eltschinger 2015: 340, fn. 99)). Note that, in the available works of Utpaladeva, an allusion to Śāṅkaranandana has not been identified (Eltschinger 2021: 101; see also his 2015 article on this point (310–11 and 353, fn. 143)). It is also worth noting that Śāṅkaranandana comments directly on the SP and not on the SPV (Eltschinger 2021: 99).

⁸⁶ *gang gis ’brel pa spangs gyur pa / ’gro ba bdag dang bdag gi min / gzung ’dzin med pa can gsungs pa / kun mkhyen de la phyag ’tshal lo* (SPAn D zhe 21b4–5/P zhe 27a2–3, trans. in Eltschinger (2021: 105), cf. also Eltschinger (2015: 336)).

⁸⁷ As he explains: “To wit (*tathā hi*), the purpose (*prayojana*) of expounding the nonexistence/unreality (*abhāva*, *avastutā*) of relations is none other than demonstrating (*√sād-*) the two types of selflessnesses (*nairātmyadvaya*, *dvividhanairātmya*). For (*hi*) selflessness consists in the other-dependence (*paratantra[tā]*) of action (*kriyā*), enjoyment [of the fruit of action] (*bhoga*) and control [over the body, the senses, and the mind] (*adhiṣṭhātr*). Because if this [very] relation (*sambandha*) does not exist, there is no inherence of action (*kriyāsamavāya*), [the pseudo-self] has no autonomy with regard to action (*kriyāyām asvātantryāt*), and therefore an agent (*kartr*) is discarded. For the very same reason ([*tāta eva*), a nature (*rūpa*) with no inherence of pleasure and pain (*sukhaduḥkahasamavāya*) is not an enjoyer (*bhoktr*). And if there is no inherence of what is controlled [i.e., the body, the senses, and the mind, this pseudo-self] is not a controller (*adhiṣṭhātr*) either. Therefore, if there is (/are) no relation(s), the selflessness of the person (*pudgalanairātmya*) is established (*siddha*).” *’di ltar ’brel pa’i dngos po med par ston par byed pa la dgos pa ni bdag med pa rnam pa gnyis sgrub par byed pa kho na yin no / bya ba dang longs spyod dang byin gyis rlob pa la rang dbang med pa ni bdag gi bdag med pa yin te/ ’brelpademedpala bya ba ’du ba med pa’i phyir bya ba la rang dbang med pa’i phyir byed pa po bsal to / de nyid kyi phyir yang bde ba dang sdug bsngal dang ’du ba med pa’i ngo bo ni loṅs spyod par byed pa ma yin no / byin gyis brlab pa dang ’du ba med pa na yang byin gyis rlob pa po ma yin no / de’i phyir ’brel pa med pa na gang zag gi bdag med pa grub pa’o* (SPAnD zhe 22a4–6/P zhe 27b4–7, trans. in Eltschinger (2021: 106)).

inheres in the self, it cannot represent a locus of meaningful activity. Thus, the relational grounds for the first kind of spiritual ignorance, viz., the relation of qualities to the substrate of self, is undermined through the negation of inherence.

Śāṅkaranandana also proceeds to explain that the inclusion of the referential relation of *parāpekṣā* bears *idealist* significance for the non-dualistic message of the SP: “Therefore[, since, as Dharmakīrti demonstrates in SP 3, there can be no relation of ‘reference’], there are no subject-object (*grāhyagrāhakabhāva*) and manifester-manifested (*vyaṅgyavyaṅjakabhāva*) relationships either, for if being a subject (*grāhakatva*) relies on an object (*grāhyāpekṣa*), there [can] be no capacity to grasp (*grahaṇaśakti*) in the absence of [something] to be grasped (*grāhyābhāve*).”⁸⁸ For Śāṅkaranandana, then, the significance of the denial of *parāpekṣā* lies chiefly in its phenomenal or experiential connotations with respect to the non-dual status of the ‘subjective’ grasper upon the supposedly ‘external’ object grasped. As Eltschinger affirms, “if the alleged object (*grāhya*) is proven not to exist, the subject (*grāhaka*) that relies on it—this is Dharmakīrti’s third candidate, *parāpekṣā*—ceases to exist as well” (2021: 108). In other words, Śāṅkaranandana insists that the denial of ‘referential dependence’ signified that Dharmakīrti was not simply making a claim about the *mutual exclusion* real impersonal particulars, but also an explicit rejection of the *dyadic structure of intentional content*: Just as impersonal, self-standing moments in a causal procession do not ‘depend upon each other’ in virtue of their actual existence, so too does the pure, reflexive manifestation of cognition instantiate a constitutively *non-relational* mode of being.⁸⁹ The selflessness of *dharmas* is tantamount to the denial that they

⁸⁸ Cf. SPAn (D že 25a1–2/P31b2–3): *de’i phyir gzuñ ba dan ’dzin pa’i dños po gsal bar bya ba dan gsal bar byed pa’i dños po la sogs pa yañ med do // gzuñ ba la ltos pa ni ’dzin par byed pa ñid yin na / gzuñ ba med na ’dzin pa’i nus pa ’di cuñ žig kyañ med de* (trans. in Eltschinger (with slight modification) 2021: 119, f.60).

⁸⁹ “If [something] that merely abides in its own nature (*svātmastha*) lacks [any type of relation such as] dependence (*pāratantrya*), connection with another (*anya[sam]yoga*), and reliance (*apekṣā*) [on another], there is no subject-object relationship (*grāhyagrāhakabhāva*) [and thus] the selflessness of the factors of existence [is established as well].” *de bzhin du rang gi bdag nyid tsam la gnas pa gzhan gyi dbang nyid dang gzhan dang sbyor ba dang ltos pa*

exist in relational opposition to the subject, and thus their objective appearance co-arises with the grasping tendencies of the false self. Eltschinger concludes that the selflessness of all *dharmas* is proven in a ‘purely idealistic’ way for Śāṅkaranandana “by dismissing the subject-object dichotomy” (107). On his reading, then, Śāṅkaranandana suggests that the SP entails some sort of ‘Yogācāra’ idealism—at least insofar as the existence of external objects is denied independently of the mind of the subject (or perhaps community of subjects?⁹⁰).

Still, just what *kind* of idealism on offer here is not all that clear, if—in *ultimate* terms—the *subject* of experience is wholly denied *along with* the relative object.⁹¹ Since there is no

nyid la sogs pa med pa na gzung ba dang ‘dzin pa’i dngos po med pa ni chos kyi bdag med pa yin no (SPANd zhe 22a6/P zhe 27b7–8, trans. in Eltschinger (2021: 107)). Note that Śāṅkaranandana’s refutation of subject-object duality also draws upon the mereological critiques of compounded objects already discussed *vis-à-vis* the Jain interpretations of the SP, which were likely inspired by Śāṅkaranandana (Eltschinger 2021: 105).

⁹⁰ See, in this regard, Kachru’s recent (2021) monograph, which interprets Vasubandhu’s Yogācāra as an ‘ecological’ idealism in which mindedness is meaningful only in a context of other lives that partake in an embodied world structured by shared *karma*. One might profess that Kachru’s presentation of Vasubandhu—which depends upon a decidedly phenomenological analysis of the Vś—challenges our interpretation of Śāṅkaranandana’s Yogācāra. Namely, in adopting a general theory of mindedness, Vasubandhu demonstrates that Yogācāra is not merely a solipsistic or skeptical form of epistemic idealism, but presents interpretive avenues for an objective metaphysics of mind. In a somewhat similar vein, Yiannopolous appears to share this position *vis-à-vis* the unfair lampooning of Yogācāra idealism; a pervasive concern in his recent dissertation (e.g., 2020: 338-344) is to distinguish between popular intentional descriptions of Yogācāra that assume a subjectification, or ‘methodological solipsism’ (Arnold: 2009) and the ultimate non-dual nature of self-reflexive cognition that explicitly denies any conventional notions of dualistic intentionality. “Yogācāra idealism...is in no wise reducible to any kind of solipsism, ‘methodological’ or otherwise. On the contrary: the point of Yogācāra analysis in this regard is simply that the referents of cognition have no existence outside of mind and mental processes *generally*. Put slightly differently: at higher levels of yogic practice (*yogācāra*), in which there is no distortion of duality, and therefore, properly speaking, neither any phenomenological object nor any phenomenological ‘subject,’ if it is no longer the case that cognition has any ‘external’ referent, it is by extension also the case that cognition no longer has any ‘internal’ referent, either” (343-4). Yiannopolous may indeed be correct on doctrinal grounds that an intentional description of Yogācāra overlooks the importance of non-dual characterizations of mind within the tradition, and scholars should be attuned to these distinctions when attempting to pigeonhole its thinkers as committed to a strict epistemic idealism or any other solipsistic—or even just skeptical—doctrine. However, insofar as Yiannopolous wants to make good on Yogācāra as committed to the existence of ‘mental processes *generally*’ (which may or may not be the case), the thrust of the ensuing comparison with Pratyabhijñā is that it cannot do so consistently within the non-relational ontology of radical momentariness. To the extent that Dharmakīrti is committed to an ontology of *momentariness*, that is, he cannot deliver a ‘general’ metaphysics of mind. I would say the same goes for Vasubandhu (although it is not clear to me, in any case, that he was as committed to *kṣaṇikavāda* as Dharmakīrti.) Of course, whether Vasubandhu himself advocated for metaphysical idealism is still a matter of debate; like Śāṅkaranandana, he insists that the subjective nature of mind itself is overcome when the final state of non-dual gnosis is achieved. (See also Gold (2015); Lusthaus (2002); and Kochumuttom (1982) for contrasting interpretations of Vasubandhu’s idealist commitments).

⁹¹ In the *Dharmālaṅkāra*, Śāṅkaranandana explicitly rebuffs the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika conception of selfhood: *yo hi kriyāsamavāyād āsāditakarṭṛbhāvaḥ, tat kriyāphalābhisambandhād bhoktā bhavet, pravartakatayā ca śarīrendriyamanasām adhiṣṭhātā sa evātmā syāt*. “The self could be that whose agency is made possible (/effected)

longer any subjective or objective ‘aspect’ to the momentary—but still constitutively *reflexive*—cognition, it is difficult to discern whether ‘idealism,’ in any meaningful sense, still applies here: For insofar as we take ‘idealism’ to mean that the existence of the external object in some way dyadically *depends upon* the mind of a *subject* (or subjects); and momentariness is just the effective denial that any real duality could rightfully obtain between any (purely conceptual) ‘subject’ and ‘object’; then Śaṅkaranandana’s denial of both cognitive poles cannot really mean ‘idealism,’ at least in the standard sense of the final mind-*dependence* of an apparently external world.⁹² Indeed, on our impending pragmatic reconstruction of Pratyabhijñā realism, Śaṅkaranandana’s non-dualistic ‘idealism’ is premised on two fundamentally incompatible commitments; i.e., radical momentariness and the reflexive nature of cognition. On this account, to the extent the Yogācārin is committed to the non-relational doctrine of momentariness, they also effectively preclude the very metaphysical non-duality of subject (i.e., reflexive cognition, or *vimarśa*) and object (i.e., manifestation, or *prakāśa*) that one might reasonably take them to desire to establish.

In the next chapter, we move to Part Three, and begin to explore these Buddhist arguments as *pūrvapakṣas* for the relational realism of Pratyabhijñā. We will eventually come to find that the Yogācārin nominalist’s exhaustive identification of the notion of ‘relation’ with particular dyads of conceptual predication—which attends the mereological reduction of general or distributed entities to tokenized actualities or tropes—misconstrues the *continuous* sense of

by the inherence of action, that which would be an enjoyer thanks to [its] relation with the fruit of this action, and that which is the controller of the body, the sense organs and the mind inasmuch as it causes them to act” (D: 1a1–2 in Eltschinger (2015: 313), trans. in (2021: 106)). Note that the Nyāya conception of the self as a sort of static substance in which changing attributes supposedly ‘inhere’ represents one notion that Utpala will challenge in his dynamical theory of *vimarśa*.

⁹² As Śaṅkaranandana states in the DL, “momentariness results in selflessness, [which is nothing but] the fact that action, enjoyment [of its fruit] and control [over the body, the senses, and the mind] are other-dependent, the fact that there is nothing left to be clung to, the supreme tranquility; one [thus] takes possession of the self-supported *nirvāṇa*, the secure, the highest.” *kṣaṇikatvāt kriyābhogādhiṣṭhānaparatantratā / nirātmatānupādeyaśeṣatvaṃ śāntiruttamā / hastīkṛtanirālambananirvāṇam abhayaṃ param* (DL 2.1–2ab, trans. in Eltschinger (2015: 333, n. 77)).

relation apropos the triadic and temporal structure of practical reason. From this perspective, the kind of idealism that the SPAn endorses can never provide a consistent and empirically adequate philosophy of the 'non-dual' nature of mind and reality.

PART THREE

CHAPTER V

SAMBANDHA AS A 'ŚAKTI-OF-ŚAKTIS': ACTION, RELATION, AND COGNITION IN BHARTṚHARI AND PRATYABHIJÑĀ

Language transcends us and yet we speak.

- Maurice Merleau-Ponty

Whenever and however any form appears, just that is its very nature; this is the supreme doctrine (upaniṣat).

-Abhinavagupta (TĀ 10.82)

Introduction

In preparation for the close reading of the SS in the next chapter, here I aim to introduce the foundational doctrines of the Pratyabhijñā system with an eye towards their relational implications. In brief, I argue that Utpala's objective idealist arguments for the reality of relation appropriate and defend Bhartṛhari's transcendental theory of *sambandha* in the grammarian's 'Exposition of Relation' (*Sambandhasamuddeśa* [SSam]).¹ Through his characteristically sensitive analysis of the phenomenology of discursive practices, Bhartṛhari identifies the general form of relation with the semiotic capacity for linguistic designation—a 'śakti-of-śaktis' ('capacity-of-capacities') that is 'neither the same nor different' (*bhedābheda*) than its relata. In doing so, he effectively distinguishes between various *tokens* of *sambandha* expressed in linguistic terms (*samavāya*, *kāryakāraṇabhāva*, etc.) and a general type associated with the reflexive capacity of mind to interpret signs in terms of other signs ('semiosis'). I proceed to show how Utpala exploits this Bhartṛharian theory of relation realism to establish his own non-

¹ My analysis of the SSam is heavily indebted to Houben's comprehensive (1995a) study of the text.

dual idealism against the Buddhist nominalists, which resonates in important ways with Peirce's own theories of temporal realism and the triadic nature of thought.

Section 1 presents a brief overview of non-dual Kashmir Śaivism, with an eye toward the way that Utpala transforms the Śaiva cosmogony into a transcendental dialectic of self-recognition.² The Kashmir Śaiva myths typically portray Lord Śiva as an omnipotent, self-existent 'consciousness'³ (*cit*) that freely manifests the universe through the inner 'vibration' (*spanda*) of His feminine consort Śakti, who in these traditions represents His creative metaphysical energy. In Somānanda's scheme—the historical founder of the Pratyabhijñā system—this entails that the power (*śakti*) of cognition (*jñāna*) becomes theoretically and practically indissoluble from the power of action (*kriyā*). For our purposes, the most important feature of Utpala's reinterpretation of Somānanda's cosmogony is the kind of 'realistic idealism'

² It should be apparent that I am in general agreement with Lawrence (1999; 2009; 2019), who has characteristically claimed that we can interpret Utpala and Abhinava as making transcendental arguments against Buddhist skepticism, in the sense of stipulating metaphysically necessary truths whose denial entails some form of self-contradiction. In this limited respect, the Pratyabhijñā arguments leveled against Dharmakīrti broadly follow similar rhetorical trajectories that Arnold (2005; 2008; 2013) has consistently identified in Madhyamaka and Mīmāṃsā. Though, regarding Madhyamaka and Pratyabhijñā specifically, I view their shared 'transcendentalism' as motivated by the common desire to salvage the ultimate reality of the conventional world from certain deconstructive and reductionistic tendencies in Buddhist philosophy—but, unlike Mīmāṃsā, do so squarely within a 'non-dualist' framework (i.e., not through a naïve realism grounded on an ontology of external relations). I interpret these distinct systems as representing, respectively, an 'apophatic' and 'cataphatic' description of this process. Much more could—and, in my humble opinion, *should*—be said about the philosophical implications of this relationship, which has heretofore received very little attention from scholars.

³ The translation of 'consciousness' as *cit* is not without its problems. As Singh notes (6-7) the word 'consciousness' denotes a relational duality apropos the 'con' prefix that does not characterize the non-dual nature of pure *cit*. In this regard, he claims that 'sciousness' represents a better translation of *cit*. The reference also serves our comparative purposes, for James himself proposes this term in the *Principles* to characterize pre-intentional, non-dualistic nature of pure experience: "Instead of the stream of thought being one of *con*-sciousness, 'thinking its own existence along with whatever else it thinks'...it might better be called a stream of Sciousness pure and simple, thinking objects of some of which it makes what it calls a 'Me,' and only aware of its 'pure' Self in an abstract, hypothetic or conceptual way. Each 'section' of the stream would then be a bit of sciousness or knowledge of this sort, including and contemplating its 'me' and its 'not-me' as objects which work out their drama together, but not yet including or contemplating its own subjective being" (304). However, given its ungainliness—along with the fact that nearly all scholars of Kashmir Śaivism employ it—we will continue using 'consciousness' to translate *cit* despite its manifest shortcomings.

to which the Pratyabhijñā school subsequently commits itself, which also becomes the axiomatic foundation for their relational realism.⁴

In Section 2, I lay out in more detail the objective idealism of Utpala’s metaphysical scheme. Its theoretical keystone is that the essential nature of Śiva—ultimate, non-dual consciousness—consists in the transcendental unity of *prakāśa* (‘manifestation/illumination’) and *vimarśa* (‘reflexive/recognitive judgment’).⁵ In terms of the Śaiva cosmogony, *svaprakāśa* designates the ‘self-luminous,’ or ‘self-existent’ quality of the cognizer (*ajādapramātrī*), which enables inert or insentient objects to ‘shine’ (*prakāśa*) in its own unified field of absolute consciousness; *vimarśa* is the spontaneous capacity (‘*śakti*’) of undifferentiated consciousness to realize itself in differentiated terms. Thus, for Pratyabhijñā, the transcendental unity of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa* articulates what I have identified as the foundational principle of ‘objective idealism’: The unity of the action that manifests objective content is nothing other than the self-consciousness of this unity.⁶ In this practical union of action and cognition, Pratyabhijñā, much like Peirce, undercut a central tenet of the Buddhist nominalist; namely, that one can exhaustively account for the reflexive dimension of the subject in terms of a determinate, static ‘representational image’ isomorphic to the actual determinacy of its particular causes.⁷

⁴ Chalmers notes in this regard that “realist idealism may sound like an oxymoron, but this is only because we tend to associate idealism with the narrow anti-realist variety and ignore the broad variety” (2019: 3). Certainly, the Pratyabhijñā system purports to represent a coherent strain of realist idealism; Utpala and Peirce would urge that metaphysical, or objective idealism demands a corresponding realism with respect to the continuity of mind, or self-consciousness. Unlike Peirce, whether or not James endorsed a ‘realist idealism’ in this Peircean sense is debatable (see, in this regard, Ford (1981)).

⁵ This translation of *vimarśa* as ‘judgment’ is not without its problems (I discuss this thoroughly below).

⁶ This phrasing deliberately invokes Kimhi’s description of Kant’s insight “that judgment belongs to a certain context of activity: the activity whose unity is the same as the consciousness of its unity, or self-consciousness. According to Kant, a judgment is a certain unity of consciousness. As such, it is a capacity for identifying consciousness as having this unity” (Kimhi: 52). In other words, it is a mistake to think that the synthetic self-consciousness ‘I think *p*’ requires a distinct cognitive act beyond the initial cognition of ‘*p*’ itself; this critique of judgment is the foundational premise behind the analytic idealism of both Kimhi and Rödl.

⁷ Ferrante (2017, 2020a, 2020b) has discussed this feature of Pratyabhijñā theory at length, and in particular, the foundations of this idea in Bhartṛhari.

In Section 3, I turn my attention to Bhartṛhari’s linguistic metaphysics and its relational doctrines. I maintain that even though Utpala and Abhinava do not explicitly endorse Bhartṛhari’s ‘*sphoṭa*’ theory of meaning⁸, their relational views are largely indebted to his pragmatic theory of linguistic manifestation. According to Bhartṛhari’s notion of *sphoṭa*, the signs of conventional discourse are built upon a *progressive* realization of the holistic essence of *vāk*, or divine speech. Here an inner, undifferentiated plenum of semantic potential ‘unfolds’ into the ordered syntax of public linguistic expressions. In this scheme, the subjective capacity of *vāk* to reflexively apprehend (*vimarśa*) the world in determinate conceptual terms does not occur all at once, but manifests gradually through the mediated processing of ‘speech.’ Since the practical capacity to relate signs stands as a necessary holistic interface between inner semantic unity and external syntactic diversity, the dialethic structure of ‘relation’ is disclosed: It is neither *strictly* identical with, nor distinct from, its relata (viz., *bhedābheda*).⁹ This ‘ultra-dependent’ form of *sambandha* entails that one cannot designate it in abstract linguistic terms without also thereby changing its essential nature as such (Houben 1995: 170-4). In effect, the singular term ‘*sambandha*’ attempts to reify the *subjective act of designation itself*, and thus can never be representable as a static propositional constituent *in* judgment. These two forms of relationality correspond, respectively, to what I call the ‘vertical’ axis of relationality-as-such, and the

⁸ At least, that is, in the extant Pratyabhijñā texts (e.g., it could be that lost portions of Utpala’s *ṭīkā* address *sphoṭa* semantics explicitly).

⁹ The compound ‘*bhedābheda*,’ literally ‘division-nondivision,’ has a long and complex history in Indian philosophy. Nicholson (2010) provides an analysis of the term in his sensitive examination of the importance of the early (pre-8th century), and lamentably neglected, Bhedābheda Vedānta tradition. The Bhedābheda tradition considered the *ātman* a part of, but not identical, with Brahman. Nicholson writes in this context that ‘*bhedābheda*’ is a *dvandva* compound that means ‘difference and non-difference’ (39). He claims that scholars that typically render it in terms of the *saptamī tatpuruṣa* ‘Difference-in-Identity’ are “attempt[ing] to make it seem more familiar” by drawing “meaningful similarities” to Western thinkers like Hegel and Spinoza. In a footnote (201, f.2), however, he clarifies that the problem is the order of the terms; ‘*bhedābheda*’ means ‘Identity-in-Difference’ not the reverse, of course. Regardless of how best to unpack the compound in the Vedānta traditions, though, for the Pratyabhijñā ‘unity-in-diversity’ reflects both a valid grammatical order and a common translation (most writers on the Pratyabhijñā use it.) In addition, the *saptamī* sense conveys, I think, something of the kind of *interpenetrative* activity that Utpala and Abhinava want to articulate, one that overcomes the tautological opposition ‘*p* and $\sim p$ ’ of the simple conjunctive ‘unity and diversity,’ as though these reflected contrary predicates of a substantive existent.

‘horizontal’ axis of relational ‘tokens’ or ‘tropes’ (e.g., *samavāya*, *kāryakāraṇabhāva*, *tādātmya*...). In this case, the general logical form is innately disclosed as the all-pervasive capacity (*śakti*) for reality to be reflexively cognized—that is to say, it designates the constitutive *intelligibility* of the real. On my Peircean reading of Bhartṛhari, then, the objective form of *sambandha* points to the spontaneous capacity of reality to apprehend itself in terms of its own reflexive standards of rational intelligibility.

Section 4 traces how this Bhartṛharian pragmatic theory of processual ‘linguaging’ underlies Utpala’s conception of relation as a pure *śakti* of universal consciousness. In particular, Utpala’s ideastic system construes the general form of relation as the pragmatic power (*śakti*) of Śiva to reflexively realize (*vimarśa*) his own unity in the synthetic diversity linguistic judgment. In the Pratyabhijñā corpus, Utpala and Abhinava flesh out this cognitive function of relation through the notion of ‘intentional synthesis’ (*anusamdhāna*)—a term Bhartṛhari himself employs to describe the process whereby a manifold of ‘vague’ perceptual cognitions conforms to the linguistic nature of reflexive cognition (*vimarśa*). Utpala proceeds to leverage the ‘intrinsic validity’ (*svataḥprāmāṇya*) of these sorts of synthetic cognitions to invert the Buddhist assimilation of *sambandha* into the category of *sāmānyalakṣaṇa*; that is, it is not that relations practically appear due to conceptual ‘impositions’ on *intrinsically unrelated particulars*, but rather that the *appearance or manifestation of all cognitive content (space, time, relations, particulars, universals, etc.) depends upon a logically prior experience of the nature of unity-in-diversity (bhedābheda)*. For both Bhartṛhari and the Pratyabhijñā thinkers, then, a fundamental continuity lies at the heart of practical judgment, and thus the Buddhist’s hard and fast distinction between the non-conceptual moment of perception and the subsequent conceptual construction does not hold water.

In the conclusion, I turn my attention to the relevant *temporal* implications of Utpala's relational views that inform much of the present conversation. Specifically, I cite a distinction in Utpala's ĪPK between two forms of action—one associated with 'conventional' notions of time (*kāla*) and another that refers to the 'divine' power of Śiva or the *ātman*, the metaphysical cause of the former. Based on these verses and Abhinava's commentary thereon, I interpret Utpala as distinguishing between a successive notion of 'time' and a form of phenomenal 'temporality' in a way that maps onto Bhartṛhari's 'horizontal' and 'vertical' forms of *sambandha*, respectively. In conversation with Peirce, I show how this sort of interpretation can overcome the time-lag problem of the Buddhist epistemologists and help establish Pratyabhijñā as a certain 'reformed' temporal realism, despite Utpala's overt denial of 'time' as a substantial existent or the primary cause of succession.

1. The Non-Dual Tradition of Kashmir Śaivism

a. The Myth of Śiva and the Cosmogony of Kashmir Śaivism

'Śaivism' represents a catch-all term used to refer to a Hindu tradition devoted to the worship of Lord Śiva as the supreme deity and/or ultimate reality. While the character of Śiva has early roots in the Rigveda as an epithet for Rudra, the storm god, by the time it develops into the tantric Śakti cults of medieval Kashmir, 'Śaivism' denotes a broad swath of interrelated traditions that draw upon a dizzying array of scriptural hierarchies, modes of worship, *yogic* practices, and socio-cultural conventions. Like their Buddhist tantric bedfellows,¹⁰ these Śaiva

¹⁰ The origins of the tantra are extremely complex and well beyond the scope of this paper. The historical evidence suggests *tantra* as a literary movement originated with Hindu traditions in the mid-first century, with Buddhist tantric practices emerging around the 7th (Gray: 2016). For an extremely rich and relevant account of early Buddhist *tantra* as a soteriology of relational *mediation* between conventional and spiritual reality (viz., praxis and theory), see Wallis's (2002) analysis of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*.

Brahmins typically sought spiritual *power* through the deliberate subversion of orthodox socio-cultural dichotomies based on the traditional ideal of *purity*¹¹: e.g., inebriation, sexual yoga (often practiced among mixed castes), meat-eating, headhunting, and holding rituals in unclean, isolated spaces like charnel grounds—in short, the sorts of ritual and meditative practices characteristic of the tantra. But, leaving aside the Buddhist expressions of tantra, though, it is not hard to discern how the character of Lord Śiva—a God of wanton power, absolute freedom, and playful action—would naturally possess substantial cache among the Hindu Kashmir who prioritized the acquisition of power over the maintenance of ritual purity. Śiva’s dynamic identity as an embodied *yogin* and ultimate reality effectively offered the Brahmanical class a uniquely congenial figure through which to develop their own subversive religious projects.¹²

To be sure, although our present focus is on the philosophy of Pratyabhijñā, it might be worth briefly mentioning the interesting parallels that obtain between the premises of tantric philosophy and the qualities of the literary character of Śiva in the *Purāṇa* corpus and the

¹¹ I am following Sanderson’s well-known (1985) articulation of the primary ideological rift of Brahmanical self-representation at the time, one faction valued the caste ideal of purity, and tended to emphasize the soteriological utility of established social structures and ritual practices for post-mortem liberation in accord with a dualistic metaphysical framework; the other strove, instead, to embody divine power (i.e., ‘*śakti*’) in the form of supernatural abilities (*siddhis*), the invocation of ecstatic states of consciousness, and, ultimately, the non-dual realization of one’s identity with God (viz., *mokṣa*) (192). Generally speaking, the Kashmir Śaiva ‘path of purity’ corresponds to the ‘orthodox’ or ‘exoteric’ movement of Siddhānta or Śaivasiddhānta. Characterized by ‘uncompromising ritualism, relative mundanity, and professionalism’ (Sanderson 2007: 247), it was dedicated to the propitiation of Śiva as the supreme deity and took its ritualistic cues primarily from the *Śaiva Āgamas*. This comparatively early school centered on the worship of the supreme form of Śiva (‘*Sadāśiva*’), and generally conducted rituals in public spaces through the phallic mark of the *lingam*. Hence, unlike later forms of non-dual Kashmir Śaivism, Siddhānta did not endorse the efficacy of subversive *yogic* practices of the Śakti cults, which invariably occur amongst a select group of secret initiates in the isolated privacy of ‘impure’ places like the cremation ground.

¹² Consider Śiva’s depiction in the early text, the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (~5th-6th B.C.E). He is identified with the ultimate reality, or the *ātman* situated in the heart of all creatures. To realize the *ātman* as Śiva is to be liberated. The text proceeds to outline a series of *yogic* practices—i.e., forms of breath control, visualizations, and meditations—to subdue the activity of the mind/senses and thereby bring consciousness into direct contact with the Śaivic ‘heart center’. The practices terminate in the acquisition of an inviolate body made of the ‘fire of Yoga’ that no longer undergoes sickness, old age, and death—in other words, complete liberation from the *māyic* world of changeful existence. Muller-Ortega points out that even this early Upaniṣadic reference testifies to a perennial theme of Śaivism; its relatively redemptive view towards physical, embodied existence. For the practice of yoga “should lead not just to an inner enlightenment, but also to a physiological transformation by which the body itself is led to enlightenment, to immortality” (1989: 28). One might frame this point as the central dialectical tension of Śaiva yoga, insofar as it seems predicated on the notion that one can realize oneself as eternal and infinite in and through embodied existence. Śiva therefore signifies a god with the power to reconcile physical and spiritual reality, and thereby guarantee that the embodied, worldly practices of yoga lead the *ātman* to liberation.

Mahābhārata. In Doniger’s well-known scholarship on Śaiva literature (1973; 1981), she characterizes Śiva as an ‘erotic ascetic’: a master yogin who practices severe self-abnegation and austerity, but who also, curiously, expresses the general potency of male sexual energy through the phallic *liṅgam*. The divinity of Lord Śiva therefore does not only consist in his pure *transcendence* from the realm of *māyā*, but rather lies in his sovereign, infinite power to manifest any objective form he desires; in other words, his paradoxical capacity to *mediate* between the conventional world and absolute reality.¹³ Śiva thus represents a reconciliation of oppositional forces, for he retains an inviolate unity all while enjoying a worldly ‘play’ of diverse and even contradictory forms.¹⁴ The image of Śiva that perhaps best captures this dynamic nature is doubtlessly the iconic Lord of the Dance (*naṭarāja*), whose spontaneous ‘performance’ conforms to whatever circumstances in which He finds Himself.¹⁵

To encounter Śiva *directly*, therefore, is a tricky business, for any explicit *representation* of Śiva automatically casts an unbounded shadow of oppositional, contradictory, and excluded attributes; any finite, determinate *image* of Śiva, we might say, implies the virtual exclusion of an infinite reservoir of other potential forms and properties. As I will emphasize below,

¹³ With respect to the literature, Doniger comments that “the mediating principle that tends to resolve the oppositions is in most cases Śiva himself. Among ascetics he is a libertine and among libertines an ascetic; conflicts which they cannot resolve, or can attempt to resolve only by compromise, he simply absorbs into himself and expresses in terms of other conflicts...He emphasizes that aspect of himself which is unexpected, inappropriate, shattering any attempt to achieve a superficial reconciliation of the conflict through mere logical compromise...Śiva is particularly able to mediate in this way because of his protean character; he is all things to all men. He merely brings to a head the most extreme and therefore the least reconcilable aspects of the oppositions which, although they may be resolved in various ways on the divine level, are almost never reconciled on the human level” (1973: 36). This aspect of Śiva markedly contrasts with the tantric cults, where the paradoxical capacity of Śiva—i.e., to act as the simultaneous paragon of stoic stillness and erotic desire simultaneously—attains an independent explanatory principle in the figure and energy of Śakti.

¹⁴ The shape-shifting Śiva of the *Mahābhārata* “assumes many forms of gods, men, goblins, demons, barbarians, tame and wild beasts, birds, reptiles, and fishes. He carries a discus, trident, club, sword and axe. He has a girdle of serpents, earrings of serpents, a sacrificial cord of serpents and an outer garment of serpents’ skins. He laughs, stags, dances and plays various musical instruments. He leaps, gapes, weeps, causes others to weep, speaks like a madman or a drunkard as well as in sweet tones. With an erect penis he dallies with the wives and daughters of the Rishis” (quoted in Atkinson 1974: 721 [from the *Mahābhārata*, *Anuśāsanaparva*, chap. 14]).

¹⁵ See the first verse of the SS: *bhedābhedātma-saṃbandha-saha-sarvārtha-sādhitā / lokayātrā kṛtir yasya svechayā taṃ stumaḥ śivam*. “We praise Śiva, whose performance as the conventional world is accomplished in all respects according to His will through the relation that consists of unity-in-diversity.”

Doniger’s characterization of Śiva represents the literary counterpart to the relational realism of Pratyabhijñā philosophy: His nature refuses to be pigeonholed purely in terms of identity or difference. My point is just that, although the mythological figure who mediates between libertinism and asceticism seems quite removed from the irreducible ‘Thirdness’ of a depersonalized mind principle (*cit*) in Pratyabhijñā, we need not compartmentalize too strictly the philosophical (viz., the ‘rational’) doctrines of Śaivism from, say, its literary, theological, ritualistic, and artistic expressions—indeed, an important and fascinating Thirdness must surely run between them.¹⁶

One such continuity between myth and philosophy at work in Śaivism pertains to the *cosmogony* of the non-dual traditions of Kashmir. Here, the power of Śiva becomes personified in terms of his feminine consort Śakti; She corresponds to the vibratory action that manifests the differentiated phenomenal universe, while Śiva represents the pure self-luminousness of boundless consciousness-bliss (*cit-ananda*) in which such manifestation occurs. Like the common Upaniṣadic metaphor of the waves and the ocean, they represent aspects or poles of one absolute reality. Through his omnipotent freedom (*svātantrya*), Śiva enacts a kind of ‘play’ (*krīḍā*) in which He chooses to dissociate from his feminine consort Śakti—that is, to apparently separate his manifest nature from his creative power (cf. Dyczkowski 1987: 99-109). In the *Spanḍa-kārikas*, an influential text of non-dual Kashmir Śaivism, this eternal cycle of separation

¹⁶ Consider in this respect Muller-Ortega’s remark that directly ties Doniger’s mythological account of Śiva to germane epistemic debates *vis-à-vis* the Pramāṇavādins: “For the non-dual Kashmir Śaivites, Śiva, who is identified with the supreme consciousness, performs a different, though equally important, mediating function. In his omnipresence, he is to be found at the interaction or junction point between any two states of awareness, no matter how opposed. As a result of Śiva’s unboundedness, any attempt to pin him down theologically results in his manifesting himself as the opposite quality as well” (29). In more poetic terms, then, I want to suggest that we can construe the figure of Śiva and His constitutive Śaktis as a symbol for the irreducible reality of ‘Thirdness’ in practical life—analogueous in some ways to the Christ figure in the religious dramas of the West (See Timothy 2:5: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”) It is through Śiva’s ideal union of action and knowledge that the yogin transcends the usual intentional dualisms of object/subject, theory/praxis, form/function, content/force, etc. One can thus construe the private rituals of Trika Śaivism and the public philosophy of Pratyabhijñā alike as integral approaches to the religious drama of coming to terms with the ‘Thirdness’ of reality.

and reunion continually creates and destroys the universe in a ‘scintillating pulse’ (*sphuratta*), or ‘vibration’ (*spanda*), of cosmic energy (*śakti*). Through proper spiritual practice, the embodied *yogin* can ‘surf’—if I may—the ‘waves’ of Śakti, expanding personal consciousness beyond its contracted state of dualistic ignorance until, at last, it completely dissipates into the ‘ocean’ of Śiva’s unbounded awareness.¹⁷

Hence non-dual Śaivism maintains that the world (*loka*) and self (*ātman*) are nothing but a single, omnipotent, dynamic and absolutely free ‘consciousness’ (*cit*). As Abhinava writes: “The truth is therefore this: The Supreme Lord manifests freely (*anargala*) all the varied play of emissions and absorption in the Sky of his own nature.”¹⁸ For this reason, the distinction between the non-dualistic and dualistic forms of Kashmir Śaivism quite often leads to its characterization as a kind of ‘monistic idealism.’ However, in accord with the critical thrust of this project, I partly want to problematize thinking that anything like a *Bradleyan* ‘monistic idealism’—any more than a Dharmakīrtian ‘epistemic idealism’, for that matter—accurately characterizes the

¹⁷ In this respect, Pratyabhijñā represents an organic consequence of the peculiar non-dual hermeneutic of the tantra: As the external trappings of symbolic rituals associated with cults of ‘purity’ lost spiritual prestige amongst certain Brahminical sects, such practices were gradually transduced and sublimated into inner states of embodied consciousness. For instance, in the Krama tradition “ritual came to be understood as an inner process of realization through which the initiate discovered his essential identity with Kālī Who is the flow (*krama*) of the power of consciousness through the polarities of subject [Para Śakti], object [Apara Śakti], and means of knowledge [Parāpara Śakti] in consonance with their rising and falling away in each act of perception” (Dyczkowski 1987: 9). We can see this aspect of the Krama tradition carry over into Trika Śaivism, where the metaphysics of *spanda* reflects the enlightening state of the *unmeṣa* of Śakti (‘expansion’, ‘blossoming’, ‘opening the eyes’) in contrast to ignorant states associated with Her *nirmēṣa* (‘contraction’, ‘concealment’, ‘closing the eyes’). Commenting on this practice, Williams pointedly notes that *unmeṣa* is often “found in the world of the in-between, in the moment between waking and sleep, in the space between the breaths, even between moments of perception” (in Chatterji 1986: xiii). Here, the *yogin* meditates on the presence of Śakti in the supposed relational ‘gaps’ in-between distinct cognitions. The ‘power’ of Śakti manifests in the ability of the *yogin* to reflexively probe the subtle, liminal states between more substantive and dualistic modes of awareness—and, in the process, expand his own *personal* reflexive consciousness such that it eventually recognizes itself as nothing other than Śiva. This description resonates with James’s theory of ‘transitive’ modes in the stream of consciousness, and, from this vantage point, effectively portrays the tantra as a means for the mind to turn back on itself and consciously realize its own irreducibly *constructive* foundation.

¹⁸ *ato'sau parameśānaḥ svātmavyomanyanargalaḥ / iyataḥ sṛṣṭisamhārādambarasya pradarśakaḥ* (trans. in Dyczkowski 1987: 68).

Trika system of Utpala and Abhinava. Instead, Pratyabhijñā should be construed as something much more like the objective idealism put forth in Peirce’s ‘logic of events.’

Given, however, the tantric orientation of the Pratyabhijñā philosophers, in their rational reconstruction of the principles that govern Śiva and Śakti’s relationship, they attempt to forge an identify between the soteriological *telos* of spiritual practice and the interpretative act of judgment itself. Lawrence notes in this regard that “the Pratyabhijñā thinkers’ ascription of a primordial, cosmogonic status to the very realization that they aim to communicate makes their response to the Buddhists highly subversive. They are thereby able to argue that *their system’s goal constitutes the very facts that the Buddhists say preclude it*” (1999: 20). It is in this pragmatic-transcendental switcheroo against the Buddhist epistemologists—viz., in the identification of the *meaning* of ‘non-dual reality’ with the cosmogonic process of recognition—that the tantric practice of ritual sublimation arguably reaches its philosophical zenith. The Buddhist cannot coherently deny self-recognition, that is, because the *śakti* internal to this interpretive act necessarily instantiates a synthetic metaphysical power that the Buddhist themselves does not ultimately accept.

b. Trika Śaivism and ‘Realistic Idealism’

The Trika Śaivism of Utpala and Abhinava represents a complex brew of non-dual philosophy that draws extensively upon the doctrines and rituals of the prior Kula and Krama traditions, both closely associated with the *Bhairava* scriptures that depict Śiva in His most terrible and violent forms (Torella, et al. 2016: 2). As the name suggests, the definitive feature of the school is its ‘triadic’ elaboration of Śakti, which corresponds to Śiva’s three powers that manifest the three planes of existence: the ‘superior’ plane of unity (*para*), the ‘middling’ realm of unity-in-

diversity (*parāpara*), and the ‘inferior’ realm of diversity (*apara*).¹⁹ In Pratyabhijñā epistemology, these three Śaktis correspond to the inner knower, the means of knowledge, and the object known, but in Peircean terms, they tentatively map onto ‘Firstness,’ ‘Thirdness,’ and ‘Secondness,’ respectively. Although they reflect distinct phases in the processual realization of consciousness, their ultimate unity comprises the ‘Triadic heart’ of Lord Śiva—they constitute his essential nature as a single omnipotent consciousness.²⁰ So while ‘Śiva’ refers to a unified principle of undifferentiated consciousness in the non-dual traditions of Kashmir, Śiva is not ontologically or ritualistically prioritized over the creative action of Śakti. Her creative energy, we might say, is *internally related* to Śiva’s essential nature as a singular omnipotent consciousness, in the sense that Śiva would not be a truly *sovereign* (*svātantrya*) metaphysical being unless also intrinsically comprised of the capacity to reflexively *enjoy* His own infinite nature.

The important philosophical point here, though, is that the middling Śakti manifests qualified knowledge associated with conventional human experience. Here consciousness appears to itself as both subject and object in equal measure in the form of “I am this” (*ahamidam*) (cf. ĪPV 1.4.1). As Śiva contracts and expands through this Śakti, the diversity of empirical knowledge correspondingly appears within, and merges back into, the unity of absolute consciousness. The middling Śakti therefore denotes Śiva’s *relational* capacity of knowledge—the ‘midway point’ between the realm of unity and diversity. In the qualified realm of empirical cognition, consciousness interprets itself relative to an object, and thus appears to itself in

¹⁹ Dyczkowski (1987: 113-16) explains the basic nature of these three Śaktis (for a wonderful illustration of the Three Śaktis, see Wallis 2013: 236).

²⁰ Cf. Abhinava in the *Mālinīvijayā-vartika* ([*MV*] I. 629-31): “Where duality, unity, and both unity and duality are equally manifest is said to be [true] unity: To those who object that in that case diversity (*bheda*) must also exist, [we say:] so be it: we do not want to speak overmuch. We neither shun nor accept [anything] that [manifests to us] here [in this world] as you do. If you wish to be supported by the view that favors all then resort to the doctrine of Supreme Unity, the great refuge you should adopt” (trans. in Dyczkowski 1987: 41).

dualistic terms—not due to the beginningless ‘illusion’ of *māyā*, but purely for the sake of playful enjoyment (*krīḍa*).

The Pratyabhijñā system refers to the non-dual philosophy of Trika Śaivism, but is sometimes used erroneously to designate the philosophical doctrines of Kashmir Śaivism as a whole.²¹ Somānanda’s *Śivadr̥ṣṭi* (*Sight of Śiva*)—technically, the first Pratyabhijñā text according to Utpala, who was his direct disciple—presents the cosmogonic myth of Kashmir Śaivism in terms of an omnipotent consciousness that freely wills the universe into being through Śakti feminine: all things exist only insofar as they are internal to this singular consciousness (cf. Gnoli 1957; Nemeč 2011). In particular, Śiva manifests the universe through His constitutive *śaktis* of cognition (*jñāna*) and action (*kriyā*). In describing this cosmogonic emanation of consciousness, Somānanda draws upon the Sāṃkhya theory of 25 *tattvas*, but subsumes them within a more general categorical framework of 36 that overcomes the stark dualism of Sāṃkhya.²² According to Somānanda, as Śakti ‘contracts’ down through the hierarchy of *tattvas*, the non-dual essence of absolute consciousness becomes progressively obscured until, at the lowest levels, it appears to itself as completely insentient (*jaḍa*).

Pertinently, in this context, the plurality of the *tattvas* associated with *māyā* ultimately represent one among many forms of Śakti that Śiva deploys to manifest reality. Since *māyā* is not excluded from the fundamental *tattvas*, as it is for Sāṃkhya, the conventional world does not signify a mere *illusion* for Somānanda, even though at higher levels of non-dual consciousness Śiva does not experience Himself in a differentiated form. The dynamic ‘Śaktification’ of the *māyā tattva* represents Somānanda’s attempt to account for why certain beings perceive

²¹ This is partly due to early literature on the subject—i.e., Chatterji’s (1914) publication—that did not adequately distinguish between different forms of Kashmir Śaivism.

²² For details on the Pratyabhijñā appropriation of Sāṃkhya ontology, see Flood (1989); Pruiett (2016: 63-4); Bartley (2011: 82–88); and Burley (2007).

delimited and contracted aspects of reality even though everything is really just the singular consciousness of Śiva (Torella 1998: 71-2). To characterize Pratyabhijñā as a ‘realistic idealism,’²³ then, generally refers to this fundamental revaluation of *māyā* in the context of traditional non-dual Brahmanical philosophy, which had typically contrasted the constitutively *passive* nature of absolute being—viz., undifferentiated, formless and timeless consciousness—with the conceptually differentiated world of conventional experience.²⁴

In the Pratyabhijñā system, Śiva’s reconciliation of unity and diversity becomes generalized in terms of consciousness and its powers, which *underpins their attempt to reconcile the Buddhist onto-logical disjunction between the two*. As Ratié puts it,

Utpaladeva and Abhinavagupta insist that although reality is a unitary consciousness, it is not a static absence of differences, but a dynamic unity capable of encompassing all differences without losing its fundamental oneness. Even though the Pratyabhijñā philosophers defend a full-fledged non-dualism, they consider that differences are not illusory, because they see reality as constituted by this unique consciousness that is first and foremost a power to manifest (literally, a “light”, *prakāśa*) and because according to them, the differentiated universe is nothing but consciousness manifesting itself in a differentiated form. This means that whatever is manifest—including all the phenomenal differences—partakes in the ultimate reality (*paramārtha*), the essence of which is manifestation (2014b: 388).

The quintessential Pratyabhijñā metaphor for the unity of consciousness and reflexive action is the image of the mirror, which retains a unified nature though it reflects a diversity of forms in a dynamic, limpid fashion.²⁵ A description of ultimate reality as pure a pure, self-manifest consciousness, intrinsically endowed with a certain triadic power of reflexive action, thereby

²³ Singh remarks that he does not find the term “Realistic Idealism” a “happy characterization” of Pratyabhijñā, because “the word ‘idea’ has played havoc in Western philosophy....Ultimate Reality is not a mere ‘idea,’ whatever that may mean, but the Self underlying all reality; the Changeless Principle of all manifestation” (1990: 7). Fair enough—although I think those philosophers in the Western cannon whose views most closely align with Pratyabhijñā are aptly called ‘realistic idealists.’ In any case, we find the terms innocuous enough for a working characterization of the system.

²⁴ See ĪPVṛ II.4.20 and its criticism of the *śāntabrahmavāda*, which attributes action only to the empirical world of illusion and not the ultimate reality itself: *ekasmimś cittatve ’pi [...] na ca tatra kriyātvam*, ‘Even if one posits the conscious principle as the only reality [...], there is no action in this conscious principle’ (trans. in Torella: 2013; see Dyczkowski (1987: 34-40), Alper (1979: 371), Silburn (15-19) and Ratié (2011: 9.III) for further comparisons of the non-dualism of Advaita Vedānta vs. Pratyabhijñā.

²⁵ On the metaphor of the mirror and its relation to other Indian schools see Rastogi (1984: 28–31), Lawrence (2005), Ratié (2011: 273–289; 2017), and Kaul (2020). For a relevant comparative phenomenological analysis of the significance of the mirror metaphor in East Asian Buddhism, see Laycock (1994).

resolves the problem of the one and the many—or at least renders it practically intelligible—for Pratyabhijñā thinkers.

To this extent, we should begin to discern how the Kashmir Śaiva identification of metaphysical reality with reflexive activity upends a more Bradleyan, Vedāntic, or even Buddhist conception of non-dual ‘reality’ as an undifferentiated mass of pure being and moves towards more ‘pragmatic’ philosophical doctrines and methods. Consider Dyczkowski’s germane comments on ultimate reality in non-dual Śaivism: “[It is] the concrete actuality of the fact of appearing, not passive unmanifest Being. Appearance (*ābhāsa*) alone is real. Appearing (*prakāśamānatva*) is equivalent to the fact of being...Everything is real according to the manner in which it appears. Even an illusion is in this sense real, insofar as it appears and is known in the manner in which it appears. The empirical and the real are identical categories of thought” (1987: 52) (cf. Lawrence 1999: 104).²⁶ This terse description represents the touchstone for pragmatic interpretations of Pratyabhijñā *à la* Peirce or James. For the Kashmir Śaivites, the world is a ‘symbol’ of absolute reality—that is, “as the manner in which it presents itself to us” (ibid.). Since the verbal essence of universal consciousness just *is* ‘to manifest’ through its own reflexive unity, any X that appears *in* self-consciousness is, *ipso facto*, nothing but *consciousness itself* appearing *as* X. Or, put most simply: There is no *appearing* without appearing *as*.²⁷ Abhinava succinctly expresses this pragmatic ethos in the epigraph—which, to my ears, sounds very much like something James might say in his essays on radical empiricism (but only if we replace the

²⁶ Although at this point in his exposition, Dyczkowski chooses to compare Kashmir Śaivism with Heidegger’s phenomenology (ibid: 53), his remark should also echo the relevant Peircean notion that even conventional ‘illusions’ or ‘errors’ are ‘real’ because their ‘reality’ does not consist merely in the manifest or determinate *image* of this or that person, but also to a certain irreducible *modality* of being (Thirdness) that expresses its objective nature *as a referential manifestation*.

²⁷ For a modern East Asian interpretation of this idea in the Tiantai school, see Ziporyn (2004). Note that this is a principle Dignāga and Dharmakīrti might agree with, insofar as the phenomenon of ‘blue’ necessarily appears in tandem with the awareness thereof (viz., this is basically the *sahopalambhaniyama* doctrine). But the crucial difference is that for Utpala and Abhinava, as we will see, there is no *appearing* ‘as’ without *relation* (at least, *qua śakti*).

final term ‘doctrine’ with ‘method’): “Whenever and however any form appears, just that is its very nature; this is the supreme (*upaniṣat*) doctrine.”²⁸ Hence the ontological ‘essence/substrate/nature’ of an object coextends with the mode of its phenomenal manifestation.²⁹ Like James and Peirce, then, the Pratyabhijñā thinkers endorse a real metaphysical unity between the way something appears and its objective form (viz., its ‘modality’ and ‘substance’/‘force’ and ‘content’ etc.), because we are not ever pragmatically entitled to separate the ‘what’ of knowledge from the ‘how’ of knowledge.

2. Pratyabhijñā Objective Idealism

a. Utpala’s Theory of Prakāśa and Vimarśa

Although Utpala attributes the origins of the Pratyabhijñā system to the *Śivadrṣṭi* and his guru, it is undoubtedly Utpala himself who brings the philosophical project of non-dual Kashmir Śaivism to full maturity. In the *ĪPK*, Utpala claims to offer a ‘new, easy path’ based on Somānanda’s teaching that can lead anyone to self-realization (presumably, that is, not just esoteric tantric initiates).³⁰ This path of rational inquiry consists of recognizing that the three *śaktis* of will

²⁸ *ata eva yadā yena vapuṣā bhāti yadyathā / tadā tathā tattadrūpamityeṣopaniṣatparā* (TĀ 10.82). Accordingly, Abhinava theorizes elsewhere that the manifestation of a non-veridical perception (i.e., one that is subsequently overturned) as not wholly ‘unreal’ due to a lack of knowledge of ‘reality’, but rather as ‘incomplete knowledge’ (*apūrṇakhyāti*) of reality: “Illusion (*bhrānti*) is simply knowledge (*akhyāti*) which is not complete (*apūrṇa*) due to the absence of complete manifestation (*pūrṇaprathā*).” *pūrṇaprathābhāvād apūrṇakhyātirūpeyam akhyātir eva bhrāntiḥ*. (*ĪPVV*, vol. III, p. 153; see Rastogi (1986: 8) and Ratié (2011: 651) for the epistemic details of this argument.)

²⁹ This explains the other name Abhinava deploys for the Pratyabhijñā school, viz., “the doctrine of [phenomenal] appearance/manifestation” (*ābhāsavāda*), or the “doctrine in which reality [corresponds only to] manifestations (*ābhāsavastutvavāda*)” (*IPV* vol. II, p. 163; *ĪPK* 2.4.12). Cf. Ratié: “Identity and difference, affirm the Pratyabhijñā, are both governed by the notion of manifestation, and the relationship between the substrate (*āśraya*) and what it is the substrate of is never anything other than the relationship between what manifests itself and the way in which it manifests itself—between being and its phenomenon” (2011a: 269).

³⁰ *iti prakāṭito mayā sughaṭa eṣa mārgo nava mahāgurubhir ucyate sma śivadrṣṭiśāstre yathā*. “Thus I have proclaimed this new (*nava*), easy (*sughaṭa*) path as it was explained by my distinguished guru [Somānanda] in the *Śivadrṣṭi śāstra*” (*ĪPK* IV.16).

(*iccha*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and action (*kriya*) that constitute sentient beings (*ajāda*)—as opposed to insentient or inert beings (*jaḍa*)—are the special faculties of Śiva Himself.³¹ Hence he effectively intends to ‘prove’ the truth of Somānanda’s cosmogonic vision purely through universally acceptable forms of rational argumentation. As the mind of the *yogin* follows the logic of Utpala’s dialectic, they ‘recognize recognition,’ so to speak, and, ideally, discover that the power of the *ātman* is none other than Lord Śiva.

To the extent a simple overview of Utpala’s system is possible, it is afforded through an analysis of his idiomatic employment of two terms already prevalent in Indian philosophical discourse at the time: *prakāśa* (‘light/manifestation’) and *vimarśa* (‘recognitive/reflexive judgment’). Apropos Somānanda’s cosmogonic schema, these two are, respectively, associated with the fundamental *śaktis* of cognition (*jñāna*) and action (*kriyā*) that create the universe. ĪPK I.5.11-14 is arguably the *locus classicus* of the doctrine of the transcendental unity of these terms in the Pratyabhijñā system—which, on Utpala’s account, encompasses and perfects the Upaniṣadic conception of the *ātman*, the tantric Āgamas, and the *vyākaraṇa* metaphysics of Bhartṛhari (which we discuss more fully in the following section):

The essential nature of light (or ‘manifestation,’ *prakāśa*) is recognitive judgment (*vimarśa*); otherwise light, though colored by objects, would be similar to an inert thing (e.g., a crystal). For this very reason, the self has been defined as ‘sentience,’ [meaning] the *activity* of consciousness (*citkriyā*) is [just] the *subject* of this activity (*citikarṭṛtā*). Indeed, it is in virtue of sentience that the self differs from insentient things. Consciousness has as its essential nature reflexive awareness (*pratyavamarśa*); it is the supreme Word (*paravāk*) that arises freely. It is freedom in the absolute sense, the sovereignty of the supreme Self. It is the luminous vibrating (*sphurattā*), the absolute being (*mahāsattā*), unmodified by space and time; it is that which is said to be the heart (*hrdayam*) of the supreme lord, insofar as it is his essence.³²

³¹ *tathā hi jaḍabhūtānām pratiṣṭhā jīvadāśrayā / jñānam kriyā ca bhūtānām jīvatām jīvanam matam. vastūnām jaḍajāḍabhedena dvaividhyam / tatra jaḍasvarūpasya jīvanīṣṭhā siddhiḥ, jīvatām puno jīvatvaṃ jīvanam jñānakriye eva (ĪPKV I.1.4).*

³² *svabhāvam avabhāsasya vimarśam vidur anyathā / prakāśo 'rthoparakto 'pi sphaṭikādijaḍopamaḥ // ātmāta eva caitanyam citkriyā citikarṭṛtā / tātparyeṇoditas tena jaḍāt sa hi vilakṣaṇaḥ // citiḥ pratyavamarśātmā parā vāk svarasoditā / svātantryam etan mukhyaṃ tad aiśvaryaṃ paramātmanaḥ // sā sphurattā mahāsattā deśakālāviśeṣinī / saiṣā sāratayā proktā hrdayam parameṣṭhinaḥ (ĪPK I.5.11-14) (my own trans. follows Torella’s (2013: 118-122) with slight adjustments.)*

As one can gather, *prakāśa* technically means something like ‘manifestation,’ ‘appearance,’ ‘cognition,’ ‘shining,’ ‘illumination,’ or just ‘light’, but it ultimately designates the self-luminous (*svaprakāśa*) nature of consciousness, as well as the cognitive or phenomenal mode of objective givenness.³³ In this respect, any *instance* of *prakāśa*—that is, a particular object that ‘shines’ or ‘appears’ in a cognitive form—presupposes the self-illumination associated with the reflexive consciousness (*vimarśa*) of the sentient knower (*ajādapramāṭr*). For the Pratyabhijñā idealist only “*knowledge is self-established*” (*svataḥ siddham*),³⁴ and therefore the cognition of inert matter presupposes a spontaneous form of vital consciousness whose reflexive capacity to *know* insentient objects as such does not depend upon anything other than its own intrinsic self-illumination. Since the appearance of insentient objects are contingent upon this self-illuminating nature of sentient consciousness, the external world only ‘shines’ or ‘appears’ in a parasitic fashion thereupon.

The other term, *vimarśa*, is more difficult to translate; indeed, Pratyabhijñā scholars often claim that *vimarśa* and other *mṛś* (literally ‘touch’) derived terms are basically untranslatable.³⁵ Ratié writes that *vimarśa* “refers primarily to the fact that consciousness is not merely manifestation (*prakāśa*), or not merely passively reflecting things, but becomes aware of them, i.e., apprehends or grasps that manifestation actively and spontaneously” (2011a: 159). *Vimarśa*

³³ ĪPKVV (vol II, p. 68): *prakāśa eva arthasya ātmā*; TĀ (3.2): *yaḥ prakāśaḥ sa sarvasya prakāśatvaṃ prayacchati*.

³⁴ Recall Whitehead in *The Concept of Nature* (32): “Knowledge is ultimate. There can be no explanation of the ‘why’ of knowledge; we can only describe the ‘what’ of knowledge. Namely we can analyse the content and its internal relations, but we cannot explain why there is knowledge.” Therefore, *the* purpose of “metaphysical science is not to *explain knowledge*, but exhibit in its utmost completeness our concept of reality.”

³⁵ Alper (1987) translated this term as “judgment”, but it has since been rendered into English as “recognitive apprehension/judgment” (Lawrence), “reflective awareness” (Torella), “self-consciousness, freedom, determinate consciousness” (Pandey), “recollection” (Skora), “grasp” or “realization” (Ratié), and “the self-referential capacity of consciousness” (Ortega). I agree with Prueitt (2016: 72) that ‘realization’ is probably the best, due to its connotations of a “moment of non-conceptual insight and the subsequent conceptual content of that awareness,” while also conveying an ambiguity between ontology and epistemology that the Pratyabhijñā seek to express. In any case, “recognitive judgment” is a useful translation for our purposes, provided we are mindful of its limitations.

therefore conveys the mode of reflexive *action* that practically enables the conceptual judgment of an appearance or manifestation (*prakāśa*); it does not, that is, designate mere intentional *content*, but the *sui generis* reflexive *capacity* of consciousness that spontaneously (*svātantrya*) ‘grasps itself’ in some fashion. Through the essential freedom of this primary interpretive act, consciousness thereupon dynamically manifests the objective world in the synthetic unity of judgment. As Abhinava explains:

The nature of this [Self] as the Great Lord consists in His reflexively judging (*vimṛśad*)—i.e., possessing [the nature of] continuous (*anavacchinna*) reflexive judgment (*vimarśa*), not being dependent upon any other [being], [and is] a singular mass of bliss. For just that reflexive judgment, whose essential nature is “I,” is the pure Cognition and Action [*śaktis*] of God (*deva*) in the ultimate sense, one who indulges in play, etc. Cognition has the nature of manifestation (*prakāśa*); Action is reflexive judgment (*vimarśa*) that has the nature of freedom (*svātantrya*). Moreover, recognitive judgment contains manifestation within itself. Therefore, Cognition and Action are, on the Supreme level, nothing but reflexive judgment (*vimarśa*). However, at the middling level (*parāpara*), which is that of Lord Sadāśiva, [cognition and action] consist of a reflexive judgment in which subjectivity (*ahantā*) and objectivity (*idantā*) are coextensive. And at the inferior level (*apara*), which is that of *māyā*, they appear to be dominated by objectivity. However, cognition is in every way nothing but recognitive judgment. For it has been said that without that there would be insentience. And that very [reflexive judgment] is Action.³⁶

In this sense, the trademark maneuver of Utpala’s rational reconstruction of the Śaiva mythology is that the ‘touch’ (*sprś/mṛś*) of Śakti—previously rendered in terms of the cosmogonic descent of the Goddess which creates the empirical world—becomes identified with the self-luminous (*svaprakāśa*) activity of reflexive judgment (*vimarśa*) that enables all phenomena to appear as such. Note, though, that the movement of reflexive awareness is not merely associated with the divine realm of pure consciousness, but operates at all three level of existence: from the ‘highest’ level of absolute unity; to the adulterated empirical consciousness of unity-in-diversity; all the

³⁶ *vimṛśadrūpatvam anavacchinnavimarśatā ananyonmukhatvam ānandaikaghanatvam, tadevāsya māheśvāryam / sa eva hi ahaṁbhāvātmā vimarśo devasya krīḍādimayasya śuddhe pāramārthikyau jñānakriye, prakāśarūpatā jñānam tatraiva svātantryātmā vimarśaḥ kriyā, vimarśaśca antaḥkṛtaprakāśaḥ, iti vimarśa eva parāvasthāyām jñānakriye, parāparāvasthāyām tu bhagavatsadāśivabhūvi idantāsāmānādhikaraṇyāpannāhatāvimarśasvabhāve, aparāvasthāyām ca māyāpade idaṁbhāvaprādhānyena vartamāne iti viśeṣaḥ / sarvathā tu vimarśa eva jñānam tena vinā hi jaḍabhāvo 'sya syāt iti ukta, sa eva ca kriyā (ĪPV (I.8.11), vol.1, 423-4; cf. Lawrence 1997: 135). Although the *śaktis* of cognition and action are ultimately unified with respect to Śiva, Abhinava here emphasizes the priority of “Action as *vimarśa* over Cognition as *prakāśa*” (Lawrence 1997: 135). In other words, the equation of the *śakti* of action with *vimarśa* itself underscores the fact that the self-manifestation (*svaprakāśa*) associated with sentient cognition—while ultimately one with the action of *vimarśa*—is nevertheless derivative from the pure action *śakti* associated with the unbroken unity of reflexive consciousness.*

way down to the apparent insentient plurality of mere external objects. The inner capacity of reflexive awareness is therefore defined in terms of the power of triadic consciousness to appear to itself as a continuum of more-or-less unified states of diversity.

Thus, while I choose to render *vimarśa* as ‘reflexive’ or ‘recognitive judgment’, given its architectonic implications, I concede that translating *vimarśa* simply as ‘judgment’ is problematic insofar as *vimarśa* is not strictly speaking a determinate intentional event, but rather designates the reflexive *capacity* of consciousness that *enables* conceptual determinacy to manifest. But I would also submit that one of the upshots of the Pratyabhijñā notion of *vimarśa* is precisely a reevaluation of what Western philosophers have frequently *called* ‘judgment’; namely, that the spontaneous capacity to reflexively apprehend a world can be exhaustively identified with a *determinate intentional* state—i.e., *one whose essential nature is internally fixed relative to the conceptual determinacy of its objective content*. As we will see below, Utpala argues that this identification of the unity of judgment *exclusively* with determinate intentional states fails to do justice to the kind of continuous activity that actually constitutes sentient awareness of the objective world.

In any case, whatever the translation, the etymology betrays Utpala’s distinctively *tantric* intent to fully transfigure the cosmogonic power of Śakti into a consistent philosophical schema: just as the universe cannot manifest independently of the creative energy of Śakti, so too can objects not appear, or shine, without a reflexive mode of activity identified with the constructive function of consciousness itself.³⁷ The rational unity of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa* hence transforms

³⁷ In Furlinger (54) study of *śakti* in Kashmir Śaivism, he argues that translating *vimarśa* as “reflective awareness” (cf. in Torella and Dyczkowski) conveys a misconstrued sense of rational cogitation, for “*vimarśa* happens exactly when the activity of reason ceases...the highest form of *vimarśa* on the level of (*cittattvam*) is clearly distinguished from the *vimarśa* of the (limited) cognizing subject, defined as a conceptual activity *vikalpa* which generates the distinction of subject and object.” While it is true that Utpala explicitly makes this distinction in the ĪPK (I. 6 4-5), I am not sure this means *vimarśa* ‘happens when the activity of reason ceases.’ I take Utpala’s point to be rather that the activity of *vimarśa*—viz., as coextensive with self-luminousness (*svaprakāśa*)—already always pervades and

the cosmogonic process of *śakti* and *śiva* into a transcendental logic of the triadic conditions that render the rational unity of the recognitive event possible. Drawing upon the *Spaṇḍa* image of Śakti as a paradoxical ‘self-luminous vibration’ of consciousness—like the mythic figure of Śiva himself—Utpala explains that the nature of Śiva is incomprehensible from the standpoint of a first-order predicate logic that governs determinate intentional content. For it consists in a seemingly paradoxical form of pure action whose self-luminous nature also remains ‘untouched by space and time’ (*deśakālāsparśāt*).³⁸ Thus, even though the pure knower (*ātman*) is said to ‘act’ in the reflexive process of judgment—due to its self-luminous and self-determinative nature—its synthetic unity remains essentially *transcendental*; viz., it is necessarily ‘real,’ but forever unobjectifiable and unrepresentable.³⁹

Yet, even though the subject is unrepresentable in its essential nature, the diverse objects of the external world remain continuous with its self-realizing action; otherwise, as already

underlies the dualistic judgments of practical awareness. In this sense, *vimarśa* is ‘happening’ in the very *midst* of ‘reason’—not just when it ‘ceases.’

³⁸ *sphuradrūpatā sphuranakarṭṛtā abhāvāpratiyoginy abhāvavyāpinī sattā bhavattā bhavanakarṭṛtā nityā deśakālāsparśāt saiva pratyavamarśātmā citikriyāśaktiḥ / sāvīśvātmanaḥ parameśvarasya svātmapratiṣṭhārūpā hrdayam iti tatra tatrāgame nigadyate* (I.5.15). This paradoxical nature of consciousness—as both reflexive activity and pure self-luminousness—is reflected in Śaiva terminology in the opposing descriptions of reality as a ‘mass of consciousness’ (*cidghana*) and ‘flow of consciousness’ (*cidrasa*) (see Bansat-Boudon 2014: 41-48). Cf. also Jayaratha’s *Tantrālokaviveka* [TĀV] ad TĀV 123, which expresses the basic equivalence of the terms *bhāsate*, *prathate* and *sphāra* in Abhinava’s text: *atrānandapūrṇe dhāmani asaṃkocavikāsino nistarāṅgaladhiprakhyasya pūrṇasya prakāśasya asaṃkocavikāsikā sadaiva sṛṣṭisaṃhāramayī, ata eva durghaṭakāriṇī svātantryākhyā śaktiḥ bhāsate svātmaikātmyena prathate, yan mātmyādiyān viśvasphāraḥ sadaiva sṛṣṭisaṃhāradaśādhiśāyitām eīty arthaḥ*. “‘There’ [means] in that place overflowing with bliss;—[Śiva] who never expands or contracts’ is all-encompassing Light, said to be [like] a waveless ocean; “in expansion and contraction” [means] eternally composed of creation and destruction. For this very reason, [his] “energy” [is said to] “accomplish the impossible”, in virtue of which it may also be termed “freedom”; [so that energy] “manifests itself” (*bhāsate*), [i.e.,] it extends itself (*prathate*) [as everything] inasmuch as it is [reflexively] identical with itself [viz., incapable of destroying its own nature]”; because of whose magnificent work, the extension of the universe (*viśvasphāra*) [is described] in such a form, eternally tending toward being governed by conditions of creation and destruction’ (in Bansat-Boudon *ibid*: 49, fn. 29).

³⁹ (Cf. ĪPK I.1.2 and ĪPVV I: p. 80). This point contributes to the *aesthetic* dimension of self-realization of Kashmir Śaivism, and Abhinavagupta’s work in particular, where the experience of Śiva at the highest level of consciousness corresponds to a state of *camatkāra*: An eternal state of self-enjoyment and self-amazement apropos the creative energy of one’s own being as *śakti* (cf. Torella 2016: 10 and Biernacki: 2023). We discuss this further in the concluding chapter.

stated, they could not *appear as such* within sentient consciousness.⁴⁰ It is precisely for this reason that even ‘inert’ external objects cannot be considered wholly unreal relative to the metaphysical ground of sentient consciousness. For just to the extent that external objects can be said to *appear at all*, that is, they also thereby necessarily partake in the metaphysical ultimacy of consciousness:

Here [in the Pratyabhijñā system], just as (tāvat) the diversity of beings are reflexively judged (vimṛśyate), in that very manner (tathā) do they exist. This is so because being (astitva) depends on manifestation (prakāśa). That is, there is the manifestation of being as depending on reflexive judgment (vimarśa) regarding what is brought about through this manifestation (prakāśa). For if a thing were not reflexively apprehended, then how could there be an answer to the questions of why it is not blue or yellow, existent or nonexistent?⁴¹ Therefore, just as much and in whatever way (yat yathā yāvat) something is reflexively apprehended (vimṛśyate) and uncontradicted, in just that very manner it exists (tat tathā tāvat asti).⁴²

As I read this passage, the abundance of relative-correlative syntax underscores the Pratyabhijñā coextension of the ‘modal’ action of *vimarśa* with the ‘substantial’ being of *prakāśa*. According to Pratyabhijñā, because the unity of the activity that manifests cognitive content always coextends with the mode of its self-consciousness as such, nothing can be more ‘real’ than the recognition of the objective world!⁴³ But the world should not thereby be reified as something

⁴⁰ Depending upon how you interpret Kant, the Pratyabhijñā may be said to diverge in their conviction that nothing outside the determinative activity of self-consciousness could appear as anything within it unless its nature is ontologically *continuous* with this activity. In other words, a reified interpretation of the noumenal is discredited merely in virtue of the intrinsically self-illuminating structure of self-conscious cognition, whose sentience consists in the fact that it cannot illuminate anything fundamentally other than itself (on this point, see Arnold (2008) and Ratié (2011b) and (2014)). This is also precisely where Hegel and Peirce disembark from Kant’s dichotomous system of thought into a triadic metaphysics.

⁴¹ Cf. Peirce: “But we may also say, in general, that if nothing real exists, then, since every question supposes that something exists—for it maintains its own urgency—it supposes only illusions to exist. But the existence even of an illusion is a reality; for an illusion affects all men, or it does not. In the former case, it is a reality according to our theory of reality; in the latter case, it is independent of the state of mind of any individuals except those whom it happens to affect. So that the answer to the question, Why is anything real? is this: That question means, “supposing anything to exist, why is something real?” The answer is, that that very existence is reality by definition” (Lane: 4.2).

⁴² *iha tāvat bhāvarāśiryathā vimṛśyate tathā asti, astitvasya prakāśaṃ śaraṅīkurvataḥ prakāśaprāṇitadeśīyaṃ āśritya samunmevāt , avimṛṣṭaṃ hi yadi vastu tanna nīlaṃ na pītaṃ na sat na asaditi kuta iti paryanuyoge kimuttaraṃ syāt / tena yad yathā yāvat avādhitaṃ vimṛśyate tat tathā tāvat asti* (ĪPV vol 1., p. 61-2; cf. Lawrence 1997: 120-21).

⁴³ Indeed, ‘non-existence’ is technically non-existent for the Kashmir Śaivites, insofar as this state is unintelligible from the perspective of the absolute ‘fullness’ of consciousness. In other words, any given *concept* of non-existent

that exists wholly independent of the unity of the action that constitutes cognitive judgment, since, if it was radically discontinuous with the reflexive capacities of sentient consciousness, it could not in the first place ‘shine’ as such therein.⁴⁴

entities (like the canonical Indian examples of a flower in the sky or the son of a barren women, etc.) presupposes the existence of an act of consciousness with respect to the apprehension of these very notions: *sphuradrūpatā sphuranakarṭṛtā abhāvāpratyoginy abhāvavyāpīnī sattā bhavattā bhavanakarṭṛtā nityā deśakālāsparsāt saiva pratyavamarśātmā citikriyāśaktiḥ*. “[The luminous vibration (*sphurattā*), namely] the fact of having a form in the process of luminous motion (*sphuradrūpatā*), the fact of being the subject of the vibration (*sphuranakarṭṛtā*), it is being (*sattā*) which is not the relative opposite (*pratyogin*) of non-being (*abhāva*), [because it] penetrates [also] into non-being; existence (*bhavattā*) is the subject of the action of existing (*bhavanakarṭṛtā*), [and is] eternal because it has no contact with place and time; this is the power of action of consciousness (*citikriyāśakti*) which consists of reflexive awareness (*pratyavamarśa*)” (ĪPKV I.5.14; cf. Ratié (2011: 687) and Torella (2013: 122)). This represents a large part of their argument for the validity of their own objective idealism against the Buddhist epistemic idealist, who leaves the possibility of the positive existence of unmanifest noumenon—like well-defined objects externally related to consciousness—skeptically open: “In other words, according to the Śaiva nondualists, the external object is absurd not only because its nature cannot be account for whether it is made of parts or not, but also...because *an absolutely unmanifest entity cannot be conceptualized at all, so there is no way to give any rational account of it*” (Ratié 2014: 368) (recall, in this regard, Peirce’s idealistic contention that being and cognizability are coextensive).

⁴⁴ There is a relevant rift in how to interpret the relationship between the pluralistic objects of the world and the subjective nature of reflexive consciousness. Ferrante argues (2021: 95-103), in this regard, that “the best way to interpret the Śaiva philosophy is to regard it not as a form of idealism but as something close to panpsychism”—i.e., the view that all things have mind in some fashion.” He cites ĪPK I.5.2: *prāgīvārtho ‘prakāśaḥ syāt prakāśāmatayā vinā / na ca prakāśo bhinnāḥ syād ātmārthasya prakāśatā*: “If light were not the very nature of an object, it would remain a non-light as before. And light is not different from the object. The essential nature of an object consists in its being light.” On Ferrante’s reading, this verse (and Abhinava’s comments thereon) speaks to the fact that “the conscious component of experience...is actually ubiquitous and present in every aspect of reality, even in material things” (102). In adopting this ‘overlooked’ panpsychist interpretation, he seeks to defend Pratyabhijñā from Ganeri (2012), who critiques Utpala’s “Pure Consciousness View” on the grounds that it entails an extremely attenuated form of disembodied ‘selfhood’ that supposedly becomes utterly unrecognizable as anything like a ‘self.’ Additionally, Ganeri believes this view suggests a potential solipsism in the radical denial of any final ontological pluralism. While I understand Ferrante’s impulse to secure Pratyabhijñā from Ganeri’s unsympathetic appraisal, I do not believe his construal of Utpala’s philosophy as a form of ‘panpsychism’ effectively does so. For even if this passage and its commentary can be read as endorsing some form of panpsychism, the *vast majority of Utpala’s corpus is dedicated to the thesis that reality comprises a single, all-powerful, dynamic form of absolute consciousness*. (Cf. e.g., APS (13): *tataś ca bhagavan sadāśivo jānātīty ataḥ prabhkṛti kimir api jānātīty antam eka eva pramātā*). At an *ultimate* level of description, Utpala repeatedly proclaims that the essential nature of all realities is the singular freedom (*svātantrya*) and bliss (*ananda*) of one (*eka*) boundless non-dual consciousness (*cit*). Thus, any thesis of panpsychism that attempts to preserve ontological pluralism at the expense of this most axiomatic of Pratyabhijñā doctrines fails to articulate the views of Utpala and Abhinava—which, in my opinion, most definitely preclude the *nominalist* inclinations of some modern experiential panpsychists. Instead, I think a better, Peircean defense against Ganeri’s criticisms come from the Pratyabhijñā philosophers themselves. In particular, as Ratié (2007) recounts, Pratyabhijñā argued that knowledge of other minds is not based on either perception or inference but involves a special kind of ‘guess’ (*ūha*), based on the fact that we partly intuit the essential freedom of the Other, yet we cannot fully represent it conceptually; hence this knowledge has the nature of a ‘guess’ that cannot be property characterized strictly in terms of the Buddhist dichotomous means of knowledge, but somehow can be said to practically involve both (Ratié *ibid*: 355; cf. ĪPVV vol. 1 p., 101). Although I don’t have the space to articulate the idea fully here, I would argue that the non-solipsistic efficacy of the Pratyabhijñā ‘guess’ suggests that they acknowledge the inferential validity of Peircean ‘abductive’ modes of inference to justify knowledge of other minds based on a shared communal sense of creative freedom. This form of knowledge *is not arrived at strictly through either induction or deduction*, but rather corresponds to the irreducible Thirdness of practical activity—viz, the

In this way, the freedom and energy of *śakti* becomes practically irrefutable, insofar as one’s self-consciousness of this practical denial already betrays the reflexive presence of *śakti*. Lawrence thus comments that, in the Pratyabhijñā deduction, “[w]e are led to the startling realization that self-recognition, the thesis-goal of the Śaiva’s inferential-ritual methodology is identical with the reason [i.e., *śakti*] that justifies it. That is, one is inferentially led to the recognition that one is the Lord, because everything is one’s self-recognition” (1999: 96). From this perspective, we can characterize Utpala’s transcendental project as the attempt to ‘prove’ Trika Śaivism through the steadfast pragmatic identification of epistemology and ontology. Similar to Peirce’s logic of events, that is, the unity of the categories that manifest (*prakāśa*) the pluralistic world is not practically intelligible as anything other than the reflexive or recognitive consciousness of this unity (*vimarśa*). So Utpala and Abhinava employ the language of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa* to save face *vis-à-vis* a common-sense conventional realism, despite the fact that—on a *prima facie* reading of certain passages, anyway—Utpala can sometimes sound as though he endorses a more monistic idealism in the manner of, say, Advaita or Bradley.

b. Action as Constitutive of Cognition

At this point, Utpala’s switcheroo strategy for undermining Buddhist eliminativism should be coming into view; for Utpala’s commitment to the idea that cognition is intrinsically reflexive, or

inexpressible experience of necessary *continuity* that obtains between conceptual and perceptual forms of knowledge, which prompts the necessary creative deployment of working hypothesis for the sake of practical inquiry (see, on this note, Arnold (2021c)). Hence, it is not through *denying* the objective idealism of Pratyabhijñā that it resists the charge of solipsism, but rather *it is precisely in virtue of their objective ‘idealism’* that conventional activities can be said to practically presuppose the ‘intuitive conjecture’ of the *ātman*’s implicit unity with other minds.

self-illuminating, echoes Dignāga’s *own* position on *svasaṃvedana* in the PS.⁴⁵ Recall that Dignāga argued for the complete ontological dissolution of the epistemic distinction between means and result when it comes to the nature of self-consciousness—because, in this case, no temporal or logical ‘distance’ obtains between the supposed perceptual means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) and its concrete ‘result’ (*phala*). But for the Pramāṇavāda Buddhists, the constitutively *nonconceptual* (*nirvikalpa*) status of self-consciousness is inferred on the *nominalist* grounds that ‘perception’ must definitionally denote an intrinsically *inactive* (*nirvyāpāra*) mode of cognition; namely, the mode identified with the pure reflexive givenness of the cognitive image that occurs when an impersonal set of extrinsic particulars causally impinges upon the various sense organs (*indriya-pratyakṣa*) and becomes subsequently apprehended through the faculty of ‘mental perception’ (viz., *manasa-pratyakṣa*). In the immediate self-conscious ‘intuition’ of mental perception, the triadic referents that comprise the mediated action of knowledge break down (viz., between the cognizer, object cognized, and the instrumental means of cognition), and we must therefore accordingly discard the ontological significance of the *kāraṇa* relations that characterize traditional grammatical analysis of discursive and epistemic practices (or more charitably, the triadic relation between these referents represents an *ex post facto* conventional description for an autonomously intelligible instance of the self-consciousness of perceptual cognition).

Now, consider the fact that the Pratyabhijñā thinkers—who champion the reality of the *ātman* as vociferously as any Brahminical sect—*also accept Dignāga’s identification of epistemic means and result*. One might then naturally ask: How can this be? For doesn’t the conceptual collapse of the *kāraṇa* relations discussed in Chapter III necessarily derive from the

⁴⁵ Although Williams (1998: 25) suggest that Madhyamaka-Yogācāra Buddhists—i.e., Śāntarakṣita—pioneered the doctrine of reflexive self-awareness, Ferrante (2017), following Rastogi (2009: 325) and Torella (2013: 125), corrects this misimpression: Bhartṛhari was actually the first to argue that cognition is intrinsically reflexive.

nominalist suppositions of Sautrāntika reductionism, which adamantly denies the ultimate existence of any perduring *substances*—not least of which is the existence of any so-called ‘self’ that ontologically ‘straddles’ distinct cognitions?

However, for the Pratyabhijñā Śaivites, we have seen that the ultimate ontological referent of ‘self’ does not reduce to a passive perceptual cognition of momentary particulars—or, for similar reasons, the passive *śāntabrahman* of Advaita Vedānta—but the reflexive dynamism of *śakti* in its pure form. From this perspective, it is *precisely because* the epistemic means (*pramāṇa*) discloses a reflexive nature in the judgment of the objective result (*phala*) that the final referent of ‘self’—the intrinsic self-luminous nature of each cognition—is fundamentally *active*. As Utpala explains:

The [means of knowledge is that] in virtue of which an object is [conceptually] determined as such (*vyavatiṣṭhate*): “this thing with such and such nature.” Although that [*pramāṇa*] is self-luminous (*svābhāsa*), it newly arises [at each moment]. This [light], whose essence is the inner reflective judgment (*vimarśa*) of that [which appears], becomes knowledge (*miti*) regarding an object that lacks spatio-temporal distinctions etc., [and is] expressed by a single name ([to the degree that such knowledge] is not overturned).⁴⁶

Commenting upon these verses, Abhinavagupta remarks that “...here [i.e., for the Śaivites], the effect (*phalam*) *just is* the ‘action’ (‘*vyāpāra*’) [of the subject]—and activity (*vyāpāra*) establishes (*siddha*) precisely a form (*ākāra*) that is not different from the agent of action and the instrument of action. For this reason, there is no distinction between *pramāṇa* and *phala*.”⁴⁷

In effect, the Śaivites reverse Dignāga’s order of explanation completely: The epistemic and ultimate identification of the *pramāṇa* and *phala* does *not* obtain in virtue of the constitutively *passive* self-consciousness of perceptual cognition (which wholly negates the objective validity of the conventional distinctions between the indeterminate object, the means for its

⁴⁶ ĪPK (II.3.1-2) *idam etādṛgityevaṃ yad vaśād vyavatiṣṭhate / vastu pramāṇaṃ tat so 'pi svābhāso 'bhinavodayaḥ // so 'ntas tathāvimarśātmā deśakālādyabhedini / ekābhidhānaviṣaye mitir vastuny abādhitā* (cf. Torella 1992: 330).

⁴⁷ *kiṃ ca iha vyāpārarūpameva phalaṃ vyāpāraśca vyāpriyamāṇāt vyāpāryamāṇāt vā ananyākāra eva siddhaḥ, iti abhedah pramāṇaphalayoḥ* (IPV 3.3.2) (Torella 2013: 62, fn.4).

apprehension, and its determinate conceptual judgment); rather, the *pramāṇa* and *phala* are non-dual *precisely because* the so-called determinative ‘activity’ in question does not manifest (*siddha*) as anything other than the reflexive apprehension of the object itself.⁴⁸ As Torella explains, “*vyāpāra*...not only exists but constitutes the very essence of *pramā* and on this, according to the Śaivas, hinges the nondifferentiation of *pramāṇa* and *pramā*: *vyāpāra* is not a different reality from the subject that acts and from the instrument that is set in action” (1992: 330-1). Hence, while the Pratyabhijñā would wholeheartedly *agree* with Dignāga that ‘however the image of the object appears to [self-conscious] cognition...the object is apprehended in just that very form,’ (PS 1.9) they would adamantly insist that Dignāga’s own nominalist construal of self-consciousness—as intrinsically inactive, and, at least for Vasubandhu and Dharmakīrti, radically momentary—practically undermines the rational conditions for the possibility of *this very fact*.

In some sense, then, Utpala takes up right from where the Pramāṇavāda epistemological project left off—viz., at the ‘transcendental’ implications of the necessary self-consciousness of contentful cognition. But in their unyielding identification of reflexive consciousness with a form of *śakti*, the Pratyabhijñā completely invert the Buddhist doctrine of *svasaṃvedana*. The latter hold that since the reflexive nature of cognition corresponds entirely to a perceptual state passively generated by the real particular, the apparently personal ‘self-consciousness’ of empirical activity is only ever ontologically ‘established’ in virtue of the constitutively *actual* nature of the impersonal causal factors that generate it. Utpala and Abhinava claim, instead,

⁴⁸ Torella (1992: 330-1) pinpoints the centrality of momentariness in this dispute: “The two positions [i.e., the Buddhist and Śaivites on *pramāṇavāda*] differ on the concept of the “function, activity” (*vyāpāra*) carried out by the elements occurring in cognition. *Vyāpāra* is completely denied by the Buddhists, who consider every distinction on this basis purely imaginary (*utprekṣita*), so much so that, for example, an act such as piercing with an arrow may be analyzed in various ways, all equally legitimate, attributing to the bow the function (*vyāpāra*) either of *kartr*, or *karāṇa*, or *apadāna*. But, above all, the impossibility of *vyāpāra* is the direct consequence of the doctrine of momentariness. Cognition, therefore, only “appears” to be endowed with a function (*savyaparam ivabhati*).”

that the intrinsic self-consciousness of cognition consists precisely in the unity of knowledge and action—not, mind you, any particular ‘action’ referred to *within* a predicative judgment, but a general form of action *qua* the intentional realization of knowledge itself.⁴⁹ It is therefore exactly the Buddhist’s identification of *pramāṇa* and *phala* that makes ‘activity’ *ineliminable* from the cognitive process; or rather, it is precisely *because* the sheer *appearance* of objects in consciousness (i.e., ‘*phala*’) cannot be practically disentangled from *the means by which they are determined as such* (i.e., ‘*pramāṇa*’) that objective idealism finds purchase against the epistemic idealism of Dignāga and his ilk. According to the Pratyabhijñā, without some constructive mode of *action* intrinsic to the nature of cognition, no object could appear in practical judgment—a fact that represents, just as Dignāga and Dharmakīrti themselves affirm, the necessary fact of the phenomenal indistinguishability between *how* something appears in the unity of self-consciousness and the objective *form* of the appearance itself.

As mentioned, a common Pratyabhijñā argument for the necessary unity of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa* is that only the free, self-luminous nature of reflexive cognition (*vimarśa*) can manifest, or illuminate, the inert objects of the external world. More specifically, no inert object (*jaḍa*) can manifest or appear within sentient consciousness independently of the self-illuminating (*svaparakāśa*) nature of the sentient knower (*ajāḍapramātr*), because only the free activity of consciousness, or the *ātman*, can manifest as both *itself*, and as something *other* than itself, simultaneously.⁵⁰ On this account, something constitutively insentient—like the prototypical

⁴⁹ Due to the intrinsic self-consciousness of the activity of judgment, Kimhi insists that what is expressed by “something of the form ‘S thinks that p’ should not be logically assimilated to that which is expressed by sentences such as ‘S is doing φ’ or ‘S is φ-ing’....The ‘thinks’ in ‘S thinks’ is an activity in what is logically a fundamentally different sense of ‘activity’ from any expressed by verbs in predicative propositions of the form ‘S is φ-ing.’...We misunderstand this uniqueness if we construe it in terms of the exceptional nature of either the substance or attributes involved in a nexus of predication” (15-6).

⁵⁰ Cf. ĪPV (vol.1, p.163): *ata eva granthakṛṭaivānyatroktam: evam ātmany asatkalpāh prakāśasyaiva santy amī / jadāh prakāśa evāsti svātmanah svaparātmabhih // iti tad yadi prakāśas tadā bhavaty arthah, prakāśas cāsau katham? yadi prakāśataiva ghaṭasya vapuh saiva paṭasyety ādi viśvavapuh prakāśah siddhah.*

example of an inert jar—does not have the capacity to make *itself* known *qua* an appearance or manifestation: Like the Buddhist’s nominal particular, insentient objects are self-contained (*svāsamapin*), incapable of active ‘turning toward’ (*nonmukhībhavati*) another—i.e., an ‘intentional’ (*aunmukhya*) object.⁵¹ Furthermore, an insentient object cannot be made known by anything with a similarly *inert* nature, as this would require the reflexive capacity of the sentient knower. Alternatively, if self-illumination represented a property of insentient objects, rather than the sentient consciousness of the knowing subject, all objects would shine or manifest indiscriminately, and hence the delimited and differentiated perspective of practical awareness would be undermined (Torella 2013: 112).

For our purposes, Utpala’s *relational* point is that, just like the procession of *momentary perceptual cognitions*, insentient objects *in and of themselves* cannot apprehend or grasp any other object in an intentional relation; any apparent ‘togetherness’ or ‘connection’ (*samanvaya*) of discrete entities—*whether apropos the determinacy of perceptual cognitions or inert objects*—can only be established through the free action of a unifying consciousness. Or, in other words, no strictly *externally related* entities or events can manifest the *internal relatedness* of the object *vis-à-vis* the subject of intentional judgment:

⁵¹ In translating ‘*aunmukhya*’ as ‘intentionality’ I am following Ratié’s translation of the ĪPV (vol I, p.215): *yadi vyatiriktam jñeyam syāt tat jñātrrūpasya ātmano yat etat jñeyaviṣayam aunmukhyaṃ svasaṃvedanasiddham drśyate tat na aśya syāt, tena vyatiriktaviṣayaunmukhyena anyādhīnatvaṃ nāma pāraṅtryam aśya ānīyate / pāraṅtryam ca svātantryasya viruddham / svātantryameva ca ananyamukhapreṣṭitvam ātmanaḥ svarūpam , iti vyatiriktonmukha ātmā anātmaiva syāt / anātmā ca jaḍo jñeyam prati na unmukhībhavati iti prasaṅgaḥ / tataḥ prasaṅgaviparyayāt idamāyātam—avyatiriktonmukhaḥ svatantraḥ san ātmānameva jñeyīkaroti iti.* “If the object of knowledge were distinct [from consciousness] intentionality (*aunmukhya*) of the Self who is the knowing subject, which aims at the object of knowledge [and] which we experience [as being] established through [mere] self-consciousness, could not belong to this [Self]. [For] this intentionality aiming at something distinct [from the Self] would entail for the [Self] what is called “dependence on the Other”—[i.e.,] heteronomy (*pāraṅtrya*). But heteronomy is contradictory to autonomy (*svātantrya*); and it is autonomy, characterized by an absence of expectation from the Other, which is the nature of the Self; therefore, a Self that would be turned towards (*unmukha*) an [entity] distinct from it would not be a Self at all. And that which is not a Self, [i.e.,] which is inert, does not turn towards (*nonmukhībhavati*) an object of knowledge—such is the consequence [if the object of knowledge is distinct from consciousness]. So this is what follows if one reverses this [unwanted] consequence: [the Self] makes itself an object while being free (*svātantra*), [i.e.,] while not being turned towards (*unmukha*) an [entity] distinct [from it]” (2011: 541; 2010: 470).

[Only if things rest on a single knowing subject (*ekapramātr*) can] objects, affected by the order of space and time [and] restricted to themselves (*svasamāpin*), be established as manifesting together (*sakṛdābhāsa*); otherwise, how is there a connection?⁵²

Abhinava explains:

What connection (*samanvaya*) [could there possibly be] between inert entities (*jaḍa*)—i.e., between [perceptual] cognitions (*jñāna*) of these [entities], the conceptions (*vikalpa*) of these [entities], and the determinate judgment (*niścaya*) of these entities—[insofar as they] do not relinquish their spatial order (*deśakrama*) and temporal order (*kālakrama*) and are “confined to themselves” (*svasamāpin*), [viz.] they abide merely in their own nature? [With this, Utpala] means there is no connection. For this connection occurs through simultaneous appearance (*sakṛdābhāsa*), [in other words,] in virtue of a manifestation which involves a conjunction (*yojanā*) that consists of a synthesis (*miśṛikaraṇa*) of the place, time and form [of each object]. And it is not otherwise possible; for [just as] when currents [of the same river] are exhausted completely separate [from each other], the twigs, grasses, etc., being carried away have no connection whatsoever.⁵³

We will discuss the important notion of ‘intentional synthesis’ (*anusamdhāna*) below. For now, though, we can begin to appreciate how Utpala’s identification of *jñāna* and *kriyā* suggests a certain form of relational realism apropos intentional life, whereby the *kind* of ‘action’ constitutive of reflexive cognition translates into the modes of phenomenal togetherness that appearances assume in accord with the basic conceptual and representational categories of synthetic judgment.⁵⁴ Just like externally related detritus of two different streams of a single

⁵² *deśakālakramajuṣām arthānām svasamāpinām / sakṛdābhāsasādhyo ‘sāv anyathā kaḥ samanvayaḥ* (ĪPK I.7.3-4).

⁵³ *arthānām jaḍānām, tajjñānām tadvikalpānām tanniścayānām ca deśakramaṃ kālakramaṃ cātyajatām, svasamāpinām—svarūpamātrapraṭiṣṭhānām, kaḥ samanvayaḥ, na kaścit ityarthah, yato hi asau samanvayaḥ sakṛdābhāsa deśakālākāramiśṛikaraṇātmanā yojanābhāsa sādhyatūṃ śakyah nānyathā, na hi pṛthakpṛthak pariḷkṣṇeṣu srotāḥsu tadūhyamānāḥ tṛṇolapādayaḥ samanvayaṃ kaṃcit yānti iti* (ĪPV, vol. I, 283; cf. Ratié 2011: 145-6; Torella 2013: 136-7).

⁵⁴ Cf. Jonas Held’s comments on Kantian transcendental synthesis: “For Kant, this act [of judgment] does not form or produce a product distinct from the act of synthesis itself. The act of combining representations is self-conscious. In putting representations together, you are at the very same time aware of their unity. As Kant writes: ‘Combination is the representation of the synthetic unity of the manifold.’ To combine representations is not to form or to produce a distinct representation but to hold the representation together in one consciousness and to be aware of their unity in holding them together. So, holding representations together . . . and being aware of their unity are not two separate acts, but one and the same act. . . . Kant defines a judgment as ‘the representation of the unity of the consciousness of various representations.’ According to Kant, a judgment is a mental act; it is the activity of combining two representations and being aware of their unity. If we now understand the activity of combining as a synthetic activity along the [above] lines. . . , it follows that the awareness of the unity of judgment is neither a product produced by the activity of combining the representations, nor a further act. Instead, in combining representations, you are aware of their unity. . . . [T]he unity of the content of a judgment is constituted by the act of judging” (quoted in Miguens: 680-1). The question of whether this means the synthetic unity of representations is *identical* with the self-consciousness of judgment (viz., objective idealism), or rather that the act of synthesis stands to synthesized content in a relationship of ‘form to matter’, remains a subject of contention among Kantian philosophers. But Bhartṛhari and Pratyabhijñā would contend—along with James and Peirce—that the practical form of self-consciousness does not

river, the diversity of external appearances presupposes contact with a continuous existence whereby their diffuse modes of operation can be synthetically reconciled and established according to the reflexive nature of phenomenal consciousness.

In short, the Pratyabhijñā leverage a ‘constitutive’ view of *svasaṃvedana*—according to which ‘self-consciousness’ just designates that which distinguishes insentient from sentient beings (cf. Arnold 2010)—to show that a certain form of activity must be intrinsic to the nature of cognition/manifestation (*prakāśa*) itself.⁵⁵ While the Buddhists are surely *right*, then, to uphold the pure self-illumination (*svaprakāśa*) of cognition, they erroneously think this entails its intrinsically reflexive ‘aspect’ is completely devoid of intrinsic action (cf. Ratié 2007: 342). The Pratyabhijñā thinkers alternatively argue that the intrinsic self-consciousness of cognition—far from rendering cognition constitutively *bereft* of any real synthetic activity associated with the relational judgments of sentient beings—proves that action is internally related to thought and being at the most fundamental level of description possible. The crux of the issue is that the relational power of the *ātman* does not *inhere* in a substantial existent like a functional activity (*vyāpāra*); likewise, it does not appear as a misbegotten conceptual ‘imposition’ (*kalpanā*) on a series of static, momentary, perceptual ‘images’ (*ākāra*). Rather, as we will discuss further below, the appearance of actual existents under the ascription of such and such predicative forms can only occur because of the dynamic unity of the metaphysical subject; that is to say, the unity

simply equate to a determinate propositional judgment ‘*p*’, but the implicate and tacit forms of cognition that precede, enter into, and culminate in this intentional content.

⁵⁵ In the Buddhist context, this ‘constitutive’ view of self-consciousness was most notably championed by Śāntarakṣita in the TS: “Cognitive awareness arises as something that is distinct from all insentient objects. This reflexive awareness of that [cognition] is nothing other than its not being insentient.” *vijñānaṃ jaḍarūpebhyo vyāvṛttaṃ upajāyate / iyaṃ evā ’tmasaṃvittir asya yā ’jaḍarūpatā* (cf. Blumenthal 2004: 237; and Coseru 2012: 7.3). Much ink has been spilt with respect to Candrakīrti’s rejection of *svasaṃvedana* even at a conventional level of description—which, according to Arnold (2012) might simply amount to the incoherent denial of the manifest fact “that we are conscious,” given Śāntarakṣita’s definition of self-consciousness as merely the mark of sentient being. While I don’t have the space to go into details here, one would surmise the Pratyabhijñā thinkers would press Śāntarakṣita even further with respect to the ultimate reality of *svasaṃvedana*, insofar as the manifestation of the interrelatedness of all phenomena—and thus their essential *groundlessness* on a Madhyamaka account—rests upon the transcendental activity of the self-conscious subject.

of ‘action’ and ‘relation’ point to the very essence of conceptual judgment as a recognitive *process*, as something done or achieved. It is not, therefore, that the particular entities of an exhaustively *perceptual* mode of self-consciousness exist wholly *independent* of their relational and conceptual determination. Instead, practically speaking, what we call intentional self-consciousness *just is* the *sui generis* experiential form of objective continuity that obtains between the perceptual and discursive phases of being. If the Śaiva thinkers are correct about the intrinsic relational capacity of self-consciousness, then the Buddhists cannot adopt the theory of *svasaṃvitti* as *pramāṇaphala* and, in the same breath, claim it remains fundamentally inactive or non-relational in its essential nature.

c. The Pure Subject of Experience

One important corollary of the Pratyabhijñā identification of *jñāna* and *kriyā* is that no cognition can be the object of any other cognition. Utpala inherits this idea from Bhartṛhari, who was the first to argue that the essential self-illuminating nature (*svaprakāśa*) of cognition precludes a complete formal closure of its intentional objectification: “Just as a light is never illuminated by another light, similarly what has the form of a cognition cannot be apprehended by another cognition.”⁵⁶ Pertinently, commenting on this verse, Hellarāja argues that the self-illumination of cognition is established in virtue of the logical and temporal regress that would ensue were cognitions and their self-apprehension distinct events.⁵⁷ Part of the reason for this

⁵⁶ *yathā jyotiḥ prakāśena nānyenābhiprakāśyate / jñānākāras tathānyena na jñānenopagrhyate* (VP III.1.106; cf. Ferrante 2017).

⁵⁷ Interestingly, one of the arguments that Hellarāja deploys involves the irreducibly private *modality* of first-person cognition vs. the public contentful objects of second-order cognition; that is, one can cognize the same objective content as another person, but one cannot cognize this content *in the same way* that the other person does. Thus, the complete objectification of cognition is not admissible based on the necessary *internal relatedness of the modal features of personal consciousness to each cognition*.

doctrine is thus the familiar relational regress that would attend so-called ‘higher-order’ theories of self-consciousness critiqued by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti: If C_1 requires C_2 in order to self-consciously appear as such, then C_2 would also logically require a C_3 for the same reason, and so on, which would never bottom-out in a determinate intentional awareness (cf. Kellner: 2010; 2011).

But the Pratyabhijñā thinkers also contend (again, following Bhartṛhari) that to posit a fully objectified cognition would simply be to attribute a property to cognition that contradicts the definitional property (*vyāpaka*) thereof—i.e., its intrinsic self-illumination, which is just the fact that it is *not* insentient. As Abhinava writes, “[cognition’s] being conscious of itself is pervaded by the light of the I, which is opposed to insentience—and insentience for its part, has the nature of ‘this,’ which pervades the property of being knowable by others. Thus it is possible to deny that a cognition is knowable by other [cognitions], because this property is pervaded by another that is in opposition to the pervading one.”⁵⁸ The property of “thisness” attributed to objects corresponds to their capacity to be known, while the purely subjective aspect of cognition—that upon which the public determination of the former rationally depends—represents the inner *svaprakāśa* of the *ātman*.

Among other things, the self-conscious unity of *jñāna* and *kriyā* therefore entails that cognition intimates a *purely subjective* dimension—one which is itself never representable in terms of any determinate or objective intentional *content*, for it logically (and temporally) precedes all such determination (cf. Ferrante 2021: 41-4).⁵⁹ On this account, while the Buddhists

⁵⁸ *siddham tāvat para-samvedyatāvvyāpakedantāsvabhāva-jaḍatā-viruddhāham-prakāśa-vyaptatvaṃ svasamvidrūpatasya. tena jñāne vyāpakaviruddhavyāptāyāḥ parasamvedyatāyā niṣedhaḥ* (trans. in Torella 1992: 337).

⁵⁹ “The Supreme Lord, whose essential nature is light or manifestation (*prakāśātma*), makes Himself into objects of knowledge, even though He cannot be an object of knowledge, because He is the unitary Knower” (ĪPV I.5.15) *prakāśātmaṃ parameśvaraḥ svātmānaṃ jñātrekarūpatvāt ajñeyamapi jñeyīkaroti iti yat saṃbhāvyate kāraṇāntarasya anupapatteḥ darśitatvāt dr̥ḍhena saṃbhāvanānumānena, tadata eva vimarśasakti-lakṣaṇāt kartṛtvāt hetoḥ bhavati,*

correctly attribute intrinsic self-consciousness to every cognition, they treat self-consciousness as fundamentally coextensive with the supposed perceptual determinacy of intentional content. Ferrante notes in this regard that according to the Buddhists, “cognition is self-conscious but only in the sense that its content corresponds to itself” (ibid.: 42). As already discussed in Chapter III, much of this pertains to the Buddhist construal of the actuality of cognitions in terms of the self-conscious perception of fully determinate *images*, rather than a continuous process of realization that coextends with the practical and temporal activity of recognitive sense-making.⁶⁰ For the Pratyabhijñā thinkers, then, the Buddhists fundamentally misunderstand the significance of the doctrine of the intrinsic self-consciousness of cognition; it does not prove that self-consciousness of cognition *consist in* the perceptual ‘representation’ of constitutively momentary, non-conceptual particular, but rather that the manifestation of *anything whatsoever* (i.e., conceptual *or* perceptual) betrays the synthetic unity of action and cognition that comprises the self-illumination of reflexive consciousness.

In the first section of the ĪPK on the recognitive nature of knowledge, Utpala explains the power (*śakti*) of memory in terms of these general synthetic capacities of the transcendental subject: “there is one unity (*aikya*) of cognitions belonging to distinct times; and that is the subject (*veditṛ*) of knowledge.”⁶¹ In his commentary, Abhinava explains that

this [synthetic unity of cognitions] is precisely what being a knower consists in (*veditṛtva*), which is something beyond (*adhika*) [mere] cognition (*vedana*): [it is] the *action* (*karana*) [exercised] at will on

yato hi ayam ātmānam parāmṛśati tato viśvanirbharatvāt tathā nīlādityena cakāsti. We might add that the inherent incognizability of the subject does not correspond to the impossibility of an incognizable *being* in Peirce’s sense, precisely insofar as the purely reflexive dimension of consciousness is *not* any *actual existent*, but a formal condition for the possibility of the determination thereof.

⁶⁰ Cf. Suzanne Guerlac’s relevant comments on Bergson’s durational theory of pure or virtual memory: “Memory is pure, that is, virtual representation...[It] must be called forth to come into play in the present, to materialize itself as image and to enter into the circuitry, or interaction, of memory and perception associated with consciousness and duration. Most psychologists get it wrong, because they materialize memory (as image) from the start and neglect the process of actualization that lets it become an image. They also idealize perception as representation [rather than action]” (144).

⁶¹ *na ca yuktaṃ smṛter bhede smaryamānasya bhāsanam / tenaikyaṃ bhinnakālānāṃ saṃvidāṃ veditaiṣa saḥ* (ĪPK I.4.3)

cognitions, [viz.,] the freedom (*svātantrya*) to associate and dissociate [them]; and this is what we call “being an agent” (*kartr̥tva*). The “unity” (*aikya*), [i.e.,] the synthesis (*anusamdhāna*) [expressed as] “experiences this pot”, or “this pot”, is no different from the synthesizer (*anusamdhātṛ*); it is to demonstrate this that [Utpaladeva] says that ‘unity’ is ‘the subject’ using the same grammatical case [for both].⁶²

Utpala contends that the mnemonic functions of consciousness can only be explained as forms of intentional synthesis, which speaks to an inner subject that is ‘beyond’ the manifestation of these separate cognitions.⁶³ The essence of action therefore designates the nature of the cognitive subject as a free agent that integrates at will the perception of distinct moments in the field of awareness, just as it conjoins propositional constituents in linguistic judgment with respect to conceptual determination. The capacity for intentional synthesis is itself therefore not strictly of a *conceptual* or *perceptual* order—it is simply not something that can ever be represented in terms of an objective cognition. Rather, it designates the reflective capacity of the unrepresentable subject, one whose continuous form of awareness both manifests and transcends this very content.

We will continue the discussion of *anusamdhāna* in Section IV below. At this point, though, we can see how the notion of *relation* provides an integral epistemic function for the Pratyabhijñā; namely, the process of ‘intentional synthesis’ (*anusamdhāna*) represents the practical unity of *prakāśa* (‘cognition’) and *vimarśa* (‘action’), which helps substantiate Bhartṛhari’s idea that the pure self-illuminating capacity of the subject—the knower who freely synthesizes cognitions in accord with his/her sovereign will—can never be represented as any

⁶² *etadeva vedanādhikam veditr̥tvaṃ—vedaneṣu saṃyojanaviyojanayoḥ yathāruci karaṇaṃ svātantryam, kartr̥tvaṃ ca etadeva ucyate / ghaṭamahamanvabhūvam iti vā sa ghaṭaḥ iti vā aikyam anusamdhānam anusamdhātṛabhinnam iti darśayitum yadeva aikyaṃ sa eva veditā iti sāmānādhikarāṇyena darśitam* (ĪPV vol. I, p. 129-130; cf. Ratié 2011: 237-8).

⁶³ Cf. ĪPKV (I.1.2): *kevalam asya svasaṃvedanasiddhasyāpīśvarasya māyāvvyāmohād ahṛdayaṃgamatvād asādhāraṇaprabhāvābhijñānakhyāpanena dṛḍhaniścayarūpaṃ pratyabhijñānamātram upadarśyate*. “However, since the Lord, though established through inner awareness (*svasaṃvedanasiddham*), does not enter the sphere of full and definite knowledge (*ahṛdayaṃgamatvāt*) because of the delusion caused by *māyā*. His mere ‘recognition’ is here shown—in the form of the acquisition of unswerving certainty—through the illustration of that sign of recognition that is represented by the faculties peculiar to him” (trans. in Torella 2013: 86-7).

determinate intentional content. In other words, since the *capacity* to synthesize cognitions into an intelligible unity must precede the actual content of judgment, the meaning of *sambandha* becomes implicitly indexed to a transcendental notion of synthetic action.

To flesh-out this Pratyabhijñā case for the transcendental validity of *sambandha-qua-śakti*, we need to explore how the ‘linguistic’ idealism of Bhartṛhari pervades Utpala’s philosophy. For the Pratyabhijñā theory already takes for granted Bhartṛhari’s linguistic analysis of reflexive cognition as a progressive form of holistic manifestation presupposed in the intelligible speech-acts of public discursive practices. Obviously, such a view was attractive to Utpala, who wanted to establish that the synthetic capacities (*śakti*) of sentient consciousness betoken the rational unity of knowledge and action. As a Vedic grammarian, Bhartṛhari believed this means that the embodied *capacity* to express reality linguistically; the conceptual *signs* of language itself; and the reflexive *apprehension* thereof; all are nothing other than a primordial *movement* of divine ‘speech’ (*para-vāc*). While the Śaiva philosophers would clearly reject Bhartṛhari’s identification of ultimate reality with speech *simpliciter*, the grammarian’s theoretical fusion of cognition and the determinative capacity of judgment recasts the general form of relation as a transcendental principle that the Pratyabhijñā thinkers will later deploy with great effect against the Buddhist relational eliminativist.

3. *Sambandha in Bhartṛhari’s Metaphysics of Language*

a. The Sphoṭa Theory of Meaning and Semantic Holism

Although it is now well known that Bhartṛhari was criticized by Somānanda (cf. Nemeč 2011; 2012), many of his ideas were warmly embraced by Utpala and Abhinava. Here I want to show that this influence extended to the Pratyabhijñā conception of *sambandha*. In particular, based on

a highly refined pragmatic analysis of the phenomenology of embodied discursive practices, Bhartṛhari's interprets *sambandha* as the semiotic capacity of linguistic consciousness—a *śakti-of-śaktis*—that reflexively interprets signs in terms of other signs. With respect to the SS in the next chapter, I maintain that Utpala unpacks this semiotic construal of relation into a series of transcendental arguments against the Buddhist Pramāṇavāda theorist. Specifically, Bhartṛhari's theory of meaning conveyance, *sphoṭa*, indicates a cosmogonic process of realization whereby *vāc*, or divine speech, gradually manifests itself through its own reflexive activity. Hence, though it appears Utpala did not embrace *sphoṭa* semantics explicitly (and he does not seem to elaborate another alternative in the extant works⁶⁴) he wholeheartedly adopts Bhartṛhari's theory that linguistic consciousness manifests through progressive phases of realization⁶⁵; and I am claiming that this durational construal of linguistic determination generates a certain theory of the general form of *sambandha* that Utpala will implicitly appropriate in the next chapter on the SS.

In Bhartṛhari's system it is impossible to talk about the processual gradations of *vāc* without at least briefly touching upon the theory of *sphoṭa*, which stands against the backdrop of Bhartṛhari's linguistic non-dualism; everything that exists is constituted by, and proceeds from, a single infinite reality, what he calls '*śabda-brahman*' (lit. 'Brahman [in the form of] word/sound').⁶⁶ This *śabda-brahman* represents the absolute and unified ground of all worldly

⁶⁴ For work that touches upon Bhartṛhari's influence on Kashmir Śaivism, cf., Iyer (1969); Dwivedi (1991); Torella (2013, pp. xxiv–xxv; 2008); Rastogi (2009); Ratié (2011a; 2018); Vergiani (2016); and Ferrante (2017; 2020a; 2020b). MacCracken's (2017; 2023) recent publications on the SS have contributed to our understanding of Bhartṛhari's influence on the Pratyabhijñā theory of *sambandha*, but none of these sources focus exclusively on the topic.

⁶⁵ More specifically, the Pratyabhijñā thinkers add a fourth, more supreme stage to Bhartṛhari's three-fold scheme I will outline below. While the details are not important here, the addition of this fourth level, associated with the ultimate, undifferentiated essence of Śiva himself (cf. ĪPK 1.5.13), symbolizes how Utpala intended to both defend and subsume Bhartṛhari's linguistic metaphysics into his own system. See Torella (2001:857-9) and Prueitt (2016: 80-83) for further discussion, and Ferrante (2020c) and Torella (2001) on aspects of denotation (*abhidhā*) in the Pratyabhijñā system.

⁶⁶ This is famously expressed in the opening four verses of the VP: *anādinidhanaṃ brahma śabdatattvaṃ yad akṣaram/vivartate 'rthabhāvena prakriyā jagato yataḥ // ekam eva yad āmnātaṃ bhinnaśaktivyapāśrayāt / aprthaktve 'pi śaktibhyaḥ prthaktveneva vartate // adhyāhitakalāṃ yasya kālaśaktim upāśritāḥ/janmādayo vikārāḥ*

phenomena and knowledge. In a well-known set of verses in the VP, he writes: “In this world, no apprehension occurs without conforming to speech: every cognition is manifest as if it were pervaded by speech. If consciousness lost its eternal nature of speech, the manifesting consciousness (*prakāśa*) could not be manifest—for it is [this nature of speech] that enables reflective awareness (*pratyavamarśinī*)...[In] all species [of living beings], consciousness (*caitanya*) is nothing but this [nature of speech] and does not exist beyond it.”⁶⁷ Thus, the reflexive nature of consciousness coextends with the power of *vāc* to manifest (*prakāśa*) the universe; that is, consciousness is not just passive being, but bears the reflexive capacity to realize and differentiate itself through the power of speech. Hence, quite unlike the ‘idealism’ of, say, Advaita Vedānta, or a Yogācāra Buddhism (insofar as we may describe them as such)—which both viewed the conceptual trappings of *language* as the quintessence of *samsāric* ignorance—Bhartṛhari believed that salvation comes with the realization that one’s conceptual capacities are identical with the divine emanation of language (*vāk*) that creates and sustains the world (cf. Matilal: 95).

Sphoṭa is a concept that Bhartṛhari develops from the Vedic grammarians to designate the holistic self-disclosure of *vāc*.⁶⁸ While it literally means “bursting,” “expansion,” or “disclosure,” for the ancient grammarians, it comes to represent the inner principle of all semantic phenomena,

ṣaḍ bhāvabhedasya yonayaḥ // ekasya sarvabījasya yasya ceyam anekadhā / bhokṛṭrbhokṭavyarūpeṇa bhogarūpeṇa ca sthitiḥ (cf. trans. in Reich (2021: 49) and Bronkhorst (1992)). We should note that Houben (1995a: 16-81; 1995b) argues that Bhartṛhari does not have any particularly strong religious or polemical commitments in the VP and employs a form of ‘perspectivalism’ whose primary aim is to systematize and describe the views of others. According to him, we should not necessarily read the opening theological *kārikās* as a personal statement of his own metaphysical position. Cardona (1999: 92-3), on the other hand, contends that this interpretation is unwarranted and does a disservice to the grammatical tradition with which Bhartṛhari identifies (cf. Todeschini 2010: fn. 14).

⁶⁷ VP 1.115–16 and 118: *na so ’sti pratyayo loke yaḥ śabdānugamād ṛte / anuvid- dham iva jñānam sarvaṃ śabdena bhāsate // vāgrūpatā ced utkrāmed avabodhasya śāsvatī / na prakāśaḥ prakāśeta sā hi pratyavamarśinī...saiśā samsāriṇām sañjñā bahir antaś ca vartate / tanmātram avyatikrāntaṃ caitanyaṃ sarvajātiṣu.*

⁶⁸ The sacredness of sound and speech, of course, trace back to the *Rg-Veda*. Two hymns, 10.125 and 10.71, are dedicated to *vāk*. Pertinently, while the former personifies *Vāk* as a goddess, the latter verse discusses three stages in the development of language: (1) inarticulate speech (e.g., the sounds of animals and insects), (2) primitive articulate speech (i.e., nominal designation), and (3) discursive, or ‘proper’ language that represents the ‘refined’ (*samskrta*) form of the Vedic sages and poets (Beck: 37).

disclosed in the fact that diverse externalized verbalizations (*śabda*) designate a universal unit of meaning or reference (*artha*).⁶⁹ We might call it something like a holistic intuition of pure semantic unity that both *generates*, and yet is also *expressed by*, sequential and distinct word-sounds (*śabda*).⁷⁰ Patañjali defines it as “the eternal and imperceptible element of sounds and words and the real vehicle of the idea which bursts or flashes on the mind when a sound is uttered.”⁷¹ *Sphoṭa* is therefore the part-less, non-sequential, indivisible ‘semanticity’ of any particular speech-act.⁷² In this respect, words and sentences both have *sphoṭa*, but the *sphoṭa* of sentences is not reducible to the *sphoṭa* of words.⁷³ This ‘semanticity’ functions at all levels of mind; like a peacock egg that lacks the variegated colors of the virtual creature, the undifferentiated unity of *vāc* also has the power to “unfold itself” into a partite and sequential diversity (cf. Bronkhorst 2001: 481).

Although one might therefore contemporarily describe *sphoṭa* as a form of semantic or sentential holism,⁷⁴ one must keep in mind that *sphoṭa* does not merely designate the universal

⁶⁹ VP I.94: *avikārasya śabdasya nimittair vikṛto dhvaniḥ / upalabdḥau nimittatvam upayāti prakāśavat.*

⁷⁰ Bhartṛhari describes this progressive unfoldment of *sphoṭa* (VP 1.83–1.86 and *svavṛtti*) as a maturation of conceptual ‘seeds’ in the mind consisting of ‘memories, effects, and potentials’ (*saṃskāra-bhāvanā-bījāni*). The semantic determinacy of these inchoate realities intentionally resolves through a series of sounds and ultimately terminates with the utterance of the final sound that discloses the unified form of the word. (See, in particular, VP 1.86 and its *svavṛtti*: *nādair āhitabījāyām antyena dhvaninā saha / āvṛttaparipākāyām. buddḥau śabdo ‘vadhāryate. nādaiḥ. śabdātmanā mavadyotayadbhir yathottaroṅkars.en. ādhiyante vyaktaparicchedānugun. asaṃskāra-bhāvanā-bījāni/tataścāntyo dhvaniviśeṣah. pariccheda-saṃskāra-bhāvanā-bīja-vṛtti-lābhaprāptayo-gyatāpripākāyām buddhāvupagraheṇa śabdās-varūpākāram saṃniveśayati.*

⁷¹ Quoted in Monier-Williams (1970: 1270). Patañjali also characterized *sphoṭa* as possessing unity, indivisibly, and eternity (Chakravarti: 89).

⁷² VP 2.116: *avikalpitavākyaṛthe vikalpā bhāvanāśrayāḥ.* See, e.g., Coward (71) and Matilal (1990: 85).

⁷³ Bhartṛhari makes this clear in the VP when he discusses the important idea of *pratibhā* (Tola and Dragonetti 1990: 97; Desnitskaya 2016: 330). For a very relevant descriptions of *pratibhā* as a form of practical knowledge, see David (2021) and Das (2022). This term is variously rendered as ‘intuition’ (Coward and Raja: 144) or ‘flash of understanding’ (Akamatsu: 37-40), but, in any case, represents the apprehension of the holistic nature of the *vākya-sphoṭa* over and above its constitutive *pada-sphoṭa*: *vicchedagrahaṇe ‘rithānām pratibhānyaiva jāyate vākyaṛtha iti tāṃ āhuḥ padārthair upapādītām // idaṃ tad iti sānyeṣām anākyeyā katham cana pratyātmavṛtti siddhā sā kartrāpi na nirūpyate // upaśleṣam ivārthānām sā karoty avicāritā sārvarūpyam ivāpannā viṣayatvena vartate // sākṣāc chabdena janitām bhāvanānugamena vā iti kartavyatāyām tāṃ na kaś cid ativartate // pramāṇatvena tāṃ lokāḥ sarvaḥ samanugacchati samārambhāḥ pratāyante tiraścām api tadvaśāt* (VP 2.143-7; see trans. in Akamatsu).

⁷⁴ It has been noted, by, e.g., Matilal and Sen (1988: 73), that Bhartṛhari advocates a theory of semantic holism similar to both Frege and Quine. For these thinkers, the semantic content of propositions cannot be derived bottom-up from their constitutive terms. See Chakrabarti (1989) for an analysis of sentence-holism in the Indian context. It

referent (*artha*) of a sentence or word (since both technically convey *sphoṭa*) but the active ‘bursting forth’ of a unified linguistic determination in the mind(s) of a speaker and hearer *engaged in the practice of communication*. The ‘language’ of *sphoṭa*, practically speaking, is always language-in-action. This is a point made by Brough apropos the pragmatic motivations for Bhartṛhari’s semantic holism:

It is important to realize that [Bhartṛhari’s] theory is not derived from *a priori* speculation, but is the result of a careful examination of what happens when we speak or listen in ordinary conversation... The essence of the matter lies in discriminating clearly between language in operation, and language-material considered and described by a grammarian. Bhartṛhari’s view is simply that words and “word-meanings” belong to the latter sphere. They constitute an apparatus (not necessarily adequate) for the description of language events, but (roughly speaking) do not themselves “exist” in the events described (1953: 166-7).

For Bhartṛhari, the logical and phenomenological form of the events that comprise discursive practices do not disclose a collection of discrete words and sounds (*śabda*), but rather the innate capacity of the linguistic mind to recognize that syntactical utterances are *continuous* with a universal semantic referent (*artha*).⁷⁵ This distinction more-or-less tracks the holistic notion of *sphoṭa* vs. the fragmented forms of *dhvani*: As Bhartṛhari writes, “the wise discern two [aspects] in the expression of words: one [*sphoṭa*] is the cause of the word [while] the other [*dhvani*] is

is noteworthy that Dharmakīrti rejects this idea by reducing sentence meaning to the conceptual determinacy of its constitutive words (in, e.g., PV I.127.2-5). This, no doubt, aligns with the nominalist tendency to view sentence meaning as a purely conceptual referent whose distributed (*anvaya*) character over categorematic referents entails that, *ipso facto*, it cannot be ultimately real.

⁷⁵ Compare this remarkable passage from St. Augustine on the nature of the *logos*: “Whoever, then, is able to understand a word, not only before it is uttered in sound, but also before the images of its sounds are considered in thought — for this it is which belongs to no tongue, to wit, of those which are called the tongues of nations, of which our Latin tongue is one — whoever, I say, is able to understand this, is able now to see through this glass and in this enigma some likeness of that Word of whom it is said, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” For of necessity, when we speak what is true, i.e. speak what we know, there is born from the knowledge itself which the memory retains, a word that is altogether of the same kind with that knowledge from which it is born. For the thought that is formed by the thing which we know, is the word which we speak in the heart: which word is neither Greek nor Latin, nor of any other tongue. But when it is needful to convey this to the knowledge of those to whom we speak, then some sign is assumed whereby to signify it. And generally a sound, sometimes a nod, is exhibited, the former to the ears, the latter to the eyes, that the word which we bear in our mind may become known also by bodily signs to the bodily senses. For what is to nod or beckon, except to speak in some way to the sight?” (trans. by Arthur West Haddan: 1887).

used to convey meaning.”⁷⁶ The term *dhvani* here thus refers to what we might call the *tokenized* expressions of language. They are the spoken and heard “articulated sounds” of propositional judgments that practically manifest the concealed and implicate unity of *sphoṭa*.⁷⁷ As Matilal puts it, “language and meaning are not two separate realities such that one *conveys* the other. They are in essence the two sides of the same coin. The *sphoṭa* is the unitary principle where the symbol and what is signified are one” (95). And while Matilal is technically correct, talk of strict identity of sign and signified occludes, I think, the *triadic* dimension of *sphoṭa*. That is to say, *sphoṭa* actually suggests the metaphysical unity of (i) the physical vibrations of sound; (ii) the inner activity of thinking; and (iii) the appearance of linguistic signs (cf. Houben 1995a: preface).

To explain the inner unfolding of *sphoṭa* into the diversity of external *dhvani*, Bhartṛhari postulated three stages of speech: (i) ‘articulate speech’ (*vaikharī vāc*), or the external, public, tokenized utterances of individual speakers; (ii) ‘intermediate speech’ (*madhyamā vāc*), which reflects a pre-verbalized form of mental representation that possess a sort of proto-syntax, one less determinate than the *vaikharī* level of discourse⁷⁸; and (iii) ‘seeing speech’ (*paśyanti vāc*), the innermost realm of indivisible semantic unity, which is non-sequential (*akramā*), undivided

⁷⁶ *dvāv upādānaśabdeṣu śabdau śabdavido viduḥ / eko nimittaṃ śabdānām aparo 'rthe prayujyate* (VP 1.44).

⁷⁷ Cf. MBhD (49): *karaṇasannipātāt*. See Seneviratne (125-139) for an extended discussion of the *dhvanis*, and, in particular Bhartṛhari’s binary division of *dhvanis*: “[T]he “*prākṛta*” (original, therefore, “primary”) type of *dhvani* is what reveals *sphoṭa*, while the “*vaikṛta*” (evolved from another, therefore, “secondary”) type of *dhvani* maintains the continuity of the already revealed *sphoṭa*” (ibid: 126).

⁷⁸ This intermediate stage is technically characterized by internality (*antaḥsamniveśa*), mind-dependence (*buddhimātropādāna*) and sequentiality (*parigrhītakrama*). Ferrante (2020a:149-150) suggests that these three qualities can be tentatively compared to a sort of Fodorian ‘mentalese’ (1975)—viz., a ‘Language-of-Thought’ (LoT) theory that posits a type of higher-order formal language, distinct from any determinate public language, that defines the universal syntactical structures of symbolic representation. Obviously, Fodor would likely have no truck with Bhartṛhari’s third level of *paśyanti vāc* that embraces a monistic vision of linguistic emanation. But one of the challenges that Bhartṛhari and the holism of *sphoṭa* can debatably present LoT theorists is to explain the experienced *continuity* between the higher-order LoT and the first-order diversity of public languages—and, metaphysically speaking, the continuity of the ‘intentional’ dimension of the LoT with the even lower-level domains of regular order apparent throughout the empirical world.

(*abheda*) and concealed (*pratisamḥṛta*).⁷⁹ Although *paśyanti vāc* exhibits no determinate content, it serves as a universal plenum for all semantic potentials; it is ‘pervaded by the capacity (*śakti*) to produce sequence’ (*samāviṣṭa-krama-śaktiḥ*). Accordingly, every self or mind consists of an infinite storehouse of *sphoṭa*-potentials with the intrinsic power to assume endless syntactical manifestation—i.e., a purely *virtual* bedrock of semantic types withdrawn from tokenized linguistic expression. This is the primordial, eternal realm of language, *paśyanti vāc*, where universal possibilities are ‘seen’ or conceptualized in the mind without being explicitly manifest in verbalization. When a speaker has the practical desire to communicate, they are aware of the corresponding *vākya-sphoṭa* and initiate a formal procedure for its encoding into *vaikharī vāc*. Thereupon, at the level of public discourse, another person hears the individual *pada-sphoṭas* and these trigger a decoding process that results in the hearer recognizing the very same *vākya-sphoṭa* within the mind of the speaker (Coward: 77). Cognitive activity therefore resembles a spontaneous procedure of encoding and decoding the holistic essence of universal language into determinate and particular speech-acts (Seneviratne: 140).⁸⁰

⁷⁹ See *vṛtti* on VP 1.159: “An ‘articulate utterance’ (*vaikharī*) is that which is intelligible to others, which is grasped by the sense of hearing, it is fixed (*pratiniyatam*) in each and every case, and has an audible form. It is conjoined [speech], a collection of discrete utterances whose propriety is well-established or in which the proper grammatical formation is lost. Being present in the axle of a cart, in a drum, a flute, or a lute, it possesses unlimited manifestations. On the other hand, the ‘middling’ word (*madhyamā*) abides within and has a sort of temporal sequence, and is grasped by the mind only. Yet, according to some, the middle word is pervaded by the activity of subtle breath and, even if sequence is contracted therein, it possesses a discernable [kind of] breath [movement]. The ‘seeing’ word (*paśyantī*), is that in which sequence is subsumed and, although unitary, it is pervaded by the capacity to produce sequence (*samāviṣṭakramaśaktiḥ*). It is movable and immovable and it is that which is obtained by concentration; it is concealed and pure; it has the form of the contents entering into it, the form in which all contents disappear into it and no form at all; it manifests itself in the form of meanings which are diversified, associated and all rest on it. Hence it possesses unlimited manifestations.” *paraiḥ samvedyaṃ yasyāḥ śrotraviṣayatvena pratiniyatam śrutirūpaṃ sā vaikharī. śliṣṭā vyaktavarnasamuccāraṇā prasiddhasādhubhāvā bhraṣṭasamskāra ca. tathā yākṣe yā dundubhau yā veṇau yā viṇāyām ity aparimāṇabhedā. madhyamā tv antaḥsamniveśinī parigrhītakrameva buddhimātropādānā. sā tu sūksmaprāṇavṛttyanugatā kramasamhārabhāve ‘pi vyaktaprāṇaparigrahaiva keṣāñcit. pratisamḥṛtakramā saty apy abhede samāviṣṭakramaśaktiḥ paśyantī. sā calācalā pratilabdhasamādhānā cāvṛtā ca viśuddhā ca, sanniviṣṭajñeyākārā pratilīnākārā nirākārā ca, paricchinnārthapratyavabhāsā samsrṣṭārthapratyavabhāsā praśāntasarvārthapratyavabhāsā cety aparimāṇabhedā* (trans., with slight changes, follows Ferrante 2020a: 149, fn.5).

⁸⁰ The circular process of encoding and decoding *sphoṭa* also evokes Bohm’s process metaphysics of implicate wholeness (1980). In these terms, we might say that a semantic whole internally ‘unfolds’ into a diversity of

Importantly for our purposes, the inclusion of an intermediate level of speech processing (*madhyamā vāc*) suggests the movement from the indeterminate unity of *paśyanti vāc* into the determinate expressions of *vaikharī vāc* is a *graded realization*. In other words, the linguistic activity that manifests *sphoṭa* cannot be an *instantaneous transition*. To the extent that we view ‘intentionality’ as broadly coextensive with discursive activity, this suggests that the capacity to utilize and understand the sequential terms of public language rests on an implicit awareness of the *transitive continuity* of this diversity with a singular conceptual referent. The three-fold scheme that practically ‘encodes’ and ‘decodes’ *sphoṭa* thus chiefly reflects stages in a phenomenological process whereby determinate linguistic signs appear through a reflexive awareness of inner, more indeterminate realms of semantic activity. The theory of *sphoṭa* therefore already implies that the practice of ‘linguaging’ requires a certain intentional, or reflexive, form of synthetic activity, one that the Pratyabhijñā thinkers will later express in terms of the identity of *vimarśa* and *prakāśa*.

b. The General Form of Sambandha: A ‘Śakti of Śaktis’

As should be clear, Bhartṛhari’s practical model of a three-fold progression of linguistic self-disclosure suggests a certain conception of the way *relation* functions in a broadly intentional context. In particular, the ideas in the VP and the SSam prefigure an important distinction fleshed out in Utpala’s SS—namely, between *tokens* of relation (‘tropes’) designated in conventional speech acts (*dhvani-śabdha*) and a universal *type* associated with the practical capacity to initiate a transformation of *sphoṭa* into a particular sequence of sounds and re-cognize

particular *dhvani*, which in turn, ‘enfold’ this implicate whole in the external act of communication. I find this metaphor fruitful for a metaphysics of holism, insofar as Bohm bases his theory primarily on modern physics, while Bhartṛhari, of course, focuses on the intentional, or phenomenological, dimensions of language-in-action.

them as such.⁸¹ Hence the way in which relational forms appear *in* judgment (‘horizontal relations’) must be logically distinguished from the general form that characterizes the practical process of ‘linguaging’ itself (‘vertical relationality’). In other words, *sambandha* comes to denote a transcendental *capacity* (*śakti*) of practical reason, a sort of metaphysical ‘activity’ (*śakti*) that informs the syntactical realization (*prakāśa*) of semantic knowledge in the context of discursive practices, but cannot thereby be represented in those very terms.⁸²

Bhartr̥hari comes to this theory of *sambandha-qua-śakti* in the SSam through investigating the question: ‘how can ‘relation’ be expressed in words?’ (Houben: 98) In the opening two verses, he proclaims that there is a ‘well-established’ relation between words and the object of understanding (i.e., the *vācyavācakabhāva*).⁸³ In verse 3, he proceeds to pinpoint the genitive relation, in particular, as the means by which we know that a referent (*artha*) is signified by a word (*śabda*) (e.g., as expressed in the propositions ‘this is the signifier of this, and this is signified of this’).⁸⁴ Since we cannot practically deny that we have knowledge of the designation of a thing while also using and understanding language, we must perforce acknowledge that some primitive form of the genitive relation obtains between the signifier and signified for any qualified knowledge whatsoever to occur.

⁸¹ This resembles one the positions he cites, but does not necessarily explicitly endorse, in the VP: *anekavyaktyabhivyāṅgyā jātiḥ sphoṭa iti smṛtā / kaiś cit vyaktaya evāśya dhvanitvena prakalpitāḥ*. “Some consider that the *sphoṭa* is the natural type (*jāti*) revealed by the various individual instances [viz., ‘tokens’], and they consider that the individuals belonging to this [type] are the sounds.” (VP 1.93; translation following Bronkhorst (1991: 10), who lists this verse as I.96). Even though he does not explicitly commit to this position, I would view this as fairly consistent with his own broader relational project, as will become clear

⁸² We will, in the next section, map these two relational axes map onto Utpala’s disjunction between non-sequential and sequential forms of action (see our comments below on Ratié’s recent study on the ĪPKVv II.1 (2021: 115-21)).

⁸³ *jñānam prayoktur bāhyo rthah svarūpaṃ ca pratīyate / śabdair uccaritais teṣāṃ sambandhaḥ samavasthitaḥ // pratipattur bhavaty arthe jñāne vā saṃśayaḥ kvacit / svarūpeṣūpalabhyeṣu vyabhicāro na vidyate* (VP III.3.1-2). (See Houben (149-53) and Biarreau (1964: 423) for analyses of these two verses, and, in particular, how the three-fold relational factors mentioned in the first two verses collapses into a dyadic *śabda-artha* relation in the subsequent verses).

⁸⁴ *asyāyam vācako vācyā iti ṣaṣṭhyā pratīyate / yogaḥ śabdārthayos tattvam apy ato vyapadiśyate* (VP III.3.1.3).

In the next two verses (4-5), however, he identifies a perennial problem that ensues when we attempt to identify *sambandha itself* as a substantial term through an ascription of some genitive or predicative properties. In brief, we cannot exhaustively characterize ‘relation’ in linguistic terms because it will always be presupposed in the capacity that enables speakers to identify things through the conceptual ascription of linguistic properties. Bhartṛhari interprets this to mean that the ‘extremely dependent’ form of *sambandha* cannot be designated through words:

There is no word that signifies the relation according to its specific property. Because it is extremely dependent (*atyanta-paratantra*), its form cannot be pointed out. Where this [relation] is, because some service is rendered [from one thing to another, or: from signifier to signified and vice versa], there one arrives at a property (viz. dependence) [but not at the relation itself]. It is even a capacity (i.e., something dependent) of capacities [which are themselves dependent upon the entity which possesses the capacity]; it is even a quality (i.e., something dependent) of qualities [which are themselves dependent upon the entity which possesses the quality] [so it is extremely dependent].⁸⁵

Relation, in its general form, is ‘extremely dependent’ in the sense that it cannot *itself* be signified in words. When we cognize some limitative ‘service rendered’ (*upakāra*) between phenomena, we ‘infer’ (*anugamyate*) a property like ‘dependence’ has occurred.⁸⁶ But this dyadic inferential ‘property’ is always necessarily one step removed from the *śakti* of ‘relation’ *in and of itself*, because the *capacity* to designate this relational property must already be in place for the designation itself to occur.⁸⁷ Thus, while a relation incontrovertibly exists between

⁸⁵ *nābhidhānaṃ svadharmeṇa saṃbandhasyāsti vācakam / atyantaparatratvād rūpaṃ nāsyāpadiśyate // upakārāt sa yatrāsti dharmas tatrānugamyate / śaktīnām api sā śaktir guṇānām apy asau guṇaḥ* (VP III.3.4-5; trans. in Houben: 170).

⁸⁶ Recall that this picture roughly corresponds to Dharmakīrti’s inferential explanation of the causal ‘relation’ in the SP (v. 13): “Upon observing one [thing], when something [that was previously] unseen is seen, and is not seen when that [other] is not seen—a person infers ‘effect’ even without the explanation of another.” *paśyann ekam adṛṣṭasya darśane tadadarśane / apaśyan kāryam anveti vināpy ākhyāṭṛbhir janaḥ*.

⁸⁷ Whether Bhartṛhari considers *vācyavācakahāvas* eternal or created is unclear (cf. VP 1.28: *nityatve kṛtakatve vā teṣāṃ ādir na vidyate / prāṇinām iva sā caiṣā vyavasthā nityatocyate*). In any case, he states that the relation is ‘permanent’ (*nitya*) insofar as its ‘beginning cannot be found’ (*ādir na vidyate*). To the extent the relation between universals is eternal in the same way that *universals* are, one can further advance the potential connection between *sphoṭa* and *logos* (Śāstrī 1959: 102-3; Beck: 14-5). Consider Gerson’s interpretation of Plotinus’ statement, “That the Intelligibles are not Outside the Intellect and on the Good” in the *Enneads*: “[Plotinus] seems to want to argue not only that eternal Forms exist, but that these are somehow connected eternally. This is so presumably because it is owing precisely to such eternal connections that instances of Forms are necessarily connected. Thus, if x is f entails

signifier and signified, no terms can designate or characterize what the specific property of this relation *is*. Houben summarizes: “Therefore, it is never possible to isolate the relation itself from the things that are connected through the relation, and, consequently, it is not possible to attribute specific attributes or qualities to the relation itself, without transforming it into something which it is not...In other words, if one reifies the relation it is not a relation anymore” (174). The singular term ‘relation’ therefore fails to properly denote any *universal* referent, despite the fact that we comprehend its tokenization perfectly well in the context of practical judgment. Even though ‘relationality’ is not representable as such, it comprises the eventful structure of practical reason and provides the logical and metaphysical basis for its manifestation.

c. The Capacity for Reference and the Reference of Capacities

This conception of *sambandha* as a form of *śakti* inspires Bhartṛhari’s novel reinterpretation of the *samavāya*, the ‘inherence’ relation, in verses 8-12 of the VP. Recall that for the Vaiśeṣika relational realists, *samavāya* is an independently existent category, often described as the ‘glue’ that binds together the other independent categories of existence.⁸⁸ In this respect, it is that objective category which localizes, or restricts, universals to particulars. In an earlier verse (6), Bhartṛhari concurs that *samavāya* is often called ‘relation’ (*sambandha*) because it seems similar in virtue of its dependent status. However, he adds that this does not refer to the general capacity

that x is g, this is because of the necessary connectedness of F-ness and G-ness. And here we must add that the eternal connection is ontologically on a par with the eternity of each Form in the connection, that is, the condition for the possibility of x being f is no more eternal than the condition for the possibility that if x is f, x must be g. At this point, Plotinus seems to be arguing that the eternal “link” between eternal, immaterial entities must be one thing which is capable of simultaneously being identified with both F-ness and G-ness so that the partial identity of these is grounded in reality...This one thing is what Intellect is supposed to be. Intellect must be eternal because any judgment made by an individual mind depends for its truth on eternal reality, including eternal interconnectedness of Forms, hence eternal Intellect which grounds the interconnectedness” (Gerson: 48-9).

⁸⁸ See, e.g., Phillips (1995), Ganeri (2011), and Oetke (2012).

of *sambandha*, because *samavāya*'s function is still *restricted* (*niyata*) to certain domains (i.e., primarily between whole and part). It clearly does not comprise the general form of all relations, in other words. Thus, Bhartṛhari reasons that this referential restriction of the subset of relata that are *samavāyins* must occur in virtue of some higher-order 'service rendered'—i.e., an even more general form of *sambandha* that restricts the sub-domains of certain relational properties like *samavāya*.

That capacity (*śakti*), called *samavāya*, rendering service to capacities, beyond difference and identity (*bhedābheda*), being established otherwise, is assisted by *sambandha* (relation), which is beyond the attribute of all categories or objects (*padārtha*) and which is characterized by everything. This is the tradition from the ancients. By others it is taken for granted that *sambandha* be always made into a category or object. [But] with this, word meaning cannot be sorted out.⁸⁹

This description of *samavāya* itself as a *śakti* completely departs from the Vaiśeṣika realists; no sources describe it as such. It is therefore Bhartṛhari's innovation, at least insofar as the traditional authority of 'the ancients' referred to above remains obscure. According to Bhartṛhari, a *śakti* is something neither identical with, nor different from, its substratum (Houben: 183-4). Thus, in identifying the *samavāya* relation with *śakti*, 'beyond difference and identity' (*bhedābheda*), Bhartṛhari not only de-reifies it from its categorical status but renders it referentially ambiguous or dialectic in terms of *bhedābheda*. This is quite in opposition to the Vaiśeṣika, whose 'radical' approach to realism invariably consisted of pinpointing the exact character and properties of a category (*padārtha*), and how precisely it differs from all others. But the delimited relational capacity of *samavāya* already corresponds to a capacity (*śakti*) of linguistic reality that recognizes the bond between universal and particular, but is itself neither the same as, nor distinct from, either one.

⁸⁹ *tām śaktim samavāyākyāṃ śaktīnām upakāriṇīm / bhedābhedāv atikrāntām anyathaiva vyavasthitām // dharmam sarvapadārthānām atītaḥ sarvalakṣaṇaḥ / anugrṇāti sambandha itī pūrvebhya āgamaḥ // padārthīkṛta evānyaiḥ sarvatrābhyupagamyate / sambandhas tena śabdārthaḥ pravibhaktum na śakyate* (VP II.3.10-12; trans. in Houben: 183-4).

And yet, despite this redefinition of *samavāya* as a form of *śakti*, it is still not a ‘capacity’ general enough for Bhartṛhari’s understanding of *sambandha*. In *kārikā* 11 above, he stipulates that *sambandha* itself actually ‘assists’ (*anugṛhṇāti*) *samavāya*. *Sambandha* hence becomes a *śakti* of a higher order than mere inherence, and thus of all qualified cognitions; it is ‘*sarvalakṣaṇa*’ which means, following Helarājā, that each and every object characterizes and defines *sambandha* (ibid.). Houben remarks, “[t]o say that *sambandha* ‘relation’ is ‘defined by everything’ amounts...to saying that it is not defined, not delimited [*sic*], not characterized by a specific, restricted domain in which it occurs. It is therefore just another way of expressing the complete absence of a specific own character of relation” (1995a: 185). Accordingly, when we attempt to reify *sambandha*, we are left with a set of abstractions that correspond to a gradation of capacities that ‘render service’ to other capacities; but we never ‘bottom-out’ at a determinate, self-standing referent ‘*sambandha*.’ The abstract status of these phenomenal capacities correspond to the restriction of semantic domains associated with the *relata* in that domain, which proceed from realms of greater and greater indeterminacy to full-on propositional determinacy: *sambandha* (*śakti-of-śaktis*) → *samavāya* (*śakti*) → other *śaktis* (Houben: ibid.). The upshot is that as the definition of *sambandha* becomes more and more *abstract* (viz., moving from tokens of relation to its general form), ironically, it finally becomes co-extensive with the concrete *śakti* that enables meaning and reference to occur. Thus, we can deduce that the general logical form of relation cannot merely be another type of *universal*, because the appearance of universal properties themselves already presupposes the power of the mind to unite a diversity through synthetic action. As we will see below, the Pratyabhijñā will exploit this fact to prove that the prime locus of relational action is the unrepresentable subject of *vimarśa*, not any abstract category or property.

Pertinently, Bhartṛhari explains how the teleological and temporal dimensions of experience are vindicated as genuinely referential to the extent that we recognize that distinct words have this exact capacity to refer to relational *powers* (*śakti*) like *samavāya*, and not distinct things in and of themselves: “If [the terms] ‘direction,’ ‘means of accomplishing [something],’ ‘action,’ and ‘time’ denoted [actual] things (*vastu*), they could not be established at all [to refer to] the nature of things’ powers (*śakti*).”⁹⁰ We could not engage in the event of practical judgment without having already understood that the *actual* constituents of the *proposition* need not always necessarily refer to actual *things*. Bhartṛhari thus ties the semiotic capacity for linguistic reference directly to the constitutively temporal and teleological features of our discursive practices; it is because the pure form of practical reason corresponds to a durational event that language can reflexively represent virtual capacities (*śaktis*) as *contentful referents*, and thereby render mere virtual possibilities practically efficacious. The capacity of language to express temporal features of experience, in other words, testifies to the fact that the categorematic referents of the proposition need not coextend with actual things (*vastu*) to genuinely refer to *concrete reality*. From the pragmatic perspective of language *use*, what is *real* is more than merely what is *actual*.

While we saw in Chapter I that Peirce expressed this idea in terms of the irreducible temporal structure of semiosis, I see the same pragmatic impulse at work in Bhartṛhari’s analysis of the concrete capacity of ‘linguaging’: in the practical and linguistic process of making the world reflexively intelligible, reason automatically assumes a constitutively teleological, and thus *temporal*, structure, one that makes contact (*sprś*) with diverse temporal cognitions simultaneously. From this perspective, *sambandha* refers to a peculiar form of activity that

⁹⁰ VP (III. 6.1): *dik sādhanam kriyā kāla iti vastvabhidyāyinaḥ / śaktirūpe padārthānām atyantam anavasthitāḥ* (cf. Torella (2002: 14, f.36); Ratié (2021: 152).

manifests the event of determinate judgment (i.e., ‘semiosis’); yet, *for that very reason*, its nature can never be fully represented thereby.⁹¹ The ‘ultra-dependent’ form of relation thus entails that it is not an autonomously intelligible ‘critter’ (cf. Phillips: 23; Dunne: 44-5); viz., it cannot be isolated from its relata and remain itself, for any *attempt* to reify ‘relation’ as an independent term in judgment will *presuppose* what it tries to reify in the very *act of reification*. Houben concludes that we “end up with a relation which cannot be expressed or signified as it is, which is indeterminate and to all intents and purposes without independent character” (190). In direct contrast with the Buddhist nominalist and Vaiśeṣika naïve categorical realists, then, Bhartṛhari does not believe that ‘relation’, in its most general form, can be identified with any specifiable property of dependence (*pāratantrya*), or inherence (*samavāya*), etc. Rather, *saṃbandha* is intentionally disclosed as an all-pervasive and continuous ‘*śakti*’—the transcendental capacity of *śabda-brahman* to manifest the world in and through conventional discursive practices.

4. Pratyabhijñā as a Reformed Relational Realism

a. Recognition and Intentional Synthesis (anusamdhāna)

In leveraging Bhartṛhari’s relational arguments against the Buddhists, Utpala draws heavily on the grammarian’s notion of *anusamdhāna* (and the related terms, *pratisamdhāna*, *pratisamdhi*, *saṃdhāna*, etc.) often translated as ‘intentional synthesis,’ or just ‘synthesis.’ Abhinava writes that “insentient [beings] are not capable of unifying one form with another; for having the nature of [intentional] synthesis (*anusamdhāna*) is invariably concomitant with consciousness, i.e., the

⁹¹ MacCracken (2023: 6) makes a similar point: “Relatedness, or relation in its absolute sense, is what orders phenomena into the distinct and unmuddled. Relation is thus not something objectifiable, but rather is indicative of phenomena as having the nature of *vimarśa* (reflective awareness), a core feature of divine subjectivity itself.”

opposite of insentience.”⁹² Its etymology lends insight into its rhetorical function in the Pratyabhijñā system: taking the first prefix ‘*anu*’ as ‘subordinate,’ ‘according to,’ ‘agreeable with’, and “*saṃ-dhāna*” as an ordered conjunction, renders something like “made to be grasped together.” This explains its Monier-Williams definition as “investigation, inquiry,” but also simply “setting in order, arranging, planning,” and “aiming at [something].” Thus, there is already a ‘vectoral’ or ‘directional’ structure integral to the sense of the term that speaks to its pragmatic-transcendental function in Pratyabhijñā discourse; it denotes an interpretation of sentient consciousness as a kind of intentional process, one that establishes a temporal ‘self-similarity’ between the logic of events that manifests conventional discursive practices (i.e., inquiry) and the subjective awareness of these practices; or again, in their own terms, *anusamdhāna* designates the power of sentient consciousness to hold multiple cognitions or appearances (*prakāśa*) together in a manner that coextends with its own recognitive judgment (*vimarśa*).

In the Pratyabhijñā dialectic, to enact the conjoined *śaktis* of knowledge and action just *is* to be the universal *ātman* that recognizes its own continuity throughout the temporal synthesis of disjunctive perception. In other words, the act of synthesis is not different from the transcendental synthesizer, and the recognition of this very fact constitutes the soteriological telos of the entire system:

Recognition...consists of a synthesis (*anusamdhāna*) of what has appeared with that which is appearing, [as in the judgment] “this is that very [same] Caitra.” It is a cognition of an object through synthesis [of prior knowledge] with something which has become present. Furthermore, in the conventional world—[in such statements as] “this [person] has been made to recognize the king”⁹³—

⁹² ĪPV II.4.15: *jaḍāḥ kilānyonyarūpam anusandhātum aprabhaviṣṇavaḥ, anyonyānusamdhāna-rūpatvaṃ jaḍaviruddhena caitanyena vyāptam.*

⁹³ Here I am following Ratié’s (2009: 433, fn., 128) analysis of this phrase, which is originally transcribed as *nṛpaṃ prati pratyabhijñāpito’yam*, “this man has been made to be recognized in front of the king.” Bhāskaraṅṭha (I 37) for instance, defends this reading, but Ratié (based on a conjecture by Alexis Sanderson) finds it unlikely, due to the obvious semantic connotation, which is that Pratyabhijñā intends for followers to recognize themselves as the Lord—not *vice versa*, of course.

‘recognition’ is understood to be the cognition which is based exclusively on synthesis; [that is to say], when there is a becoming present again of something that been cognized [previously] in terms of either its general or particular character (as for instance [in the recognition] ‘[someone] who is the son of someone,’ or ‘[something] which has such and such an appearance,’ or ‘[something] which has such and such qualities’). In the present case, the Lord is also well known to have absolute power by means of the Purāṇas, Siddhānta Śaivism, scriptures, inference, etc. And [given that] one’s Self is immediately evident, there arises a cognition (*jñāna*) [from these two sources of knowledge] through an intentional synthesis (*pratisaṃdhāna*): ‘Indeed, I am that very Lord.’⁹⁴

Clearly, the notion of *anusamdhāna* does not just signify token intentional states, then, but the objective capacity of the unrepresentable subject who synthesizes temporal and spatial properties in accord with their own reflexive nature. To practically re-cognize a ‘present’ object is nothing other than to cognize *oneself* as having *already cognized* the ‘same’ referent at an earlier time. Thus, the mnemonic function of immediate cognition discloses an implicit continuity of temporal activity between earlier cognitions and later cognitions. But the subjective nature of this mediation is *itself* not representable in terms of a cognition of one or the other; since the essential nature of each cognition is self-illumination, no single cognition can be fully objectified—and hence externally related—to any other.

Bhartṛhari, unsurprisingly, identifies this synthetic capacity of reflexive cognition with the *linguistic* nature of knowledge, which underpins and coordinates the synthesis of perceptual cognitions into intelligible conceptual referents (cf. Torella 2013: 126, fn.43). Specifically, Bhartṛhari argues the conceptual determinacy of initially ‘vague’ (*anaṅgī*) cognitive impressions would not be possible without the synthetic capacities of a constitutively linguistic consciousness:

If knowledge was not by nature linguistic, the very vague [perceptual] cognition (*prakāśa*) that has appeared, being unable to contact another [cognition], would not establish a means for the action

⁹⁴ ĪPV 1.1: *pratyabhijñā ca bhātabhāsamānarūpānusaṃdhānātmikā sa evāyaṃ caitra iti pratisaṃdhānena abhimukhībhūte vastuni jñānam. loke’pi etat putra evaṃ guṇa evaṃ rūpaka ity evaṃ vā, antato’pi sāmānyātmanā vā jñātasya punarabhimukhībhāvāvasare pratisaṃdhīprāṇitameva jñānam pratyabhijñā—iti vyavahriyate; nṛpatim pratyabhijñāpīto ’yam ity ādau / ihāpi prasiddha-purāna-siddhāntāgamānumānādividitapūrṇa-śakti-svabhāve īśvare sati svātmanyabhimukhībhūte tatpratisaṃdhānena jñānam udeti, nūnam sa eva īśvaro’ham iti* (cf. Lawrence 1997: 40-1 and Ratié 2011a: 240).

(*kriyā*) of knowledge. When there is the cognition of a bare object, whose distinct parts are unrelated to each other and mutually independent, there is subsequently a unification, i.e., a synthesis (*anusamdhāna*), [which is] the production of a unitary content, the grasping of conjoined capacities (*śakti*) as undivided; all this is related to the linguistic nature of knowledge.⁹⁵

This crucial passage illustrates how Bhartṛhari's practical and phenomenological analysis of language informs his transcendental construal of *anusamdhāna*. In particular, knowledge of the *external* relations that define the empirical world would be meaningless (viz., could not provide a rational basis for practical activity) without the synthetic capacity of the linguistic mind to grasp a diversity of virtual 'capacities' (*śakti*) as a unity in consciousness: that is, as apparently 'external' content that is, in fact, *internally related* to its own reflexive action.⁹⁶ The diachronic synthesis of distinct perceptual modalities therefore corresponds to the general capacity of linguistic consciousness to take a manifold of indeterminate perceptions and become reflexively aware of them in determinate terms. It does not signify a mode of action fundamentally *distinct* from the one that governs the process of semiosis, that is, but rather designates the same general relational capacities (albeit in a certain 'focused' or 'intense' mode of intentional signification).

In defending this idea, Bhartṛhari argues (in a manner strikingly similar to James) that even though all acts of mind imply the reflexive capacity of consciousness, the manifold of perceptions or feelings that factor into each experience do not typically 'unfold' into full-blown propositional knowledge. He observes that one could not engage in a rapid activity that requires the coordination of many distinct perceptual-motor capacities ('*śaktis*') were every cognition therein reflexively apprehended in its explicit form of linguistic signification; that is, as the self-conscious *reason* that practically organizes, evaluates, and indexes the complex field of

⁹⁵ *vṛtti* on VP I.132: *vāgrūpatāyām cāsatyām utpanno 'pi prakāśaḥ pararūpam anaṅgīkurvan prakāśanakriyāsādhanaṛūpatāyām na vyavatiṣṭhate. bhinnarūpāṇām cānupakāriṇām ātmāntarānātmanām itaretarasya vastumātrājñāne pratyavabhāsamāne yad uttarakālam anusamdhānam pratyavamarśa ekārthakāritvam avibhāgena śaktisamsargayogopagrahas tad vāgrūpatāyām baddham* (cf. Ferrante 2019: 151).

⁹⁶ In contemporary philosophy of mind, this is commonly known as "the binding problem" (cf. Chalmers and Bayne (2003)).

empirical data into gradations of relevance to its own subjective aims. In a well-known portion of the *vṛtti* on the VP (one that Utpala will proceed to invoke in the SS), he gives the example of one who runs swiftly along a path, and, though he comes into direct contact with innumerable swaths of grass and clods of earth, etc., this assemblage of perceptions does not enter vividly into the reflexive light of linguistic awareness. However, they are also not radically *discontinuous with the nature of this reflexive awareness*—upon deliberate reflection, for instance, one can explicitly judge having experienced them, and thereby self-consciously ‘unfold’ the ‘contracted’ linguistic expression that factored into awareness during the initial experience:

As in the case of somebody’s verbal potentiality in its contracted condition, a non-conceptualized knowledge does not bring about any verbal usage whatsoever, even if produced in relation to known objects. To explain: even the cognition of somebody quickly walking, acquired by entering in contact with grass, lumps of clay and so forth, is a kind of cognitive state in which the seed of a verbal potentiality is present. In it, once manifested the expressive powers of the words—which are explicit or implicit, make grasp the object and are fixed for any object—one cognizes, that is, linguistically denotes, the manifestation of a well-defined form, which is consistent with knowledge, which has the nature of the object, and which is obtained and concretized by a cognition permeated by language and in accordance with the expressive power of the words. When the linguistic seeds are manifested due to other reasons, [the manifestation of a well-defined form] is the cause of memory.⁹⁷

According to Bhartṛhari, the fact that these liminal cognitions remain responsive to recollection later on testifies to the continuous presence of the reflexive capacities of a thoroughgoingly linguistic consciousness even in the most ‘vague’ or ‘fringe’ forms of perceptual cognition. Ferrante (2019: 152) notes that the inchoate perceptual cognitions that attend empirical consciousness are “liminal” because “they are in between: they are unconscious but not altogether different from conscious ones, mainly because they can be recalled to mind later on” (cf. also Vergiani: 2012).⁹⁸

⁹⁷ *vṛtti* on VP I.131: *yathāsya samṛtarūpā śabdabhāvanā tathā jñeyeṣv artheṣūtpannenāpy avikalpena jñānena kāryaṃ na kriyate. tadyathā tvaritaṃ gacchataḥ tṛṇaloṣṭādisaṃsparśāt saty api jñāne kācid eva sā jñānāvasthā yasyām abhimukhībhūtaśabdabhāvanābījāyām āvirbhūtāsvārthopagrāhiṇām ākhyeyarūpāṇām anākhyeyarūpāṇām ca śabdāṇām pratyarthaniyatāsu śaktiṣu śabdānuviddhena śaktyanupātinā jñānenākriyamāṇa upagrhyamāṇo vastvātmā jñānānugato vyaktarūpapratyavabhāso jñāyate iti abhidhīyate* (trans. in Ferrante 2017: 4.4).

⁹⁸ Vergiani writes that “the potential for full-blown knowledge, namely the possibility of the retrospective illumination of even a minor, random segment of human experience, can only stem from the intrinsically linguistic

All cognitions are thus ‘pierced’ with reflexive consciousness even when apprehended *as* unconscious or indeterminate; such cognitions have not ‘unfolded’ into a determinate intentional form, but one can deduce their implicit continuity with reflexive awareness because they comprise the background ‘reservoir’ of surplus experiential affordances upon which the focused consciousness of intentional judgment metaphorically ‘floats.’ If these separate cognitions utterly lacked the intrinsic capacity for explicit discursive reference—viz., they were inherently ‘incognizable’—they could never enter into synthetic relations with other cognitions in accord with the reflexive unity of the sense-making process (i.e., semiosis). The potential linguistic articulation of these cognitions (*śabdabhāvanā*) hence provides the felt ‘intentional background’ that directly factors *into* the determinacy of conceptual judgments, but are not themselves captured in explicit propositional terms (cf. Torella 2013: 125, fn. 42). We might note that while James might balk at Bhartṛhari’s contention that “language” itself represents the metaphysical *cause* of this synthetic consciousness, he would certainly agree that the reflexive apprehension of a manifold of perceptual data from the intentional ‘fringe’ belies a continuous form of relational unity that necessarily surpasses the determinacy of any substantive conceptual content.⁹⁹

nature of even the most inchoate mental events” (2012: 340; cf. Ratié 2011a: 165, fn.126). Here we might compare Searle’s notion of the ‘intentional background’: “Intentional states with a direction of fit have contents which determine their conditions of satisfaction. But they do not function in an independent or atomistic fashion, for each Intentional state has its content and determines its conditions of satisfaction only in relation to numerous other intentional states” (1983: 141-159). Pertinently, for Pred, Searle’s notion of intentional states satisfies a Jamesian conception of the relational unity of mental life. But since he does not incorporate the notion of the ‘fringe’ into his conception of intentional states, he does not grasp the way that indeterminate perceptual cognitions remain experientially—and thus ontologically—*continuous* with full-blown states of conceptual determinacy.

⁹⁹ In this regard, consider Abhinava’s arguments against the *nirākāratāvādin* Buddhist in the ĪPVV (vol. II, p. 79-80), who claims that pure self-luminous cognition has no content. Here Abhinava argues that the manifestation of reflexive cognition is not taken *in the same way* therein, but appearances are apprehended in *gradations of determinacy*. Thus not all cognitions can be caused by the same absolutely non-differentiated nature, but must be reflective of a non-dual reality that contains in itself the capacity for *modes* of differentiation: *nirākāratve ca samyedanam nīle yat paṭu, tan mandatevenānubhavo yasyety evam abhimatasya mandena vānubhavenābhimatasya pītasyāpi sambandhitayā paṭiyastvenaivābhimatam syāt, nīlasyāpi vā sambandhitayā mandatevena, yadi vādvaye ’py apatūmandatvena. na hi nirākāratāpakṣe samyedanasya ko’pi viśeṣaḥ. sa eva paṭūmandatādinā saṃkara uktah.* “And if [cognition] were devoid of [differentiated] aspect (*nirākāra*), cognition [including blue and yellow at the same time, and] which is intense (*paṭu*) with respect to blue [and vague (*manda*) with respect to yellow], should be considered to be in relation to yellow too, [while yellow] is, [as Utpaladeva says], “considered as that of which the

In the ĪPK and the SS, Utpala appropriates wholesale Bhartṛhari’s notion of intentional synthesis to disprove the Buddhist’s sharp distinction between the moment of perceptual intuition (which is *kalpanāpoḍham*) and the moment of conceptual awareness. In one of the most famous verses of the ĪPK, Utpala writes, “*Even at the moment of the direct perception (sākṣātkāraḥ) there is reflexive awareness (vimarśaḥ). How otherwise could one account for such actions as running and so on, if they were thought of as being devoid of intentional synthesis (pratisamdhāna)?*” He adds in the *vṛtti* that “a rapid action—such as reciting, running, and so on—necessarily occurs through a determinate awareness of the intention of reaching or leaving this or that place etc., which is seen at that moment.”¹⁰⁰ In his commentary on this verse, Abhinava explains how Utpala’s view—wherein a ‘subtle’ (*sūkṣma*) form of reflexive awareness (*pratyavamarśa*) appropriates and synthesizes perceptual cognitions in relation to its own determinate conceptualization—undermines the instantaneous ontology of the Buddhists:

Or, even if we admit that immediate perception has a strictly instantaneous nature, even in this [instantaneous immediate perception], there is necessarily a reflexive awareness (*vimarśa*): “otherwise”, [in other words], if this were not the case, then [the one] who goes hurriedly with only one idea in mind, [the one] who reads letters in haste, or the one who quickly recites a book of *mantra*, would not achieve his goal, would not pronounce [the letters], nor recite [the *mantra*]. Indeed, how could one reach the desired place, without awareness (*parāmarśa*) consisting of association and dissociation [of different elements], starting with the awareness of this place, the desire to take a step, the action which consists of taking this step, the consciousness of having taken this step, the synthesis (*anusamdhāna*) with [the cognition] of a second goal, the desire to leave [the first place], the synthesis (*anusamdhi*) with the [cognition] of yet another place, the desire to take a step into this [other place]. And one should reason in the same way regarding hasty reading and recitation, etc. In these [last two

experience [takes place] in a vague way (*mandatvena*)”—or again, [if we analyze the compound differently,] “considered as [produced] by a vague experience”. [Or] it is in a particularly intense way (*paṭīyastvena*) [that this intense cognition of blue should be related to yellow, although yellow is only vaguely perceived there]; or again, [it should be considered] as being related to blue also in a vague way, [since yellow is manifested there in a vague way;] or again, [it should be considered] as [taking place] neither intensely nor vaguely with regard to both at the same time. For in the doctrine according to which [cognition] is devoid of [differentiated] aspect (*nirākāratāpakṣa*), cognition makes no distinction. [In other words, Utpaladeva] denounces [here] the same confusion (*saṃkara*) [which he denounced earlier with regard to the differences inherent in objects, but this time] insofar as [the manifestation of these differences itself] must be both intense (*paṭu*) and vague (*manda*), etc.” (trans. in Ratié 2011a: 359-60).

¹⁰⁰ ĪPKV I.5.19: *sākṣātkāraḥ pyasti vimarśaḥ kathamanyathā / dhāvanādyupapadyeta pratisamdhānavarjitam. sākṣātkāralakṣaṇe jñāne 'pi cito 'rthapratyavamarśo 'sti sūkṣmaḥ, vācanadhāvanādau śīghrakriyā tattadṛśyamānadeśādyupāditsājihāsānusamdhānena hi bhavet* (trans., with slight changes, in Torella 2013: 125).

cases], in particular, there is association with the movement, etc., of the point of articulation and the organ of articulation. And in [all these cases, these acts are carried out with] speed precisely because we are not aware of the construction of the gross concept (*sthūla*) that will [only] appear later. There must therefore necessarily exist [at the moment when these acts have taken place] a subtle (*sūkṣma*) awareness (*pratyavamarśa*) which is none other than the power of verbal expression (*śabdabhāvanā*) in condensed form. Since conceptualization (*vikalpa*) is gross, it is the power of verbal expression which, [until then] condensed, is developed explicitly. For example, the development of “this” is “the white pot”, etc., and the development of the latter is “a shape with a wide base and a cavity, [shape] which has a quality inherent associated with the gender of whiteness,” etc.¹⁰¹

We can see here how the Pratyabhijñā rejection of the Buddhist doctrine of radical momentariness relies heavily upon Bhartṛhari’s own phenomenological and practical analysis of the synthetic capacities of language processing. For Pratyabhijñā thinkers explain practical action in terms of a synthetic consciousness that can organize a flux of perceptual cognitions in subordination to its own reflexive conceptual aims; hence the dynamic function of the *ātman* is to establish some genuine *continuity* between these two modes of cognition. According to Utpaladeva, then, there is no hard and fast distinction between the indeterminate moment of initial perception and its subsequent conceptual determination in the Jamesian ‘stream’ of consciousness.

Utpala’s invocation of Bhartṛhari suggests that even though he does not adopt the latter’s theory of *sphoṭa* wholesale, he concurs that an implicit continuity of discursive activity defines the progressive conceptual determination of perceptual cognitions. The fact that mnemonic activity can subsequently develop these latent forms of perception demonstrates that “consciousness does not passively record sensory data but appropriates them through some kind of silent expression that can later be elaborated on when (s)he thinks back on what (s)he has

¹⁰¹ *bhavadu vā kṣaṇamātravabhāvah sāksātkārah. tatrāpy asti vimarśah; avaśyaṃ caitad anyatheti yadi sa na syāt, tad ekābhisaṃdhānena javād gacchaṃs tvaritaṃ ca varṇaṃ pathan drutaṃ ca mantrapustakaṃ vācayan nābhimatameva gaccheduccārayed vācayed vā. tathāhi tasmіндеśe jñānam ācikramiṣā kramaṇam ākrāntatājñānam prayojanāntarānusamdhānam tityakṣā deśāntarānusamdhis tatrāpy ācikramiṣetyādinā saṃyojanaviyojanarūpena parāmar śena vinābhimatadeśāvāptih katham bhavet? evaṃ tvaritodgrahaṇavācānādaṃ mantavyam. tatra viśeṣatah sthānakaraṇākramaṇādiyogaḥ. atra ca yatah paścādbhāvīsthūlavikalpapakalpanā na saṃvedyate, tata eva tvaritatvam iti sūkṣmeṇa pratyavamarśena saṃvartitāśabdabhāvanāmayena bhāvyaṃ eva. saṃvartitā hi śabdabhāvanā prasāraṇena vivartyamānā sthūlo vikalpo yathedaṃ ity asya prasāraṇā ghaṭaḥ śukla ityādiḥ. (trans., with slight changes, in Ratié 2011a: 163-64).*

done and explains it. This means that discursive thought is nothing but the development of a subtle, condensed expression already present in any act of perception” (Ratié 2021: 96).¹⁰² ‘Full-blown’ conceptual judgments are thus not regarded as experientially discontinuous with the sorts of inner feelings that already implicitly take for granted the embodied identification of meaning and action.¹⁰³ Thus, elsewhere, Abhinava likens this contracted form of reflexive awareness to the kind of identity of language and action disclosed in non-verbalized, embodied forms of signification that implicitly convey semantic information—e.g., an ‘internal nodding of the head,’ (*antarmukhaśironirdeśaprakhyā* (ĪPV vol 1, 205-6)) or ‘silent gestures like pointing with a finger’ (*aṅgulinirdeśādiprakhyā* (ĪPV vol. II: 260-61)).¹⁰⁴

The synthetic movement from inner, silent, embodied knowledge to verbalized, explicit judgment is only possible, Utpala and Abhinava claim, because the will of the unified subject

¹⁰² MacCracken (2023: 6) likewise notes that “[i]ncipient interpretability is present and real even in what is common-sensically called perception, that is, perceptual as opposed to conceptual cognition.”

¹⁰³ Consider this point in relation to Polanyi; while broadly similar in their practical account of knowledge, one major difference is that while Bhartṛhari and Utpala both consider embodied, or ‘tacit’ knowledge, *linguistic* in a broad sense, for Polanyi, ‘tactic’ or ‘embodied’ knowledge is precisely what cannot be said or remains unspecified in terms of definite rules, and thus is often contrasted with propositional or linguistic knowledge (1967: 4). Given the inexpressible nature of the subject of experience, it would be interesting to parse whether the use of ‘language’ to describe such practical knowledge remains appropriate given Polanyi’s distinction. Here we might also consider Fodor’s (1981 [1967]) critique of Polanyi and Ryle, who claims that these categories of knowledge are “too crude”—viz., assimilating ‘knowing that’ merely to ‘knowing how’ cannot account for the awareness of the difference between ‘doing’ (verbs) and ‘doing well’ (adverbs): “Traits give rise to adverbs, competences to verbs: we exhibit our competences in our activities and our traits in our style” (1981: 72).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. ĪPV I.5.13 (vol. 1, pp. 250–254): *cetayati ity atra yā citiḥ citikriyā tasyāḥ pratyavamarśaḥ svātmacamatkāralakṣaṇa ātmā svabhāvaḥ. tathā hi ghaṭena svātmani na camatkriyate, svātmā na parāmrśyate, nā svātmani tena prakāśyate, na aparicchinnatayā bhāsyate, tato na cetyata iti ucyate. caitreṇa tu svātmani aham iti samrambhodyogollāsavibhūtiyogāt camatkriyate, svātmā parāmrśyate, svātmany eva prakāśyate...pratyavamarśaś ca āntarābhilāpātmakeśabdanasvabhāvaḥ, tac ca śabdanaṃ saṃketanirapekṣam eva avicchinncamatkāratmakam antarmukhaśironirdeśaprakhyam akārādīmāyīyasāṃketikaśabdajīvitabhūtam. nīlam idaṃ caitro ‘haṃ ityādipratyavamarśāntarabhittibhūtatvāt, pūrnatvāt parā, vakti viśvam abhilapati pratyavamarśena iti ca vāk.* “The word *citi*, derived from *cetayati*, ‘to make conscious’, indicates the activity of consciousness, whose essential nature, its essence, is a reflexive awareness characterized by self-savoring. To explain: a pot does not have savoring with respect to itself; it does not have a reflective awareness as a self, it does not cognize with respect to itself, nor it shines as having an uninterrupted nature. This is why it is said to be unconscious. On the other hand, a person named Caitra has savoring with respect to himself, for he has the power to produce an effort towards a raised state, that is the ‘I’; he has reflexive awareness as a self and cognizes precisely with respect to himself...Furthermore, reflexive awareness’s essential nature is ‘languageing’, consisting in inner speech. This ‘languageing’ is independent from any linguistic convention and is an uninterrupted spontaneous savoring. It is like an internal nodding of the head; it is the life of the conventional sounds existing at the Māyā level, such as ‘a’ etc., because it is the internal support of a reflexive awareness such as ‘this is blue’ or ‘I am Caitra’ and so on. Since speech denotes, conveys, all things through reflexive awareness, consciousness is said to be the ‘word’” (trans. in Ferrante 2020: 144-45).

(*ātman*) with the powers of conceptual recognition (i.e., memory and exclusion) can become aware of contradictory appearances simultaneously through its own reflexive action (*vimarśa*). Yet, the pure self-illumination (*svaprakāśa*) of this dynamic act of consciousness renders the cognitive nature of the *ātman* fundamentally unrecognizable *in those very terms* (viz., as a linguistic *vikalpa*).¹⁰⁵ Thus, the Pratyabhijñā diverge from Bhartṛhari insofar as they argue that the linguistic nature of being does not logically precede the existence of pure, boundless or non-dual consciousness, but the conceptual manifestations of language are absolutely coextensive with its capacity for reflexive action. So even though the Pratyabhijñā agree with the Buddhists that momentary cognitions are ‘contained in themselves,’ they claim that the necessary unity of cognitive and mnemonic consciousness betrays an intentional form of continuity that only the transcendental non-duality of the subjective *ātman* can provide—for synthesis cannot, *ipso facto*, simply be another self-contained *cognition*, but must represent the *sui generis* form of activity which *constitutes* the cognitive subject thereof. Otherwise, the conventional world would cease to remain conceptually intelligible. As Abhinava explains,

Cognitions are certainly “different from each other”: [in other words], one is the cognition which is experience, another is the actual cognition which we call “conceptual”, yet another is the cognition called “memory”. Now these [cognitions,] whose nature consists only in the manifestation of their own object, are, so to speak, unconscious, blind, deaf and mute with regard to the object of other [cognitions], and their nature does not [allow them] to enlighten each other. Thus, the synthesis (*anusamdhāna*), which consists of unification (*ekībhāva*) [of cognitions], cannot come either from the nature [of each cognition], nor from the object; and there is no mutual relation of perceived object to perceiving subject between [cognitions]; and as there cannot be a fourth cause which would be a relation [between these cognitions] capable of producing [their] synthesis, [all] worldly activities should be annihilated.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ As Ratié explains with reference to the Buddhist theory of conceptual exclusion (*apoha*), “the ‘I’ awareness specific to absolute consciousness, although it is of the order of language, is not a concept (*vikalpa*), because the concept of an object X is the result of a mental construction which supposes the exclusion of everything which is other than X (*anyāpohana*)...But in the case of the absolute subject’s awareness of his own conscious activity, such a distinction is impossible, because the subject grasps there a pure conscious light (*prakāśa*), a manifesting manifestation which cannot be constructed by a process of exclusion of everything that is not it, since everything that exists exists only insofar as it participates in this conscious light and is manifested by it. The awareness of the I through pure consciousness is therefore not of a conceptual order” (2011a: 204).

¹⁰⁶ *anyonyam tāvat bhinnāni jñānāni. anyat anubhavajñānam, anyat idānīntanaṃ jñānaṃ vikalpābhimatam, anyat smaraṇasammatam jñānam / tadetāni svaviśayaprakāśamātrārūpāṇi paraviśaye jadāndhāneḍamūkakalpāni , na ca*

As we saw in earlier chapters, according to the Buddhists Sautrāntikas, all perceptual cognitions are ultimately momentary and self-manifest. But the Pratyabhijñā argue that these properties are in tension: If perceptual cognitions are all instantaneous, then no cognition can emerge therefrom such that a contrastive awareness of two successive moments could appear in consciousness. Insofar as cognition remains both instantaneous and self-manifest, momentariness cannot account for the synthetic unity that characterizes sentient consciousness; reality would remain insentient if the unity of reflexive consciousness only consisted of *self-contained perceptual cognitions*, constitutively devoid of the intrinsic capacity for synthetic unity.¹⁰⁷

The notion of *anusamdhāna* therefore conveys, first and foremost, the *free will of consciousness* to parse reality in the very relational and conceptual terms that suit its own reflexive nature: When we refer to a mass of buildings as a city; or a group of trees as a forest; or interpret successive sounds as music; or concatenate phenomes together to form words, and words to form sentences; or even pick out the cause(s) of some phenomenon; we are, in every case, freely employing the synthetic capacities of the reflexive mind to recognize divisions in a unified field of consciousness—in effect, licensing ourselves to realize the conventional world in terms of our own intersubjective standards of rational intelligibility. The Buddhist who denies all ontological continuity therefore does not only misconstrue conceptual re-cognition as incidental to the immediacy of perceptual cognition itself, but also, on a more basic level, cannot account for the fundamental property of consciousness to freely choose *how* to parse perceptual cognitions in a manner that necessarily coextends with this recognitive function.

anyonyasya prakāśarūpāṇi evaṃ na svarūpato na vedyayo vā ekībhāvarūpam anusamdhānam asti / anyonyam ca viṣayaviṣayibhāvo nāsti / na ca turyam jñāteyanibandhanam anusandhānādhāyi sambhāvyaṭe iti dhvaṃseran vyavahārāḥ (ĪPV vol. I on ĪPK I.3.6; my trans. follows Ratié 2011a: 167-68).

¹⁰⁷ As Ratié explains, “this is because the connection presupposes a unity between things that distinct cognitions cannot produce in themselves: if we are capable of synthesizing a multiplicity of objects and of being conscious not only of each of them in its singularity, but also the connection that binds them, it is because cognitions are only limited forms assumed by a single consciousness” (Ratié 2011a: 194).

Summarizing the influence of Bhartṛhari on the Pratyabhijñā, Torella comments that “in order to undermine the discontinuous universe of the Buddhists he [Utpaladeva] decides to avail himself precisely of the [doctrine of] the language-imbued nature of knowledge, which is meant to demolish its main foundation stone, the unsurpassable gulf between the moment of sensation and that of conceptual elaboration, representing, as it were, the very archetype of the Buddhist segmented reality” (Torella 2008: 350-51). We can now fully appreciate not only the significance of Bhartṛhari in the Pratyabhijñā system, but also why the topic of *relation* was so central to Utpala that he decided to revisit the subject on its own his *Siddhitratyī*. For the problem of proving the reality of a dynamic, unified *self* against the Buddhist nominalist entails establishing a rational and temporal *continuity* between the initial moment of bare perception and its subsequent conceptualization—and only something like the constitutively synthetic nature of linguistic consciousness could represent a necessary and sufficient condition thereof.

b. The Intrinsic Validity of Relational Cognition

In this section and the next, I will focus on the second chapter of the *Kriyādhikāra* (ĪPK(V) II.2.1-7)—which, aside from the SS itself, doubtlessly comprises the most important text on the nature of *sambandha* in the entire Pratyabhijñā corpus. To set the stage for these verses, recall from Chapter III that the Buddhist—like Bradley—justified their rejection of relations on the characteristically nominalist grounds that nothing real can be unified and diverse simultaneously. We saw that Dharmakīrti denied the reality of a substantive self and distributed conceptual entities alike for these same characteristically nominalist reasons. As we have seen, in epistemological terms, this steadfast nominalism evolved into a doctrine that severed conventional notions of action completely from the intrinsic self-consciousness of cognition—

specifically, through construing the latter in terms of a constitutively inactive (*nirvyāpara*) state of non-conceptual (*nirvikalpa*) perception. Hence a large part of Buddhist foundationalism is predicated on the idea that cognition and action alike do not conform to the nature of real causally efficacious particulars; the former is self-established (*svaparakāśa*) as a real existent only inasmuch as it corresponds to the reflexive aspect of the perceptual image (*ākāra*), while the latter term designates a subsequent conceptual construction that imposes a distributed, or continuous nature over what is really a discrete sequence of momentary entities.

When put in these terms, the arguments against action and temporality become tantamount to an argument against relationality: both depend upon the conceptual imposition of an impossible unity among a disconnected series of momentary particulars—something that is ‘neither the same as nor different’ than its respective relata.¹⁰⁸ Accordingly, reflecting on Utpala’s verses on *sambandha* in the *Kriyādhikāra*, Abhinava distills the Buddhist position as such: “But unity and diversity are mutually contradictory. How could they be one and the same thing? The [Buddhist] method for eradicating [all] continuance (*sthairya*) is based [solely] on this disproving reason (*bādhakapramāṇa*).”¹⁰⁹

As we have just discussed, Bhartṛhari presented Utpala with an alternative pragmatic formulation for the meaning of the possible connection between action and relation—viz., ‘relation’ is not the post-hoc conceptual *result* of a non-relational perceptual cognition, or a universal category like *samavāya*, but rather a transcendental capacity (*śakti*) of the reflexive

¹⁰⁸ Utpala’s Buddhist interlocutor expresses this in the *vṛtti* to ĪPK I.2.9: *kriyāpi pūrvāparībhūtavayavaikā kārakavyāpārārūpā na yuktā kramikasyānekakālasprśah svātmāikyāyogāt, nāpi kālakramavyāpī caikasvabhāvas ca tasyā āśrayo yuktaḥ, kevalaṃ gamanapariṇāmādirūpā sā kriyā / kāyādīnām tu tattadbhinnadēśakālagatapūrvasattāmātram etad atiriktasyānyasyānupalambhāt*. “Additionally, action cannot be endowed with successive parts [and still] be a unified [entity, which] consists in the activity of [the various] factors of action (*kāraka*). For [something] occurring in sequence, i.e., connected to diverse moments, cannot have any unity in and of itself; nor can it have a substratum that perdures throughout a temporal sequence [and yet] possess a unitary nature. Action only consists in going, changing, etc.; but this is merely the fact that [things], such as a body, etc., have a new existence occurring at various places and times that are different [from each other], because nothing else is perceived that would be distinct [from these momentary entities]” (cf. Ratié 2021: 102).

¹⁰⁹ *nanvekatvam anekatvaṃ ca parasparaṃ viruddhe, katham ekatra vastuni syātām, tataścāyaṃ bādhakapramāṇakṛtaḥ sthairyonmūlanaprakāra* (ĪPVV II.1.1 2: 8-9); cf. Lawrence (1999: 103).

action that manifests linguistic or conceptual knowledge. Although not overtly mentioned, Utpala clearly defends Bhartṛhari’s position in his response to the implied Buddhist Pūrvapakṣin in the *Kriyādhikāra*. In the first verse, Utpala affirms that even though all categorical appearances are based on both unity and multiplicity, they must still be regarded as real on practical grounds: “*The ideas of action, relation, universal, substance, space and time, which are based on unity and multiplicity, are to be considered real (satyaḥ), because of their permanence and efficacy.* The ideas of relation, etc., are also real manifestation, just like action, even if they regard both unity and multiplicity [at the same time].”¹¹⁰

To charitably interpret Utpala here, we must keep in mind that the Pratyabhijñā thinkers accept the epistemic doctrine of ‘intrinsic validity’ (*svataḥ prāmānya*) as the criterion for true cognitions, i.e., those that possess ‘permanence and efficacy’ (*sthairyopayoga*) in the empirical domain and withstand being overturned by subsequent cognitions.¹¹¹ For Utpala, these pragmatic standards apply to cognitions of relation as much as any of the other fundamental categories of empirical judgment: it does not matter, that is, if the content of cognition is a particular, a universal, a relational trope, or spacetime itself—all are ‘real’ just in the manner they appear, provided they are not overturned in the course of practical inquiry. And yet, the immediate appearance of each one presupposes a constitutively *general* form of unity-in-diversity that can

¹¹⁰ *kriyāsaṃbandhasāmānyadravyadikkālabuddhayaḥ / satyāḥ sthairyopayogābhyām ekānekāśrayā matāḥ*. kriyāvad anye 'pi saṃbandhādaya ekānekaviṣayā api satyābhāsāḥ, sarvadopayoginām eṣām arthavattvenāpariharaṇīyatvāt (trans. in Torella (2013: 157)).

¹¹¹ See Abhinava’s formulation: *satya eva yataḥ sthira bādakenānunmūlyamāna-vimarśaḥ saṃvādavāṃś ca abhisamhūtāyām grāmaprāptilakṣaṇāyām kriyāyām upayogī*. “Truth is just that which is (i) permanent, viz., a judgment’s not being uprooted by a countervailing cognition, and (ii) manifests (*saṃvāda*) as efficacious in conventional activity characterized by the cognition of many” (ĪPVV III: 29; see also Torella (2013: 157, f.4)). This definition of a cognition as intrinsically valid until overturned was famously developed by Kumārila (cf. Immerman (2018), Arnold (2001), and Taber (1992)). Insofar as the doctrine of intrinsic validity represents a common epistemic touchstone of the Mīmāṃsā externalists and the Śaiva internalists, it speaks to the ways in which *ontologically idealistic* schools can appropriate *realist epistemologies* to bridge the gap between the concept of defeasible justification and the concept of independent ‘truth,’ but do so without solipsistically reducing knowledge of the external world to mere subjective projection, or ‘epistemologizing’ the concept of objective, ‘mind-independent’ truth. Rastogi notes this when he writes that the Pratyabhijñā endorsed the “intrinsic validity of knowledge[,] and yet holds that causes of error are its own creations by granting empirical reality to them. This...represents a sort of synthesis between idealism and realism and may be said to be captured by the Śaivism of Kashmir” (1986:10).

never *itself* be empirically overturned, insofar as the transcendental basis for the experience of all other categories would not obtain in that case.

Accordingly, given the connection already established by the Buddhist between relation and action, Utpala believes that Buddhist arguments against the latter do not ultimately hold water; even though actions require a paradoxical awareness of both unity and diversity, their perceptual validity is never practically overturned (cf. Ratié 2021: 112-13). The point is that ‘unity’ and ‘diversity’ are only *contradictory* when construed as simultaneous predicates of a *substantial existent*. The simultaneous application of unity and diversity to the nature of concrete phenomenal experience is never practically overturned because the ‘unity’ in this case is supplied by the pure dynamism of the unrepresentable *subject*: “*In action etc., there is one internal reality; this, once it has become the object of sensory knowledge, becomes manifold depending on place, time and the specific shapes it assumes.* The essential reality (*tattvam*)—which is by nature absolutely undivided—becomes one and manifold because of the division into internal and external manifestation. [It becomes manifold] because of the multiplicity of the manifestations of the individual realities (*svalakṣaṇa*), constituted as they are by the different combination of external manifestations such as place, time, and shape.”¹¹² In general, then, these apparent poles of experience do not refer to numerical *attributes* of an actual being, but reflect placeholders for phases in the non-dual process of manifestation—i.e., as the nature of mind realizes itself through a movement *from* internal unity *to* external diversity. Like Bhartṛhari, Utpala considers the transformation of the inner reality of self-knowledge into objective terms a holistic form of continuous action. When anything appears in consciousness—whether space,

¹¹² *tatraikam āntaraṃ tattvaṃ tad evendriyavedyatām / samprāpyānekatām yāti deśakālasvabhāvataḥ. abhinnaṃ eva tattvaṃ anto bahir ābhāsabhedād ekānekam, bahirdeśakālasvabhāvabhedābhāsambedamayaikaikaḥ svalakṣaṇābhāsānām anekatvāt* (trans. in Torella 2013: 158).

time, relations, particulars, or universals, or even the retrospective falsification of cognitions themselves—this general form of unity-in-diversity is already in play.¹¹³

In a distinctly Peircean register, Utpala proceeds to explain that the unity-in-diversity of the mind (*manas*) corresponds to the fact that it abides in the ‘middle’ (*madhya*) of these polarities of experience; namely, between the diversity of external objects at the ‘inferior plane’ (*apara*) and the unity of the ‘superior plane’ (*para*) of pure reflexive consciousness: “*The mind, performing the function of determination following [direct perception] (anuvyavasāyi), brings about conceptual elaborations such as action and so on, which are based on these two and substantiated by the activity of the knowing subject.* The conceptual elaborations such as action, etc., carried out by the mind (*mānasyaḥ*) and regarding both the external and the internal plane—the mind being halfway (*madhya*) between them—are essentially the activity of the knowing subject.”¹¹⁴ In Abhinava’s commentary, he writes that Utpala intends to counter a hypothetical Buddhist who might argue that these ‘conceptual elaborations’ do not occur at the time of direct perception, but rather subsequent thereto, which would preclude direct contact with reality (cf.

¹¹³ Indeed, in the SS and the ĪPK, Utpala notes that the apprehension of contradictory empirical states itself depends upon a synthetic awareness of unity-in-diversity; there would be no meaning to ‘cancellation of validity’ if one were not already aware of the establishment of a relational unity between two temporally distinct cognitions—i.e., the one being ‘overturned’ and the one doing the ‘overturning.’ See ĪPK I.7.6 in particular: *bādhyabādhakabhāvo 'pi svātmaniṣṭhāvirodhinām jñānānām udiyād ekapramātrpariniṣṭhiteḥ. bhinnasvābhāsamātraniṣṭhānām jñānānām ko virodhaḥ, tat katham bādhyabādhkatvam / ekapramātrviśrāntau tu yuktam.* “*Also, the invalidating-invalidated relation (bādhyabādhakabhāva) between cognitions which are restricted to themselves and do not contradict one another may exist only by virtue of their resting on a single knowing subject.* What contradiction can there be between cognitions which are only directed to the single manifestations that are their own, and, consequently, how can one speak of an invalidating-invalidated relation with reference to them? On the contrary, this relation is admissible if they rest on a single knowing subject” (trans. in Torella (2013: 139)). The Pratyabhijñā theory of error is sophisticated and internally variegated (at least according to Nemeč (2011)), and I cannot do the topic justice here. Generally speaking, there are different levels of error for the Pratyabhijñā based on their metaphysical absolutism. For Utpala in the Śivādṛṣṭivṛtti, the basic metaphysical error was the noncognition of non-duality (*abhedākhyāti*). Abhinava develops this idea with his theory that conventional error is ‘incomplete knowledge’ (*akhyāti, apūrnakhyāti*). In this sense, Abhinava does not accept the idea that illusions or errors represent an absence or negation of knowledge; even conventional illusions represent a kind of positive knowledge, albeit an incomplete form (see Rastogi (1986) and Sharma (1972) for further details). We discuss this further in the next chapter on the SS.

¹¹⁴ ĪPK II.2.3: *taddvayālabanā etā mano 'nuvyavasāyi sat / karoti mātrvyāpāramayīḥ karmādikalpanāḥ. madhyasthatayāntarbahistattvaviṣayā mānasyaḥ kriyādikalpanāḥ pramātrvyāpārarūpāḥ* (trans. in Torella 2013: 158-9).

Torella 2013: 159, fn.9).¹¹⁵ But the relational principle of mind corresponds to the fact that it stands as a *dynamic* interface *between* the undifferentiated state of internal unity and the differentiated manifestations of the external world. In cosmogonic terms, it corresponds to the *śakti* of *parāpara* that recognizes the undifferentiated and differentiated planes simultaneously (viz., in the form of “I am this universe”). Thus, the capacity we call ‘mind,’ practically speaking, *just is* a relation of ‘Thirdness’, albeit of a constitutively *sui generis* sort: It is a relation whose mediation *between* relata is also constitutive of what it means for the relata themselves to appear as such.

c. The Practical Inversion of the Buddhist Theory of Relations

In the next set of verses, Utpala implicitly invokes two senses of relation that, I want to suggest, map onto the distinction already surveyed above with respect to Bhartṛhari’s ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ conceptions of relation: i.e., there are various ideas or notions (*‘buddha/dhi’*) of ‘relation’ that apply to the successive entities in *māyā* (‘Seconds’), and then there is the unity-in-diversity associated with the mediating activity of the knowing subject (‘Thirds’): “*Things that are self-contained and are manifested separately, possess a unity in the sense of mutual connection within the unitary knowing subject. This is the basis of the ideas of relation (sambandha).* The various ideas of relation, such as that expressed in the phrase ‘the king’s servant,’ rest on the unity which derives from the connection on the internal plane and the

¹¹⁵ ĪPV vol. II, pp. 43-4: *nanu evaṃ viśayabhede abhyupagamyamāne yadā ekaṃ pratibhātaṃ bhavati tadā na anekam, anekapratibhāse ca na ekaṃ pratibhātam, iti katham ekānekarūpaṃ vastu syāt, tathāhi bāhyena indriyeṇa caitro vicitradeśakaḥ param anubhūyate, na tu anekābhāsaṃmiśrīkāre bāhyendriyajasya avikalpakasya vyāpāraḥ—saṃnihitaviśayabalotpatteḥ avicāratvāt ityāhuḥ, vikalpenāpi mānasena tathābhūtaṃ vastu naiva sprśyate iti kayā dhīyā vastu ekānekarūpaṃ grhyeta? iti paravyāmohanibarhaṇāya āha.*

differentiation of the two related terms externally.”¹¹⁶ Note that Utpala does not define *saṃbandha* itself here, but rather claims that the existence of internal unity and external diversity serves as a ‘sign,’ or ‘token’ (*pada*), for the various ‘ideas’ (*dhī*) of relation (*saṃbandha*). Hence, he clearly means to distinguish between the two—i.e., between the general form of *bhedābheda* and *saṃbandhadhīpadam*—in a manner that jibes with Bhartṛhari’s own theory of relational realism.

In the next two verses and their commentaries, Utpala clarifies that this reasoning extends to universals, particulars, and the nature of space and time; each of these phenomena correspond to certain modalities of unity-in-diversity, which manifest in conformity to the reflexive awareness of the various factors (*kāraṇāṅām*) that comprise the action (*kriyā*) itself:

*Likewise, the conceptual elaborations of the manifestation of ‘universal’ and ‘individual substance’ also rest externally on unity, as well as on the differentiation of the individual realities and parts. The notions of ‘cows’ and ‘Caitra’ have as object, externally too, both the unity of manifestation represented respectively by the general configuration of cow and by the configuration of a particular man seen as a whole, and the multiplicity of manifestations typical of the individual realities and the various parts. The connection existing between the factors of the action is based on the awareness of the action; the notions of space etc. rest on the connection between limit and limited. The notion of action is based on unity-multiplicity, insofar as the various factors that contribute to carrying out the action—the wood, saucepan, Devadatta [and] rice—are internally linked to each other by the verb ‘he cooks’ and externally differentiated. Also, spatial and temporal succession—given the mutual involvement of the objects which act as the limiting and limited element—is merely a particular case of relation characterized in the same way by unity and multiplicity. The notions of universal, individual substance, action, number etc. all rest on inherence (*samavāya*), which is a particular type of relation.*¹¹⁷

Note that Utpala singles out *samavāya* as a particular subset of *bhedābheda*; in other words, inherence is not a special *ontological instantiation* of the general logical form, *à la* Nyāya-

¹¹⁶ *svātmaniṣṭhā viviktābhā bhāvā ekapramātari / anyonyānvayarūpaikyayujah saṃbandhadhīpadam. rājñah puruṣa ityādisaṃbandhadhiyo 'ntaḥsamanvayād aikyaṃ bahiḥ saṃbandhibhedam cālambante (ĪPK(V) II.2.4; trans. in Torella 2013: 159-60).*

¹¹⁷ *ĪPK II.2.5-6: jātidravyāvabhāsānām bahir apy ekarūpatām / vyaktyekadeśabhedam cāpy ālambante vikalpanāḥ. gavaś caitra iti ca matayo bahir apī gomātraikaghanapuruṣaviśeṣākārābhāsaikyaṃ svalakṣaṇāvayavābhāsabahutvaṃ ca parāmṣanti. kriyāvimarśaviśayaḥ kāraṇāṅām samanvayaḥ / avadhyavadhimadbhāvā-nvayālambā digādidiḥ. kāṣṭhasthalīdevadattaudanānām pacatīty antaḥsamanvayād bahirbhedāc caikānekaviśayā kriyāmatih / deśakālakramo 'pi bhāvānām avadhyavadhimadrūpānām anyonyāpekṣaḥ saṃbandhabheda eva tathaivaikānekamayaḥ / jātidravyakriyāsaṃkhyādimatayaḥ sarvā eva saṃbandhaviśeṣasamavāyaviśayā eva (trans. in Torella 2013: 159-60).*

Vaiśeṣika, but merely a certain modality thereof. Additionally, he implicitly invokes a general and tokenized form of action when he claims that the ‘notion of action’ (*kriyāmatih*) is based on unity-in-multiplicity, while unity-and-multiplicity is itself a form of synthetic action-*qua*-*śakti*. Hence, we can correlate the metaphysical action of *śakti* with Thirds, while judgments of various actions correspond to tokenized, or ‘horizontal’ Seconds.

With respect to the Buddhist, one of the most important features of Utpala’s treatment of *sambandha* above is that *universal types (jāti)* also become logically subordinate to unity-in-diversity. Recall that Dharmakīrti viewed relations as ultimately *unreal* due to their continuous (*anvaya*) nature, and thus were fundamentally forms of conceptual *inference* associated with the benighted state of *vikalpa*. To this extent, the Buddhist ontological order of explanation proceeds from the momentary activity of *causal particulars (svalakṣaṇa)* → *perceptual cognitions (pratyakṣa)* → *universal cognitions (sāmānyalakṣaṇa)* → *all types of relations (sambandha)*. However, we have seen that Bhartṛhari’s conception of *sambandha* as a *śakti* implicitly inverts this Buddhist order of explanation; here *sambandha* is not explained in terms of a *post-hoc* conceptual *inference* associated with the predicates of determinate judgment, but rather the appearance of universals—and all other Vaiśeṣika categories, for that matter—are explained in terms of the transcendental *śakti* of the semiotic mind. Thus, we instead have the prime transcendental *śakti* of relation (*sambandha*) → the apprehension of various other subsidiary capacities (*śaktis*) → the distributed appearance of *universals (sāmānyalakṣaṇa)* → the discrete manifestation of *particulars* (which are, for Utpala, just manifold universal appearances (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa-ābhāsa*) in a ‘contracted’ state due to their mutual conformation to space and time (cf. Torella 1987: 168-9; 2013: 89, fn.3)). ‘*Sambandha*’ thus ultimately designates the reflexive power of mind to progressively determine the degree of ‘contraction’ that define sub-

domains of relata through the spontaneous deployment of relational tokens—and yet, nevertheless, always retain its essential metaphysical unity.

Although Utpala does not directly attribute this doctrine to Bhartṛhari in the ĪPK or the SS, we can see the grammarian’s influence explicitly in Abhinavagupta’s *Vivṛtivimarśinī*. In an important section commenting on the verses above, Abhinava draws out the implications of Utpala’s doctrine by calling attention to a passage from Bhartṛhari’s SSam already quoted:

Thus it is established that universals, etc., indeed possess a kind of reality called ‘conventional reality’ that appears in the conceptual constructions of the everyday world. It has been proved that they are not unreal, like the two moons, etc. With respect to this [conventional reality], consciousness empirically manifests¹¹⁸ thusly: relation, universal, etc., these all appear due to the power of action (*śakti*) characterized by recognitive judgment (*āmarśana*) and freedom (*svātantrya*). Although, with regard to these [referents], the real form is only relation, which always consists of unity-in-diversity. But when this [viz., the ‘GLFR’] is associated with another specific form, it has a different name. Thus that relation whose essence is the unity of a group of many individuals bearing a certain designation—such as “cows”—is given the name “universal.” [Likewise,] there is conventional use of the term “action” due to the force of the designation “it is vibrating” (*spandate*) when there is a stream of numerous moments which become unified in a single substratum; there is conventional use of the term “substance/whole” (*dravya*) [as in the case] “this is a cloth” when there is a unity of threads; there is conventional use of the term “endurer” [*avasthātr*, viz., the subject that passes through the stages of life] in the unification of childhood [youth, adulthood, old-age] etc. Similarly in other cases. Yet [in all these cases] there is only the appearance of relation without any difference, i.e., when the application of another designation has no effect [to the relation]. And [any] appearance that goes beyond the simple noun-stem, that is only in fact a relation. Thus it is said in the *Sambandhasiddhi* “*bhedābheda...*” [SS v 1]. Even the advocates of separate universals accept the relation of *samavāya* in accord with [Bhartṛhari, who states] “*sambandha* assists [*samavāya*]...(*anugrṇāti sambandha*)” [SSam v.11] or due to the acceptance of something assisted by a dependence relation. And relation, consisting of unity-in-diversity, is due to the greatness of the power of action whose essence is the autonomy of the sentient knower. Therefore, it is only relation which is the basis of the establishment of the unity of the subject, since it is stated in the [*Vijñānabhairava Tantra* v. 106]: “[The consciousness of subject and object is the same for all embodied beings, but the distinction of yogis is that they have] awareness of relation.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Lit. ‘sequentially descends’ (*avataranakramah*).

¹¹⁹ *evamiyatā saṃvṛtau vikalpabuddhau sphurataḥ sāmānyādeḥ saṃvṛtisattvaṃ nāma sattvaviśeṣa eva avatiṣṭhate, na dvicandrādivadasatyateti upadāditaṃ. tatra ayam avataranakramah saṃvidah—sarvamiḍaṃ svātantryāmarśanalakṣaṇāyāḥ kriyāśaktervijrmbhitaṃ yat saṃbandhasāmānyādi. tatrāpi saṃbandharūpataiva anekakarūpatālakṣaṇa sarvatra tāttvikaṃ rūpaṃ tatra tu asādhāraṇarūpāntarayoge nāmāntaram. anekavyaktigrāmasya yā aikyātmā saṃbandhaḥ, tatra gāva iti vyapadeśāntarasahiṣṇutvaṃ tatra sāmānyavācoyuktir, anekakṣaṇapravāhe āśrayabalādekībhavati spandate iti vyapadeśabalāt kriyāvyaḥārah, tantūnāmaikye paṭo ‘yamiti dravyavyavahārah, bālyādyavasthānāmaikye avasthātrvyavahārah. evamanyatra. vyapadeśāntaragranthivandhyatāyāṃ tu nirviśeṣa saṃbandhābhāsaiva, prātipadikārthāt tu yadatiriktaṃ bhāte, tat saṃbandha eva sarvam. tathā eva “bhedābheda...” [SS: 1] iti uktaṃ saṃbandhasiddhau bhinnasāmānyavādibhirapi samavāyasya saṃbandhasya “anugrṇāti saṃbandhaḥ...” [VP III.11] iti nītyā saṃbandhena vā anugrṇītasya aṅgikāraṇāt. saṃbandhaśca ekānekatāmayaḥ pramāṭṛsvātantryātmakakriyāśaktimahimnā. tataḥ saṃbandha eva pramātraikyāsiddhau mūlam,*

In this crucial passage, Abhinava summarizes the central place of *sambandha* in the Pratyabhijñā idealist system as a pure form of *śakti*; all the Vaiśeṣika categories are empirical manifestations of the unified action of the sentient knower who essentially consists of recognitive consciousness and freedom. In this context, tokenized relations and universals both have conventional forms of appearance that manifest through an intentional synthesis, but they equally instantiate a general form of unity-in-diversity. The objective distinctions among these categories emerge when this relationality is ‘associated’ (through the reflexive *śakti* of relation itself) with some specific conceptual domain of relata.

Abhinava therefore rearticulates Bhartṛhari’s metaphysical ‘descent’ of the absolutely free determinative function of *sambandha* (viz., *śakti-of-śaktis*→ *samavāyaśakti*→ other *śaktis*) in terms of the spontaneous recognitive power of the *ātman*. In this context, the relata observed in different phenomenal domains correspond to the manner by which the action of reflexive consciousness progressively realizes objective content: e.g., ‘universal’ is the unity-in-diversity that represents many different appearances with a single designation; ‘physical vibration’ is the unity-in-diversity of many moments in succession; and ‘particular substance’ is the unity-in-diversity of the inherence of common properties bound together in virtue of space and time. The dynamic essence of relationality itself—its elusive, chameleonic nature—entails that its apprehension always depends upon the nature of the relata in the context of conventional discursive practices. The relational point is that a fundamental *asymmetry* obtains between the relations of practical judgment and the general form, because no such designation in the realm of the former can ever have any possible effect upon the meaning of the latter, while the existence of the latter is a condition for the possibility of the former.

“[*grāhyagrāhakatāsamvittiḥ sāmānya sarvadehinām yoginām tu viśeṣo ‘yam] sambandhe sāvadhānatā*” [VB v 106] *ityukteḥ* (ĪPKVV vol. III, p. 51; cf. Allport: 201–3 and Lawrence 1999: 137-38).

For Pratyabhijñā, the appearance of a *samavāya* relation between the particular substance and its universal properties suggests these categories cannot be ontologically *distinct* in the way the Buddhist nominalist or Nyāya naïve realist supposes. For the only way practical judgment is possible—the only way, that is, it *makes sense* to employ general concepts for the sake of understanding and making inferential commitments *vis-à-vis* the changing empirical world—is if one already takes for granted that a certain continuity obtains between these two domains of experience. Utpala accordingly concludes the section on relations: “*Thus the knowing subject who aspires to the production of determinate results may obtain them with an entity that is at the same time both differentiated and undifferentiated. Thus one may not speak of error as regards them.* With the notions that have been discussed so far, that is, action and so on, which are both one and many, the knowing subject has the capacity to obtain the determinate effects he desired (which demonstrates their congruence with reality), accompanied by the continuity and homogeneity of their manifestations. Therefore, such notions are not erroneous.”¹²⁰ Just as Peirce noted, practically speaking, the ‘reality’ of a “universal concept” does not consist in its being the *kind of nature* that is purely singular or diverse. Rather, the determinate or categorematic appearance of general concepts represents a certain terminal phase in the mediated process of recognitive signification.

Conclusion: Temporality and the Recognitive Event

This chapter served to introduce the doctrines of nom-dual Kashmir Śaivism in preparation for our presentation of the SS in the next chapter. Along the way, I have also argued that, in his

¹²⁰ *taddvayālabhanā etā mano 'nuvyavasāyi sat / karoti mātrvyāpāramayīḥ karmādikalpanāḥ // svātmaniṣṭhā viviktābhā bhāvā ekapramātari / anyonyānvayarūpaikyayujāḥ sambandhadhīpadam. vrtti: rājñāḥ puruṣa ityādisambandhadhiyo 'ntaḥsamanvayād aikyaṃ bahiḥ sambandhibhedam cālambante. jātidraṅgāvabhāsānām bahir apy ekarūpatām / vyaktyekadeśabhedam cāpy ālambante vikalpanāḥ* (ĪPK(V) II.2.1-5; trans. in Torella 2013: 160).

‘emanationist’ construal of the metaphysical process of the realization of divine ‘speech’ (*paravāk*), Bhartṛhari effectively introduces a new conception of *sambandha* into the Indian philosophical scene as a transcendental form of *śakti* (viz., a ‘*śakti-of-śaktis*’). *Sambandha* here refers to the intrinsic *capacity* for the holistic essence of inner speech (*sphoṭa*) to express itself in differentiated, external terms through the semiotic designation of signs. This vision explicitly contrasts with the Nyāya construal of *sambandha* as a static objective referent that can be faithfully captured within the determinate structures of language (viz., an independent term *in addition to* the appearance of relata), as well as the Buddhist view of *sambandha* as a subset of *sāmānyalakṣaṇa*. According to Bhartṛhari, while we might attribute some distinct *properties* to a ‘token’ of *sambandha* through inference (e.g., *pāratantrya*, etc.), the judgment of these referential terms derives from the practical powers of *vāc*, which makes the very act of linguistic reference—and thus all knowledge—possible in the first place.

In his characteristic style, Utpala ultimately appropriates and exploits Bhartṛhari’s arguments to advance the claims of his own Śaiva system of ‘realist idealism’—arguably to the detriment of both Dharmakīrti’s nominalism and Bhartṛhari’s ‘linguistic monism.’ For the ultimate reality here is not *paravāc*, *per se*, but Lord Śiva, identified with the recognitive *ātman* who possesses the creative *śaktis* of knowledge and action. The transcendental maneuver of Utpala’s reformed relational realism consisted in showing that the ‘unity’ of ‘unity-and-diversity’ never really applies exclusively to a *predicate* of some *substance*, but rather always applies to the synthetic activity that practically constitutes the intentionality of the sentient knower. In this respect, the relata of any relational trope are always transcendently indexed, not to some particular objective *content*, but to the dynamic unity of the reflexive awareness thereof. Accordingly, we will see in the next chapter on the SS that things are only judged to be ‘unified’

and ‘diverse’ with this relational capacity already very much in play. ‘Relation’ is therefore not merely a *post-hoc inferential* ‘latecomer’ onto a constitutively perceptual scene of pure immediacy, as the Buddhists insist, but rather a special *kind* of sign that, in its most general sense, points to the basic phenomenological fact that the objective form of *time* corresponds to the flow of signs in the semiotic process: the *śakti* of ‘*sambandha*’ is really the cosmic ‘stage’ upon which Śiva engages in the ‘performance’ (*krīḍa*) of conventional discursive practices.

Since *time* and *relation* become so entwined for the pragmatic realist, I want to dilate a bit on the question of *time* in the Pratyabhijñā system—and, with the help of insights from Peirce, offer a reading of Utpala’s philosophy as a form of *temporal realism* that potentially ameliorates the time-lag problem of the Buddhist epistemologists in Chapter III.¹²¹ Utpala focuses on time and action in the ĪPK II.1.1-8, before his discussion of relation in the following chapter (II.2). As the first verse makes clear, Utpala links all three topics together (i.e., time, relation, and action) through the Buddhists denial of something ‘that is both unitary and successive’ in I.2.9. As we have already discussed, Utpala argued such a position is invalid because the unitary principle underlying all relational action is the dynamism of transcendental consciousness, which is not predicable as a traditional substance (*dravya*) in terms of the diametric numerical disjunction of strict identity *or* diversity.¹²² Accordingly, Utpala proceeds to reduce conventional notions of ‘time’ (*kāla*) to successive properties associated with objects in the realm of *māyā*, as measured through things like the movement of the sun and the life cycle of particular flower.¹²³ Utpala thus writes in verse II.1.4 that

¹²¹ See Sherover (2003) on relevant reflections on the primacy of the constitutively temporal form of practical reason, which inform some of the arguments here.

¹²² *ata eva yad apy uktam kriyā naikasya sakramā / eketyādi pratikṣiptam tad ekasya samarthanāt // ekacittattvasamarthanād ekasambandhī vyāpāra eka eveti kriyāpy apakṛtadūṣaṇā* (ĪPK II.1.1).

¹²³ *kālah sūryādisaṃcāras tattatpuṣpādijanma vā / śītoṣṇe vātha tallakṣyaḥ krama eva sa tattvataḥ // sā sā prasiddhā kriyā kālah śītādi vā tadupalakṣitaḥ sarvabhinnāvabhāsamānabhāvopādhibhūtaḥ krama eva vāsau tasyaivopayogāt* (ĪPK(V) II.1.3).

[time is nothing but succession, and] succession is based on differentiation, and this in turn derives from the existence or non-existence of a certain manifestation. The existence or non-existence of manifestations depends on the Lord, who is he who determines their multiform appearance. The cause of succession in things is the very action of the Lord, directed to the multiform appearance of the manifestations differentiated in their nature and mutually exclusive.¹²⁴

At this point, one might not consider Pratyabhijñā a ‘temporal’ realism in any *robust* sense, insofar as ‘time’ is *mere succession*, and the unified reality of the subjective *ātman* must transcend any of the successive states identified with a pluralistic *māyā*.¹²⁵

Yet, in an earlier verse (II.1.2) Utpala distinguishes between ‘successive’ and ‘divine’ *action*: while the former depends upon ‘the power of time’ (*kālaśakti*) and pertains to ordinary entities in *māyā*, the latter reflects the recognitive activity of the *ātman*, and is thus the source of the former.¹²⁶ As Ratié notes, the entire point of Utpala’s verses on time is thus to “*dissociate time from action and to show that the former is not an intrinsic property of the latter*, so that action, in the form of *vimarśa*, can be the essence of the ultimate consciousness without necessarily entailing a temporal limitation in it” (2021: 139). Along these lines, I want to tentatively suggest here that one might interpret Utpala as a kind of ‘reformed’ temporal realist even though he reduces conventional notions of ‘time’ to mere succession. More specifically, we can perhaps buffer Utpala’s apparent denial of ‘time’ *tout court* to the extent that the referent in

¹²⁴ *kramo bhedaśrayo bhedo 'py ābhāśadasattvataḥ / ābhāśadasattve tu citrābhāśakṛtaḥ prabhoḥ // anyonyābhāśaśūnyabhinnabhāvāvabhāśavaicitryakriyaiva prabhor bhāveṣu kramahetuḥ* (ĪPK II.1.4; trans. in Torella 154).

¹²⁵ As Abhinava comments in the MŚV, “time [itself] is unable to cause differentiation in consciousness, nor is this time capable of becoming a differentiator [i.e. a differentiating quality] of the object of perception. For the universe does not exist outside of knowledge, otherwise it (tad) would not appear.” *tasmāt kālo na bodhasya bhedakatvāya kalpate / nāpi vedyasya kālo 'sau bhedakībhavitum kṣamaḥ // viśvaṃ hi bodhābhinnaṃ tad atathāve na bhāśate* (MŚV 61–62ab; trans. in Hanneder (1998: 68–9)). Prueitt likewise concludes that, for Abhinavagupta, “the mere fact of differentiated appearances means that these appearances are somehow inherent in ultimate reality, even though they are experienced through limiting adjuncts such as time. Time itself cannot cause differences. Rather, it is an expression of the differentiation inherent in the ultimate” (2019: 305).

¹²⁶ “Succession pertains to ordinary action, which is dependent on the power of Time; it is not, however admissible for divine eternal action, as it is not for the Lord. The action of entities that, due to the power of *māyā*, appear differentiated, is successive, being depend on the power of Time, but that action, informed by the awareness of the self, without beginning or end, which is the very essence of the Lord, is not.” *sakramatvaṃ ca laukikyāḥ kriyāyāḥ kālaśaktiḥ / ghaṭate na tu śāśvatyāḥ prābhavyāḥ syāt prabhor iva // māyāśakter bhinnabhāvāvabhāśānām kriyā ca kālaśaktivaśāt sakramā na tv ātmavimarśarūpānādinidhanā prabhoḥ svabhāvabhūtā* (ĪPK(V) II.1.2; trans. in Torella 2013: 153).

this case does not amount to successive properties of *discontinuous* entities in a particular series *per se*, but instead signifies a conceptual derivative of the *objective intuition of continuity* intrinsic to the semiotic, or recognitive, event itself.¹²⁷ Hence, *insofar as action (kriyā) is not reducible to conventional notions of ‘time’ qua discontinuous succession (kāla)*, Utpala’s blanket denial of the latter only refers to external referents in the differentiated realm of *māyā*, rather than the dynamism of primordial consciousness.

One might therefore say that Utpala implicitly makes his own sort of distinction between ‘time’ and ‘temporality,’ or ‘the conceptual judgment of a unity of successive actions’ and ‘the experience of action in itself’—one that, I am suggesting, tracks onto Bhartṛhari’s distinction between ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ forms of *sambandha-śakti*. In accord with this reading, Utpala and Abhinava distinguish between ‘the power of time’ (*kālaśakti*), i.e., the recognitive *cause* of successive properties, and ‘time’ itself, which is just the sequential properties of things in *māyā*. Abhinava accordingly comments that “[t]he power of time (*kālaśakti*), which makes sequence manifest, is the power of the Lord Himself: and [as for] time, [it] is nothing but the sequence made manifest by this [power—a sequence] that is entirely dependent (*lagna*) on the *māyic* knowing subject, since it exists while having [this subject as its] essence, [and] it resides in the [objective] entities that are liable to become the objects [perceived] by this [subject].”¹²⁸

Hence ‘*kāla*’—as distinguished from *kālaśakti*—is nothing but the conceptual differentiations

¹²⁷ In this regard, Ratié notes, e.g., that “time belongs in some ways to the sphere of error, because any temporally determined awareness involves a contradiction between aspects that are mutually incompatible, and thus entails a lack of awareness of reality’s non-duality. Yet it is less radically so than spatial sequence: our awareness of time is so to speak one step closer to the ultimate reality than our awareness of space, because there is no experience of time without a recognition, that is, the awareness of an underlying identity in a perceived multiplicity” (2021: 170).

¹²⁸ *ity āśaṅkya bhagavata eva śaktiḥ kramam avabhāsayantī kālaśaktiḥ, tadavabhāsyāś ca māyāpramāṭṛlagna eva pradhānatayā bhavan etadviśayīkaraṇīyabhāvanīṣṭhaḥ krama eva kāla iti darśayitum sūtram* (ĪPVV vol. III, p.4; trans. in Ratié (2021: 139; also cf. 160)). In regard to this Pratyabhijñā view of time, see Prueitt (2019: 608), who writes that, for Abhinavagupta, “time is the expression of the differentiation inherent in ultimate reality by its very nature. The beginninglessness of time is the fact that a first cause of a causal process unfolding in time cannot be identified. The beginninglessness of ultimate reality is the fact that the ultimate is beyond time since time is a limited manifestation of its inherent differentiation. Ultimate consciousness both is the source of time and always exceeds its own temporal expressions.”

associated with a certain sequence, and thus not ultimately ‘real’ as a substantive or categorical referent independently of the synthetic action of the universal agent.¹²⁹ To this extent, Utpala agrees with Bhartṛhari’s conventional understating of *time* (*kāla*) as just another form of *śakti*; here, the power that orders cognition involves the exclusion (*pratibandha*) of certain phenomenon from occurring when there is rational assent to others (*abhyanujñā*).¹³⁰

Utpala proceeds to explain that, from this perspective, knowledge of both space and time do not merely consist in an awareness of pure difference, but a *contrastive unity of cognitions of mutually incompatible forms* (*murtibheda*) and *actions* (*kriyābheda*), respectively, which can only be achieved through the power of *vimarśa*.¹³¹ We can therefore say that ‘time’ and ‘space’ indicate a power (*śakti*) of consciousness to recognize two ‘governing principles’ at work in concrete judgment, one that involves the determination of spatial form and the other temporal actions. The apprehension of these ‘rules’ are such that they resolve conscious awareness of sameness and difference with respect to both the content and action of judgment. Or, more simply, time and space are both nothing other than the capacity of mind to recognize that two *general* rules must govern all practical appearances, such that a certain coherence of cognitions is reflexively achieved—that is to say, intelligibly judged as such in the context of practical inquiry.

At this point, the reader should recall Peirce’s realist view of time *vis-à-vis* the process of semiosis, which helps explicitly reconstruct how a more temporal interpretation of Utpala might solve the time-lag problem. Recall back to McTaggart’s *a priori* deconstruction of the A-series

¹²⁹ Cf. ĪPV II.1.5: *iti pramātrāśrayabhāveṣvapikramonayuktaḥ, nacapramātrñirapekṣeṣvapi teṣu svātmani dūratvādi bhūtatvādi vā*. “Therefore, the temporal and spatial orders, which are recognised to be dependent upon the subject, cannot either be spoken of in reference to external objects. For, distance and priority etc. do not belong to them independently of the subject” (trans. in Koul: 127-28).

¹³⁰ On Bhartṛhari’s theory of time and use of these terms, see VP 3.9.4–5 and VPV on 2.22; cf. Cardona (1991: 448–9, fn. 20).

¹³¹ *mūrtivaicitryato deśakramam ābhāsayaty asau / kriyāvaicitryanirbhāsāt kālakramam apīśvaraḥ* (ĪPK II.1.5).

comprised of temporal indexicals: For him, like the Sautrāntika Buddhists, time as a changeful passage of distinct moments cannot *really exist*, since the temporal indexicals of past, present, and future are incompatible determinations with respect to any single moment; ‘Every event must be one or the other, but no event can be more than one.’ To this extent, he conceives of time in nominalist terms—i.e., that for time to count as ‘real,’ it must be comprised of *individual* moments that function as logical subjects predicable in terms of three categorical tenses. However, in this case, all three predicates are mutually exclusive.¹³² Furthermore, if we try to explain time in terms of a *sequence* of predicative properties of the same individual event, then a vicious circle or regress ensues: For it presupposes the existence of some temporal properties to describe the change of properties that these very same properties were supposedly invoked to *explain*. Hence McTaggart, like the Buddhist, embraces the ‘unreality’ of time.

Peirce, on the other hand, comes to define time as precisely *the intuition of a general rule which enables the irreversible attribution of incompatible predicates to the same subject*:

[Time] is certainly a law. It is simply a unidimensional continuum of sorts of states of things and that these have an antitypy is shown by the fact that a sort of state of things and a different one cannot both be at the same time. And in consequence of this antitypy a state of things varies in one way and cannot turn round to vary the other way. Or to state it better a variation between state A and state B is limited to occurrence in one direction (NEM 2:611, 1908).

Just as Utpala believed, abstractly considered, ‘time’ is just a general rule governing possible states that stipulates the same things cannot bear incompatible qualities *at the same time* but *can at different times*.¹³³ He therefore writes that insofar as time is practically analyzable at all, it reflects a ‘hypothesis’ to account for the apparent violation of the principle of contradiction in

¹³² Lowe (1987) critiques McTaggart’s use of temporal indexical, which, he argues, are fallaciously treated as something akin to *spatial* indexicals like ‘here’ and ‘there’ that bear symmetrical properties, and thus do not correspond to the intrinsic modality of temporal indexicals like ‘now’ and ‘then’: “Well, certainly, ‘*e* is present’, ‘*e* is past’, and ‘*e* is future’, said simultaneously, express contradictory statements. But what about the claim that what is future will become present and then past (so that every event is past, present and future)? This is simply *false*, or, more strictly, *incoherent*. What should be said is that if *e* is a future event, i.e. if *e* will occur, then it will be possible to express a true statement by means of the sentence ‘*e* is present’, or ‘*e* is happening now.’”

¹³³ See Schmidt (2022) for a very useful assemblage of Peirce’s statements on the nature of time and its relation to his metaphysics of synechism; many of the passages of this section are drawn from this article.

the alterations of empirical phenomena (e.g., ‘the beats of the pulse, breathing, day and night’). In his own metaphor, “we are, somehow, in a situation like that of sailing along a coast in the cabin of a steamboat in a dark night illumined by frequent flashes of lightning, and looking out of the windows. As long as we think the things we see are the same, they seem self-contradictory. But suppose them to be mere aspects, that is, relations to ourselves, and the phenomena are explained by supposing our standpoint to be different in the different flashes” (CP 4.642). Thus, the experience of the reality of time does not violate the law of contradiction insofar as the apparent inconsistent properties that appear in the continuous flow of experience do not inhere in the ‘exact same’ existents, but rather signify a general rule in the logic of phenomenal events defined in virtue of their relations to the mind.¹³⁴

Recall that for Peirce, the ontological category of actual existence is a special ‘modality of being,’ wherein indeterminate feelings are rendered determinate (and thus subject to the logical principles of non-contradiction and the excluded middle) through the categorical opposition of a dyadic judgment (i.e., Secondness). These categories of being—existence and reality—are therefore not coextensive for Peirce, as they typically are for the nominalist; viz., contradictory properties can certainly obtain in *reality* even if these cannot obtain *at the same time* in *actuality*. Accordingly, Peirce construes the rational form of ‘time’ as that general rule whose apprehension necessarily legislates the synthetic manifestation of the semiotic event that represents an irreversible transition from an inner awareness of potential contradictory states to the determinacy of actual existence. For the manifestation of each event consists in an “existential junction of impossible facts” (1896: CP 1.492), or the metaphysical reconciliation of contrary states of being that perforce cannot combine in a single judgment

¹³⁴ For an overview of Peirce’s conception of time with respect to Kant’s understanding of continuity, see Kvelson (1983). She argues that the mature Peirce came to perceive time not only as a certain continuous sign, but ‘time *as method*,’ i.e., as the general form of semiotic dialectic.

without contradiction: “The event, therefore, considered as a junction, is not a subject and does not inhere in a subject. What is it, then? Its mode of being is *existential quasi-existence*, or that approach to existence where contraries can be united in one subject. Time is that diversity of existence whereby that which is existentially a subject is enabled to receive contrary determinations in existence” (CP 1.493–4). Accordingly, Peirce identifies the subjective Thirdness of “the living present” as “plainly that Nascent State between the Determinate and the Indeterminate” (1906: CP 5.459; cf. Sfondoni-Mentzhou 2008: 278). The former state is propositionally defined and intentionally apprehended in terms of relative negation, which is another way of saying that Secondness establishes the principle of non-contradiction.

Peirce’s objective idealism makes a remarkable claim, then, *vis-à-vis* the nature of the relation between the subjective ‘force’ and objective ‘content’ of judgment: it entails that the *empirical* form of the supposedly ‘external’ dimensions that constitute finite experience actually derive from the *logical* form of practical judgment. As he explains, “[a]ccording to the metaphysical law of sufficient reason, alike in all respects two things cannot be. Space evades that law by providing places in which two things or any number, which are precisely alike, except that they are located in different places, themselves precisely alike in themselves, may exist. Thus, *space does for different subjects of one predicate precisely what time does for different predicates of the same subject*” (CP 1.501, c. 1896 [emphasis added]). Extrapolating upon this important point, Murphey articulates the general form of time and space in relation to the logical form of judgment: “The hypothesis of space explains how there can be many subjects of one property...[while] the hypothesis of time is required to explain how a single thing may possess contradictory properties” (1961: 384–5). For Peirce, then, the transcendental logic that governs the manifestation of recognitive events is not a simple first-order predicate type—i.e.,

one that represents the nature of categorematic subjects through the dyadic ascription of such-and-such determinate attributes. Instead, both the subject and predicate of the proposition are constitutively general and indeterminate (to varying degrees), and the dimensions of spacetime that define particular experiences correspond to the intuition of general rules that legislate the manifestation of a concrete event given the virtual reality of infinite possibility. In phenomenal terms, then, the appearance of space and time denote a transcendental recognition that the incompatible cognitions of ‘*sameness*’ and ‘*difference*’ have been metaphysically reconciled through the synthetic form of predicative judgment.

Another, perhaps more compelling way to put this is that the semiotic process does not evolve ‘within’ the cognitively *independent* dimensions of time and space; instead, these phenomena are themselves a secondary conceptual byproduct of the transcendental intuition of the rational constraints or regularities that govern the semiotic form of practical reason; or, as Peirce puts it, “time is the form under which logic presents itself to objective intuition” (1898: 6.87).¹³⁵ Likewise, since “no continuum can be apprehended except by a mental generation of it” (1904: 7.536), ‘space’ and ‘time’ do not designate a mind-independent *ground* of ‘reality,’ but more like *the way we self-consciously construe those general rules which are required to resolve cognitions of ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’ with respect to the necessary ‘content/form/substance’ and ‘force/action/mode’ of judgment.* Thus “each kind of existence consists...in being a second to any object in [the] universe taken as first. It is not time and space which produce this character. It is rather this character which for its realization calls for something like time and space” (1896: CP 1.433).

¹³⁵ Cf. Pape: “[Peirce] wants to treat temporal sequence and continuity as structural features of mental processes which provide ontological restraints for what may count as a logic capable of describing the validity of thought processes” (171).

In semiotic terms, then, the objective form of time is not a strictly *linear* sequence of distinct moments qualified in terms of McTaggart's three mutually exclusive temporal 'properties' (e.g., the '*saṃskṛtalakṣaṇa*'). Instead, the essence of 'time' is something much more like Hofstadter's (1979) notion of a 'strange-loop,' where the continuous sense of living through a sequence of irreversible moments 'falls out' of the circular—or perhaps spiraling, given Peirce's contention apropos the real growth of signs—movement of the semiotic process.¹³⁶ Here, the rational function of 'thirdness' of signs is just to re-cognize 'firsts' *as* 'seconds'; yet, due to its own continuous structure, in some sense, a sign always end up *right back where it started*. In temporal terms, this phenomenal aspect of the creative sign corresponds to what we call 'the living present.'

Peirce accordingly affirms that a metaphysical unity obtains between his cosmogony and the general development of Reason itself; the creation of the universe, that is, was not a singular event that happened sometime in the ancient *past* for wholly inscrutable reasons, but is ongoing *right now* as the endless semiotic manifestation of events: "This development of Reason consists, you will observe, in embodiment, that is, in manifestation. The creation of the universe, which

¹³⁶ Here is Hofstadter's own definition: "What I mean by "strange loop" is...not a physical circuit but an abstract loop in which, in the series of stages that constitute the cycling-around, there is a shift from one level of abstraction (or structure) to another, which feels like an upwards movement in an hierarchy, and yet somehow the successive "upward" shifts turn out to give rise to a closed cycle. That is, despite one's sense of departing ever further from one's origin, one winds up, to one's shock, exactly where one had started out. In short, a strange loop is a paradoxical level-crossing feedback loop (2007: 101-2)." I primarily view the 'strange-loop' idea as a phenomenal or temporal limit on the definition of a continuum in Cantorian terms, i.e., as a sort of dense, infinitely divisible set of members wherein the cardinality of each discrete sub-section is isomorphic to the cardinality of the whole. To this extent, the paradoxical nature of the strange-loop image signifies the distinction between a purely *formal understanding* of continuity as a pre-existent totality of infinitely concatenated metrical elements, and its *experiential manifestation* as an irreducibly *subjective* activity of semiosis. Recall that the former set-theoretical approach informed Peirce's own analysis of continuity in his early career, until he opted for a more explicitly temporal construal in his later pragmatic work. For while a relational continuum contains a formally precise isomorphism between the cardinality of the whole and its segmented parts, the *creative* nature of experiential and temporal continuity is simply not formal or abstract in this sense. Peirce thus remarks in 1892, e.g., that Cantor's definition of continuity "turns upon metrical considerations; while the distinction between a continuous and discontinuous series is manifestly non-metrical" (6.121). See also Potter and Shields (1977), who helpfully organize Peirce's understanding of continuity into four distinct chronological stages that progressively move beyond Cantorian definitions of continuity: in the last, post-Cantorian stage (1908-1911), "it is evident that Peirce's continuum has become indifferent to multitude and thoroughly dimensional—time-like" (31).

did not take place during a certain busy week, in the year 4004 B.C., but is going on today and never will be done, is this very development of Reason” (CP 1.615, EP 2:255). It is clear that the immanence of Peirce’s semiotic cosmogony—as both ever-present and eternally unfolding—bears a strong similarity to the Śaiva myths of non-dual Kashmir Śaivism, where the ancient cosmogonic descent, or contraction, of Śakti into the empirical world is identified with the ever-present reflexive action of universal consciousness.

The preceding conversation has really intended to articulate a way that Peirce’s temporal semiotics presents a rebuttal to the Abhidharma ‘time-lag’ problem without lapsing into the dyadic regresses of the Sarvāstivādins or the skeptical representationalism of the Sautrāntika. Specifically, he inverts the nominalists construal of the relationship between *cognition* and *time*: It is not that a discrete moment of pure immediacy (First) *causes* a subsequent conceptual judgment of relational succession (Second). Rather, the irreducibly triadic nature of signs enables cognitions of indeterminate percepts to re-cognize *themselves* as *continuous* with some determinate representational form—and thus the percept *attains* intentional content through an act of reflexive interpretation. To this extent, the temporal and relational cognitions that comprise personal self-consciousness are never ontologically severed from the triadic nature of the real:

When we consider that, according to the principle which we are tracing out, a connection between ideas is itself a general idea, and that a general idea is a living feeling, it is plain that we have at least taken an appreciable step toward the understanding of personality. This personality, like any general idea, is not a thing to be apprehended in an instant. It has to be lived in time; nor can any finite time embrace it in all its fullness. Yet in each infinitesimal interval it is present and living, though specially colored by the immediate feelings of that moment. Personality, so far as it is apprehended in a moment, is immediate self-consciousness (1892: CP 6.155).

Given this relational and temporal definition of personhood, we can now grasp how Peirce’s triadic theory of the sign overcomes the skeptical divide of the Abhidharma nominalist; no obstinate ‘time-lag’ forever alienates the ‘external’ object of cognition and its ‘internal’

representation. Instead, the experience of self-consciousness presupposes temporal feelings associated with the triadic nature of the general semiotic process. Both Peirce and Utpala thus express that a rational identity obtains between the triadic form of the laws that govern ‘personal’ self-consciousness and those that legislate the objective manifestation of ‘impersonal’ events. The highly peculiar condition of the finite intellect, then, is that the objective unity of the action that manifests events necessarily coextends with the reflexive consciousness of its own meaning-making practices.¹³⁷

Quite unlike Peirce, however, for the non-dual Śaivite, the metaphysical unity of *means* and *goal* in the creative act of recognition is resolved through a non-dual God who provides an attendant soteriological possibility for final liberation—a way beyond the semiotic round.¹³⁸ In this respect, Utpala seeks to leverage the processual structure of reason to establish the validity of Śaivism, not a mere transcendental-pragmatism built on a ‘logic of events.’ Although Utpala therefore presents Pratyabhijñā as a purely ‘rational’ enterprise, it should still ultimately be viewed as an organic extension of the ideal unity of praxis and theory that defines the greater tantra (cf. Lawrence 1996: 166). From this more Hadotian (1995) vantage point, the *subversive*

¹³⁷ Consider again, in this respect, Utpala’s elaboration of Bhartṛhari’s conception of *anusamdhāna*—which, on my reading, brings into view the way that Utpala, like Peirce, implicitly conjoins an awareness of *time* to the logical form of practical judgment: “A rapid action...necessarily occurs through a determinate awareness of the intention of reaching or leaving this or that place etc., which is seen at that [present] moment.” I construe Utpala as saying here that the conceptual description under which the manifold of ‘vague’ perceptions presently appears to the practical subject always necessarily conforms to its own reflexive awareness of the relationship of this percept *to an open future*. As discussed, for Utpala, this intentional synthesis of temporal cognitions in the context of practical action is only possible through an omnipotent will that can interpretively index its own perceptual cognitions to what it freely deems a worthwhile teleological pursuit therein (cf. Ratié 2021: 7.1-3). This spontaneity also accounts for the metaphysical nature of Śiva as fundamentally *aesthetic*, insofar as the basic act of recognition entails an endless state of ‘savoring,’ ‘bliss’ and ‘amazement’ that coincides with the metaphysical ‘unexpectedness’ of the mystery of Śiva as He discloses His own boundless nature to Himself.

¹³⁸ Cf. Abhinava’s comment in the TĀ: “The Relation of means [*upāya*] and goal [*upeya*] is an illusion of grossness of cognition. It is the Action Śakti which is the cause of both bondage and liberation. What use is there with reasonings regarding the self-luminous principle of consciousness?...All means, external and internal, depend upon it. How could there be means regarding it?...[Objects of different kinds of experience, such as] blue, yellow, and pleasure are only awareness, this is, Śiva. Since there is [really only] this supreme non-duality which has the nature of awareness, what relation of means and goal could there be which is other than it? For that [relation of means and goal] is only awareness” (TĀ 2.10-11, 16-17, 2: 319-323; trans. in Lawrence 1996: 185-6)

nature of the ‘spiritual exercises’ of Pratyabhijñā take on a peculiarly ‘meta-semiotic’ form; here, the practitioner attempts to ritualistically enact an ideal reflection between the normative, subjective *reasons* for this or that action and the logic behind the universal principles that manifest *objective reality*. Through this embodied correspondence between reason and reality, the worshipper of Śiva purportedly comes to experience their own self-consciousness as nothing other than the free creative action of a non-dual God.

CHAPTER VI

REFORMED RELATIONAL REALISM IN THE *SAMBANDHASIDDHI*

We praise Śiva, whose performance as the conventional world is accomplished in all respects according to His will through the relation that consists of Unity-in-Diversity.

-Utpaladeva (SS v.1)

Introduction

We saw in Chapter IV that Dharmakīrti argued that relations, in an ontological, or ultimate sense, do not exist—they are purely conceptual constructions (*kalpanā*) that obtain only at the conventional or empirical level of description (*saṃvṛti*). In the *Sambandhasiddhi* [SS], Utpaladeva offers a “proof” (*siddhi*) of relation against the prominent Bauddha’s deconstruction. In this chapter, I translate the SS while working to characterize the form of relation that Utpala has in mind.¹ In particular, I suggest that Utpala’s arguments appeal to the spontaneous givenness of the ‘internal’ relations that phenomenally characterize the reflexive act of *vimarśa* (‘judgment’). In doing so, he develops concepts inherited from Bhartṛhari to defend the thesis that I have dubbed ‘reformed relational realism,’ which states that the relationality-as-such cannot ultimately denote any distinct categorematic *term* or *universal* (as per the *samavāyapadārtha* of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika) (Berger: 2023). Rather, as discussed in the previous chapter, Pratyabhijñā idealists maintain that the various tokens of the type ‘*sambandha*’² necessarily

¹ The manuscript for the SS translations refers to Shastri’s (1921) edition, which received partial translations in Allport (1989) and MacCracken (2017). Quite unlike the SP, however, there are no extant commentaries on the SS. The present translations represent the fruit of working through the SS directly with Dan Arnold, who immeasurably improved the accuracy of the translation; needless to say, any other errors of translation and interpretation are my own. I should also add that I wrote this chapter before MacCracken’s recent publication on the SS (2023), which touches upon similar idealistic themes in Utpala’s relational philosophy that concern the present project. In particular, he discusses Utpala’s affinity with Peirce in terms of a shared rejection of nominalism (14-17), a comparison first noted by Lawrence (2014; 2018). I should add that I have not yet seen MacCracken’s own (2021) dissertation where he translates the SS in full; we were working on translations of the text at about the same time.

² For instance, the relations of *pāratantrya* (dependence), *apekṣā* (reference), *samavāya* (inherence), *śaṣṭhī* (genitive), *saṃyoga* (conjunction), and *kāryakāraṇabhāva* (causal) are covered in the SS. As already noted, for the

derive from the unity of action (*kriyā*) and knowledge (*jñāna*) in the intentional synthesis (*anusamdhāna*) of *vimarśa*. In the SS, Utpala defines this general form as ‘division-nondivision’ (*bhedābheda*), or, as it is commonly rendered, ‘unity-in-diversity.’ Although the Buddhist decries any such ‘relation’ as a flagrant oxymoron, Utpala and Abhinava identify it with the transcendental power of the *ātman* to synthesize diverse appearances in a unified act of reflexive awareness. For this reason, Utpala believes that just because relations are conceptual constructions that involve unity and diversity doesn’t mean *they aren’t real*—indeed, we can only conventionally *recognize* perceptual mistakes (*bhrānti*) with these relational faculties already implicitly in play.

On my reconstruction, Utpala’s ‘reformed’ conception of relation can be summarized in the pragmatic principle that *the action of reflexive judgment (vimarśa) cannot be intelligibly distinguished from the manifestation (prakāśa) of its objective form*. In other words, due to the metaphysical unity of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa*, we aren’t practically entitled to make a hard-and-fast distinction between the categorematic *content* of judgment and the syncategorematic *force* whereby this content is actually interpreted as such.³ Utpala shows that this construal of relation avoids the deconstruction and regress of the SP’s critiques of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, because here ‘relation’ is never ultimately reified as a ‘thing’ *in addition to* the synthetic form of the judgment of the ‘independent’ relata *themselves*. In turn, Utpala makes a strong case that Dharmakīrti’s

Buddhists, these relations are subsumed into the category of *dependence*, in accord with their basic metaphysical vision. For Utpala, on the other hand, they all share the fact that they unify a diversity of terms.

³ As mentioned, the motivation for Rödl and Kimhi’s idealism is the shared rejection of the force/content distinction established by Frege, which axiomatically distinguishes between the modal force of judgment and its objective intentional content. Both thinkers contend that an ‘absolute’ form of idealism resides in coming to terms with the fact that this distinction is false with respect to the logical form of judgment, in which the self-consciousness of a unity *just is* its objective unity. For Kashmir Śaivism and Peirce, however, I have urged that this purely formal identity of the propositional sign and self-consciousness is too strong a claim—i.e., it lacks the irreducible nature of Thirdness, and thus degenerates the realistic impulse of *objective* idealism into a kind of neo-Wittgensteinian *absolute* idealism, which comes to rest in a monistic philosophical ‘quietism’ (Kimhi: 3.1). I take this as opposed to Peirce’s characteristically Hegelian emphasis on the pragmatic significance of inquiry, the historical growth of knowledge, and the organic self-development of reason.

own theory of relations is only conceptually *intelligible* (viz., only semantically and inferentially meaningful) insofar as it necessarily presupposes a non-conceptual, direct acquaintance with a continuous form of synthetic action. This *sui generis* form of action enables all qualified semantic content whatsoever to appear—including, most pertinently, the causally efficacious appearances of particular objects. Hence, the SS suggests that the relational principles of Dharmakīrti's SP (*pace* Śāṅkaranandana's Yogācāric interpretation) likely entail some *epistemic* form of idealism, since any robust 'objective' idealism cannot ultimately be reconciled with a momentary ontology that throws the baby of relation out with the bathwater of conceptual reification. The structure of the chapter follows Utpala's presentation in the *vṛtti*.⁴

In Section 1, after a pair of benedictory strophes, Utpala proceeds to define *sambandha*. He finds that all conventional relations are fundamentally dyadic instances of a general form, i.e., unity-in-diversity, and subsequently outlines the various problems that bear on its philosophical analysis. Section 2 translates the Buddhist *pūrvapakṣin* position as presented in the SS. As per usual, this Dharmakīrtian figure denies the existence of relation on *a priori* grounds and maintains the discontinuity of the sequence of cause and effect, which confines the distributed nature of relation only to the moment of conceptual abstraction.

Sections 3-5 present the extended Śāiva *siddhāntin* response. Though the Śāivite grants that relations are conceptual and conventional, this does not entail that relations are not *real* (*satya*)—i.e., in the strict sense of an appearance of a reality that is *actually otherwise*. In the course of his argument, Utpala refutes the Dharmakīrtian deconstruction of Nyāya naïve relational realism, insofar as the Śāiva portrayal of the predicative relation does not require a single categorematic form to appear; viz., the mode of self-consciousness that personally judges

⁴ As the reader will gather, I chose to incorporate the final 21 verses as footnotes for what I take to be the corresponding portions of the *vṛtti*, which come appended to the end of the main text in Shastri's (1921) edition.

a particular relation also necessarily ‘colors’ its objective manifestation. Hence, the appearance of a tokenized conceptual relation spontaneously conforms to the nascent mode of perceptual ‘feeling’ that discloses its respective relata, which are themselves foregrounded in consciousness in virtue of a free act of attention for the sake of some conventional mode of inquiry. Utpala defends this pragmatic position with an extended analysis of grammatical relations. Here, the primary claim is that a linguistic referent (*artha*) appears as a relational complex or singular term depending upon *how* it is taken—its modal form *vis-à-vis* conventional discourse. In other words, the appearance of anything is not *intrinsically* relational or non-relational, since the *same* ‘referent’ can *appear as either one* depending on its intentional context.

I conclude with a summary of the merits of Utpala’s position: If we confine our inquiry merely to the ramifications of the SS for the Indian debate over relations, Utpala’s approach has the promise to avoid the pitfalls of the two relational systems surveyed in the previous chapters—the ‘naïve realism’ of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika and the ‘eliminativism’ of Dharmakīrti and the SP’s rebuttal of naïve relational realism. On the one hand, in contrast to the Vaiśeṣika realists, the referent of ‘relation,’ as a metaphysical act of unity-in-diversity, can never be represented as a substantive object or determinate category on the Pratyabhijñā account; on the other hand, Utpala insists that not only is ‘relation,’ in the general sense of *bhedābheda*, real, but indicates a primordial capacity of consciousness that grounds all possible knowledge. From a cross-cultural perspective, the arguments of the SS are jointly reinforced by James’s phenomenological observations and Peirce’s triadic metaphysics. Together, these philosophical systems serve to establish a vision of causation that cannot denote a simple dyadic form of logical necessity; instead, it must capture the practical fact that concrete experience is *actively*

constructed as an irreducibly continuous creative process. In the subsequent concluding chapter, we leverage this fact to compare pragmatic interpretations of Pratyabhijñā and Madhyamaka.

1. The Definition of Relation

a. The Opening Maṅgala Verses

The SS comes to us as part of a trio of proofs, the *Siddhitrayī*, which also includes the *Īśvarasiddhi* ('Proof of the Lord') and the *Ajaḍapramāṭṛsiddhi* ('Proof of a Sentient Knower').⁵ Although not explicitly stated in the 'Three Proofs', the connection between these topics in the Pratyabhijñā system is not hard to grasp; as discussed in the previous chapter, Lord Śiva is conceived as a singular, absolute, non-dual consciousness who manifests the conventional world and the limited self through the creative power (*śakti*) of relation (*sambandha*).⁶ Utpala explicitly proclaims this metaphysical vision in the opening *maṅgala* verses of the SS that I partially quoted in the epigraph:

1. We praise Śiva, whose performance as the conventional world is accomplished in all respects according to His will through the relation that consists of unity-in-diversity.

2. Shining forth in a form consisting of relations that begin with a differentiation of being, the supreme Lord, manifesting as the Self of all while one, triumphs.⁷

In Shastri's edition, these two verses provide the basis for a lengthy '*vṛtti*' that proceeds to unpack the paradoxical benediction: Through the primary relation of unity-in-diversity

⁵ Taber (1986) and Ratié (2016) have written analysis and partial translations of the *Īśvarasiddhi*, while Lawrence (2009) has provided an analysis and full translation of the *Ajaḍapramāṭṛsiddhi*.

⁶ See Shastri's (1921) introduction for some speculations on the conceptual relationship and historical emergence of these three treatises. The general order of Utpaladeva's writings has been well established, in part due to references in the ŚDVṛ to the ĪPK and its *Vṛttis*, with the ST most likely coming after the ĪPK (see Pandey 2000: 163; and Torella 2008: 513-514).

⁷ *bhedābhedātma-sambandha-saha-sarvārtha-sādhitā / lokayātrā kṛtir yasya svecchayā taṃ stumaḥ śivam // bhāvabhedādi-sambandha-mayena vapuṣonmiṣan / jayaty eko'pi viścātmā prakāśaḥ parameśvaraḥ* (SS: 1). Technically, in Shastri's edition, the rest of the text could be considered a *vṛtti* on these verses, sandwiched between another twenty-three closing *maṅgala* verses. Torella, for instance, treats these as distinct texts in his 2013 bibliography (221). For simplicity, though, we will just refer to the verses and the *vṛtti* jointly as the SS.

(*bhedābheda*), Śiva creates the conventional multiplicity of the world out of, and within, his own absolute consciousness.⁸ The category of relations is thus instrumental in Pratyabhijñā philosophy—not only in an epistemic or inferential sense, as per the Buddhists, but *ontologically*, as the creative lynchpin of their entire system of ‘realistic’ or ‘objective’ idealism.⁹ Accordingly, Lawrence observes that “generally, relation may actually be understood as epitomizing what Buddhist logic is trying to deny. Like universals, relations may be taken as a description of the ontological counterpart of recognition. They are ostensible connections, conditions seeming to endure, between the particulars experienced in different circumstances” (1999: 81-2). Since Utpala’s system had so much riding on the validity of *sambandha*—as *recognition* (*pratyabhijñā*) itself is a constitutively *relational* act—it is not surprising that he felt the need to directly respond to Dharmakīrti’s logical deconstruction of relations, as evident in his repeated references to the SP in the relatively brief tract.

Unlike Dharmakīrti, then, Utpala does not structure his treatise with respect to different sorts of relations (e.g., dependence (*pāratantrya*), fusion (*saṃśleṣa*), causal (*kāryakāraṇabhāva*)) and then marshal arguments tailored to each respective type. Instead, Utpala, like Bhartṛhari, seeks to characterize the most general form of ‘*sambandha*’ possible—i.e., what is it that all

⁸ Kṣemarāja’s commentary on the SK (v. 3) states the basic cosmological structure of this paradoxical situation. After he rejects the antinomies that absolute reality can change and that change and diversity are unreal, he writes: “This suggests that the Lord has the power to do the impossible (*atidurghatakaritva*) in so far as he manifests the diversity of the waking and other states while remaining undivided therein. Thus, He manifests Himself in the form of diversity (*bheda*), unity (*abheda*) and as both together by manifesting His own nature as the Supreme (*para*), Inferior (*apara*) and Middling (*parāpara*) powers. Thus, it is the Lord Himself Who appears as the absolute Trika principle (*anuttarasadardhatattva*).” *anena cātīdurghaṭakiratvam eva bhagavato dhvanitam yasmā jāgarādivibhedam ca prakāśayati tatraiva ca svābhedamiti bhedātmanā tadabhedāmanobhayātmanā ca rūpeṇāparāparāparāparāśaktitrayasvarūpeṇa sphuratīty anuttaraśaḍardhatattvātmatayā bhagavān eva sphurati* (SK 1.3:16; trans. in Dyczkowski 1992a: 14). See Nemeč (2014), as well, on the distinction between Somānanda’s pantheism and Utpaladeva’s panentheism, which is relevant to the way in which Utpala understands Śiva as transcending the relational world of *māya* while also comprising it.

⁹ Even Utpaladeva’s well-known mnemonic proof of the self depends upon relations, as he theorized memory is only possible given that a continuous self exists to unite temporally distinct cognitions via forms of relation. For an extended discussion of the argument from memory, see Torella (2007b), Ratié (2011: ch. 2–4; 2016), and Allport (ch. 5). We discuss this in more detail below.

referents of the word ‘relation’ have *in common*? This turns out to be the *śakti* of *bhedābheda*, or unity-in-diversity. Once he establishes this point, Utpala will argue that *this* definition of relation is actually *unique*, precisely because its referent becomes coextensive with the *sui generis* form of the synthetic unity of self-consciousness (*vimarśa*), the spontaneous action that culminates in intentional or conceptual knowledge (*vikalpa*). Utpala will then proceed to characterize all forms of relation—i.e., both causal and semantic—as tokens of this general type.

b. The Definition of Sambandha

In the opening sections of the SS, Utpala entertains various interpretations of the definition of *sambandha*, including some that Dharmakīrti himself explores in the SP (e.g., *sambandha* as *dviṣṭha*). Presumably, these options correspond to the array of philosophical definitions floating around at the time, even though Utpala does not explicitly associate these relational positions with any particular schools until a clear Buddhist *pūrvapakṣin* interjects in the next section. First, Utpala considers relations of different forms to get clear on what, *exactly*, a relation *is*:

Here the *relationship* of beings is discussed. First of all, what is the meaning of the word “relation”? Even if one says that “mixture” (*samsarga*), “contact” (*samparka*), [or] “fusion” (*saṃśleṣa*) is ‘relation,’ then the full meaning of relation is not understood: Is ‘fusion’ continuity (*nairantarya*) or something else? If it is continuity, then there would be no [relation] between a son and father, insofar as they are far apart (*dūrastha*), and there would be [a relation] between iron and a bar (*ayaḥśalāka*),¹⁰ even though these are pervasive substances that share a single locus.¹¹

Utpala begins by attending to the slippery nature of the topic at hand, which, *prima facie*, applies equally to conceptually opposing circumstances—namely, instances of continuity and discontinuity. For if ‘relation’ was *only* the continuity that characterizes fused entities sharing a

¹⁰ On this phrase, see chapter IV, fn.22.

¹¹ *iha bhāvānām sambandho vicārtiyate: kastāvāt-sambandha-śabdārthaḥ samsargaḥ samparkaḥ saṃśleṣaḥ sambandha ityapyukte na vivṛtaḥ sambandhārthaḥ pratīyate | kiṃ nairantaryaṃ saṃśleṣaḥ utānyat kiṃcit? nairantaryaṃ cet dūrasthayoḥ pitāputrayoḥ sa na syāt, ayaḥśalākayoḥ saṃnikṛṣṭayoḥ vibhudravyayor api ca syāt* (SS:1).

single locus (*saṃnikṛṣṭa*), then a father and son who stand distantly would bear no relation to each other, which is clearly false; while the form of a bar and the iron atoms that compose it would presumably bear some sort of ‘relation’ even though they refer to a *single* object—and one object cannot bear any relation.

Echoing Dharmakīrti in the SP, Utpala then considers the possibility that ‘relation’ just means something ‘situated in two entities/places’ (*dviṣṭha*): “Perhaps, then, ‘relation’ is something situated in two places. In this case, too, if being a relationship is just being situated in two places, then, e.g., that [property] would even belong to the distinctness of the two terms in a dyad (*dvidviprthaktva*). And this meaning [of relation as *dviṣṭha*] does not correspond to the meaning of the lexical parts of the word “*sambandha*”; rather, it is just idiomatic, like the word ‘*tailapāyikā*¹².’”¹³ Utpala points out that each term in any dyadic relation possess the property of being distinct from the other, and thus, *ipso facto*, must reflect a property, or state, instantiated in both terms. Insofar as *dviṣṭhatva* just *is* the supposed meaning of relation, this property of ‘being distinct from the other’ would itself be the presumed “relation” *between* them. In that case, though, there isn’t any separate ‘*dviṣṭha*’-thing here above and beyond these two monadic properties of isolated relata. Just as the word for a certain kind of beetle (‘*tailapāyikā*’) does not derive from the meaning of the literal terms (i.e., an ‘oil-drinker’), so too does this notion of ‘relation’ as *dviṣṭha* not derive from the sense of its constitutive terms; for the precise meaning/referent (*artha*) of ‘relation’ is merely a conceptual property ascribed to independent things. Utpala clearly has someone like a Buddhist in mind here, who would view *dviṣṭhatva* as a

¹² *tailapāyikā* literally means ‘oil-drinker,’ but conventionally refers to a type of beetle.

¹³ *atha dviṣṭhaḥ padārthaḥ kaścit sambandhaḥ. tatrāpi dviṣṭhataiva sambandhatā cet tad dvidviprthaktvāder api sā syāt. na cāyam arthaḥ sambandha-śabdasya avayavārthānurodhād uttiṣṭhati api tu tailapāyikā-śabdasyeva samketamātrāt* (SS:2).

priori incoherent, and thus subject it to the familiar monistic reduction *qua* a property of each particular ‘relatum’ taken in isolation from the other.

Utpala explores other alternatives to this deflationary account: “On the other hand, maybe ‘being situated in two’ is not the only meaning of the word *sambandha*; rather, if it is called ‘situated in two’ only as one of several [characterizations] that are possible for just two relata, then it should be clearly (*spaṣṭam*) explained that *sambandha*, as it is in itself, is the basic meaning of these ‘synonyms’ (*paryāya*) like *saṃśleṣa*, etc.”¹⁴ In other words, given that all forms of relation (e.g., like ‘mixture,’ ‘contact’ and ‘fusion’) presuppose two things in some kind of dyadic situation, we can posit a more abstract relational principle that includes the literal understanding of *dviṣṭha* as a token of a more general dyadic type (i.e., *sambandha*). This notion would not necessarily refer to the criterion of ‘being situated in two,’ but rather simply involves two relata in the most *general* sense—whether or not the relation is, strictly speaking, actually simultaneously ‘distributed’ over two different loci.

To explore this point, he draws attention to the Buddhist argument that a literal interpretation of *dviṣṭha* is incoherent when we extend its meaning to *temporal* states that include ‘reference/expectation’ (*apekṣā*) and ‘dependence’ (*pāraṅmanya*):

And no other meaning of ‘relation’—not even[, e.g.,] reference or dependence—could be the intended meaning, according to the same reasoning with respect to ‘being situated in two.’ Furthermore (*cāpi*), this [i.e., ‘reference/dependence’] is not the intended meaning of that [*sambandha*], since neither the sense of ‘reference,’ nor the sense of ‘dependence,’ is suitable for two inanimate relata. Thus, a sprout that ‘refers to’ a seed (*bīja*) or is ‘dependent’ (*paratantra*) upon a seed because its origination is, e.g., really dependent on that—even that is not accurate (*etad api na samyak*). For this [description] would be figurative (*upācāra*); viz., it would be *as though* (*iva*) ‘referring’ or ‘dependent.’ However, the inanimate does not possess literal (*mukhya*) ‘reference,’ which is an expectation, supplication, or specific desire; nor [does it possess] dependence, which is an inclination towards another, [or] a desire to use what belongs to another. [In all these cases], there is only a specific intention that is realized insofar as it is characterized by the cessation of the activity of one’s own desire. And things like ‘reference’ are invoked for the sake of achieving completion (*ātmalābhārtham*) of what is not yet

¹⁴ *atha sambandha-śabdārtha eva na dviṣṭhatā api tu so 'nya eva kevalam sambaddhayor eva sambhavatīti dviṣṭha ucyate, sa tarhi svarūpeṇaiva spaṣṭam ucyatām sambandhaḥ saṃśleṣa ityādi paryāyāṇām ayam artha iti* (SS: 2).

completed. And since there are not two places at that time, the sense of ‘relation’ does not stand to reason.¹⁵

Here Utpala cleverly shifts the focus of Dharmakīrti’s rail against ‘dependence’ in the SP to the *intentional* implications of this view in a temporal or practical context. Recall that Dharmakīrti himself affirmed in verses 1 and 3 of the SP that particular entities in the momentary causal procession do not ‘depend on’ or ‘refer to’ anything, for they are intrinsically self-existent and non-relational. Hence, due to the temporality of causation, the actual reality of something ‘situated in two places’ is necessarily precluded in virtue of the fact that the impersonal (*jaḍa*) particulars that come into being and perish in the causal procession never simultaneously occur. So, for instance, when we say, “a sprout ‘requires’ (*apekṣā*) a seed,” some relation of ‘dependence’ is acknowledged, but it cannot literally be *something dviṣṭha*, since the relata do not exist at the same time, and thus cannot instantiate a distributed dyadic function. Yet, we still *conventionally* refer to these forms of ‘dependence’ as tokens of *relation*, even though they are purely conceptual or metaphoric in this circumstance.¹⁶

In light of this observation, Utpala entertains the notion that the conventional practice (*upācāra*) of describing *jaḍa* objects as ‘dependent’ amounts to human beings merely acting *as though* (*iva*) some objective ‘relation’ exists—a position to which the Buddhist would certainly be sympathetic. Hence, strictly speaking, these sorts of ‘relations’ do not apply to inert or non-intentional objects that cannot properly be said to ‘refer to’ or ‘depend upon’ anything at all. Instead, such states only obtain in the minds of *sentient* creatures, since it is only at a broadly

¹⁵ *apekṣāpāratantryādir api na cānyah sambandhārtho dviṣṭhatvanyāyenaiva so 'rthākṣiptaḥ syāt. na cāpy arthākṣiptatāsyā, na hi jaḍayoḥ sambandhinor apekṣārtho ghaṭate pāratantryārtho vā / athāpy aṅkura eva bījam-apekṣate bīje vā paratantra bhavati, tadāyattatvādes tadātmalābhasvety—etad api na samyak. upacāro hy ayam apekṣata iva paratantra iveti syāt. na tu jaḍasya mukhyaivākāṅkṣā prārthanā cecchaiva viśiṣṭā apekṣā; pāratantryaṃ vā para-pravaṇatā parakīya-viniyogākāṅkṣā svecchācaraṇa-nirodha-lakṣaṇaḥ saṃkalpa-viśeṣa eva saṃgacchate. alabdhātmanas cātmalābhārtham apekṣādi kathyate. na ca tadānīm adviṣṭhatvāt sambandhārthopapattiḥ* (SS:2).

¹⁶ Cf. Iyer and Pandey (vol. I, vii-viii) on this point.

‘intentional’ level of conceptual description that these sorts of relational states could even be said to *make sense*. For referential states speak to a *conceptual* awareness of two necessarily *non-simultaneous* moments; namely, those that involve the correlative completion of something regarded as *metaphorically* incomplete (since something that exists is, *ipso facto*, not *actually* ‘incomplete’). To say that dependence ‘relations’ are purely *conventional*, then, is to say that they really only obtain with respect to *ajādatva* frames of reference.¹⁷

Accordingly, the incoherence of *dviṣṭha* is not simply because self-established existents, *ipso facto*, do not ontologically depend on anything (*pace* Dharmakīrti). Rather, it is because these relational appearances only represent a valid description of events taken from a decidedly *sentient* perspective, wherein figurative descriptions of the practical fulfillment of desires—undertakings that necessarily refer to *multiple asynchronous* moments—can even *make sense*. And so, for Utpala, the figurative content of referential dependence precludes ‘relation’ from being defined strictly in terms of something *dviṣṭha*. In effect, Utpala implicitly leverages Dharmakīrti’s own conflation of referential/semantic and existential/causal dependence to his own advantage, insofar as now the Buddhist cannot make sense of the temporal appearance of

¹⁷ See ĪPK (II.4.14-5): *asmin satīdam astīti kāryakāraṇatāpi yā / sāpy apekṣāvihīnānām jāḍānām nopapadyate. na hi svātmaikaniṣṭhānām anusandhānavarjinām / sadasattāpade ’py eṣa saptamyarthaḥ prakalpyate*. “The relation of cause and effect as well, i.e., ‘when this exists, this comes to be,’ is not admissible for realities that are insentient and as such incapable of ‘requiring.’ In fact, the meaning of the locative case [i.e., ‘when this exists’] may not be applied to self-contained entities, incapable of intentional synthesis (*anusamdhāna*) whether [cause and effect] are considered existent or non-existent” (trans., with slight adjustments, in Torella 2013: 183-4). In light of his treatment of this issue in this ĪPK, with the remark that *jaḍas* (a term not used in the SP) are incapable of manifesting relations, Utpala commences with his broader line of argument that eventually hoists the Buddhists by their own rhetorical petard. For Yogācārin would presumably *agree* that these sorts of relations are intelligible only at a *conventional* level of description, where *ajāda* perspectives hold sway, and thus, *ipso facto*, cannot actually apply to things in the ‘real’ world of momentary particulars. And here lies the rub in Utpala’s strategy; for he can now utilize the Yogācārin’s *own* philosophical commitments to the reflexive nature of *svasaṃvedana* against them. To give a preview of the strategy: Insofar as the Yogācārin adopts a constitutive view of self-consciousness—wherein being *ajāda* just is the *svasaṃvedana* of cognition—they must also agree that representations of particulars (*qua* causally efficacious *jaḍa* objects like a pot or a cloth) can only *appear* (or ‘shine,’ *ābhāsa*) as such through the intentional state afforded by the self-luminosity (*prakāśa*) of sentience. To the extent that particulars are determinately *recognized* in *vimarśa*, though, all *jaḍa* objects must be fundamentally *continuous* with (or perhaps ‘touch,’ *mṛś*) the self-consciousness of *vikalpa*. From this perspective, the relations that constitute self-consciousness are real precisely *because of*—not *despite*—the fact that the *bhedābheda* relation is only intelligible at an *ajāda*, or conventional, level of description.

causal relations outside of a constitutively conceptual or intentional context;¹⁸ Utpala will further explicate this point in section 4.b below.

c. Relation is Necessarily a Unity of Many

At this point, Utpala concludes that since the idea of relation as strictly *dviṣṭhatva* fails to apply to all instances of conventional use, this definition cannot be the most general sense of relation. For we all presumably *agree* that these various tokens of ‘relation’ have *something* in common in virtue of their apparent joining of multiple elements—otherwise we could not even conventionally recognize them as tokens of *sambandha*. Hence, to this extent, we can regard them all as synonyms (*pariyāya*), in that the singular term ‘relation’ just *means* ‘something that demands reference to both unity and multiplicity’:

Therefore, *sambandha* should be emphatically¹⁹ designated as primary (*mukhya*). In this regard, it is said that these—i.e., relation, combination, [and] fusion—are principally ‘synonyms’ (*pariyāya*). And that meaning of ‘fusion’ is regarded as the unity of what is multiple (*aneka*). However, there is neither being only multiple, nor being only unitary; rather this referent, i.e., *sambandha*, requires both conditions. For this very reason, there is no single relation of many [terms]; for if relation were just multiplicity, or just unity, many [terms] would bear [a relation] whether they enter a state of unity or do not enter a state of unity—as would just a single [term.] But given that relation, which is a unity of many, requires reference (*apekṣayā*) to both, in that case, a mere single [term] cannot bear a relation because it requires many [terms]; and, because it requires unity, there can be no [relation] of what is only multiple, insofar as that [multiplicity] is located separately (*prthaksthita*).²⁰

¹⁸ See SS: v. 3-4: *apekṣā pāratantryam ca na sambandho jadātmanoḥ | asaṃbhavād ātmalābhe 'py upacāro na lakṣaṇā || asatām ātmalābhokter dviṣṭhataivaṃ ca hīyate | rūpa-saṃśleṣa evaivaṃ sambandhārthaḥ sthitaḥ sa ca*. “Reference and dependence of two inert things is not relation, because there is no occurrence [of a relation] even when [either one] is present— [it is thus] a figurative expression, not elliptical. Moreover, due to calling non-existing things present, being situated in two is in this way abandoned; and therefore, it is established that the meaning of relation is just this union of form.”

¹⁹ lit. “full-throatedly” (*muktakaṇṭha*).

²⁰ *tasmān muktakaṇṭham eva mukhyaḥ sambandho 'bhidhātavya iti | tatrocyate sambandhaḥ samparkaḥ saṃśleṣa ity ete paryāyās tāvad bhavanti. sa ca saṃśleṣārtho 'nekasyaikatā kathiyate. na tv anekataiva nāpi ekataiva api tu ubhayāvasthāpekṣo 'yam arthaḥ sambandhaḥ. ata eva na bahūnām ekaḥ sambandhaḥ | yadi hi anekatva-mātram ekatva-mātram vā sambandhaḥ syāt, tadbahūnām api ekatāpattau ekatānāpattāv api vā syāt, ekamātrasyāpi ca syāt | yadā punar anekasyaikatā sambandha ubhayāpekṣayā tadānekāpekṣaṇād ekamātrasyaiva na sambandhaḥ, ekāpekṣaṇāc ca nānekasyaiva prthaksthitasya (SS: 2-3). Cf. SS v. 5: *nānantaryam-asaṃbandhāt tathātve 'yaḥśalākayoḥ □ tenānekasya rūpasya śleṣa aikātmīyam eva saḥ*. “[Relation] is not an absence of an interval, because*

Utpala explains that different forms of ‘relation’ have some common referent in virtue of being recognized as synonymous—viz., different particularized *sambandhas* (e.g., *samparkaḥ*, *saṃśleṣa*) must all be tokens of a primary (*mukhya*) type. But *sambandha* itself—as signifying what all these tokens have in common—must then be conceived as something that depends upon the condition, or state (*avasthā*), of both unity and multiplicity. Implied in Utpala’s language is the classic set of dilemmas familiar from Dharmakīrti and Bradley: Relation always refers to a *general* unity whose *empirical* form must necessarily conform to a *specific multiplicity*. On the one hand, to posit the mere *existence* of a diversity of externally related terms does not guarantee any sort of real *unity* between them one way or the other (at least, any unity that is not merely nominal). And, contrariwise, it is equally obvious that a single object or term is devoid of relational significance. For this reason, a relation cannot *merely* be unitary or diverse, but must instantiate both states simultaneously. Notably, while Dharmakīrti considered the singularity of fusion a testament to its true non-relational nature (*saṃśleṣa* in SP v.2), Utpala considers fusion merely another instance of relation because one can still *refer to* two things even if they practically amount to a single entity.

d. Tokens of Relation Are Always Dyadic

Having established that all relations necessarily refer to both unity and diversity, Utpala thereupon infers that any number of potential relata can always be formally expressed through a certain *dyadic* function, one that represents the relata as a certain pair of ‘unity’ and ‘diversity’:

there is no relation of the iron and the bar which are in such a situation. Therefore, the joining of form that is diverse, that is just unity.”

Nor is there one relation of three things or more (*tryādīnām*); for since there is a difference amongst each one of the three from its basis, which [for each one] is an aggregation of [the other] two, it is made a term (*avadhi*) in a different division. And because there is reference to their abiding in the nature of relation, that [unity] (i.e., the unity that one has with a second) is not with a third, because of the difference between the second and the third and the reference [to both]. For these reasons, a single relationship will be proclaimed for each pair (*pratiyugala*) of many elements (*saṃkhyānām*), even if they number in the hundreds. Thus, the sense of the word *sambandha*, used precisely according to the lexical components [of the word], is itself the unity of two terms (*dvayor ekātmā*): This is clearly expressed by the lexeme ‘*saṃ-*’ (which functions having the sense of ‘with,’ or with the sense of equivalence), and by ‘*bhandin*’ (which means having one place or condition that depends on excluding another place)—for that is just the state of unity of the multiple.²¹

Technically, Utpala argues the relations R of any whole set S with greater than two members will resolve upon analysis, without remainder, into the distinct relations $R(x,y)$ that obtain amongst its *proper* dyadic subsets, comprised of the distinct pairable members ($a,b,c\dots n$) of S .²² So, say we have three or more objects, a, b, c , etc.. In accord with the notion that there is a dependence of the form of conceptual relations on the nature of the relata, Utpala claims that $R(a,b)$ must differ from $R(a,c)$, but must also differ from $R(a,bc)$ or $R(ab,c)$ where ab and bc are grouped as a single term (cf. Allport: 236). If we extend the list indefinitely, we can always group distinct elements of any set together such that their relational sum can be strictly represented as a set of dyadic functions. By that measure, there is no *single* relation that holds between *all* the members in a set of more than two elements; each pair exhibits its own distinct relation, insofar as the aggregate itself, or a subset (>2) therefrom, is not treated as a *single term* in yet *another* dyadic relation. The ensuing grammatical analysis of ‘*sambandha*’—now rendered as ‘something bound (‘*bhandin*’) with (*saṃ*) [another]’ in a single ‘place’ (*deśā*)—testifies that any *particular* dyad

²¹ *na cāpi tryādīnāmekāḥ sambandhaḥ. trayānām hi bhinna-bhedāvadhikṛta-dvairāśy āśrayāt parasparaṃ bhedāt; teṣāṃ ca sambandha svarūpa-sthitāvapekṣaṇāt, ekasya dvitīyena saha yaikatā na sā tritīyena saha, tayor dvitīyatritīyayor bhedād apekṣaṇāc ca; tato bahūnām śatādisaṃkhyānām api pratiyugalam evaikāḥ sambandha udghoṣyate: ity evaṃ dvayor ekātmēti sambandha-śabdārtho 'vayavānusāreṇaiva vyavasthitaḥ | saṃśabdena sahārthavṛttinā samānārthavṛttinā vā bandhinā ca deśāntara-parihāra-pūrvakaika-deśāvasthānārthena vispaṣṭam-uktaiva sa hy anekasyaikaṭā* (SS: 3).

²² Formally speaking, for any $|S|>2$, S reduces into its dyadic *proper subsets* (\subset), which is the operation that excludes the set itself from being its own subset. So, e.g., for any triadic relational set $S\{a,b,c\}$, $S = (A\{a,b\}) \cup (B\{b,c\})$ where $(A \subset S) \wedge (B \subset S)$. Note that this also assumes symmetry amongst the members of the subsets.

$R(a,b)$ necessarily excludes (*parihāra*) the instantiation of any other dyad of the form $R(b,c)$, insofar as *that particular relation* $R(a,b)$ is currently under consideration.

We will discuss this point in more detail below, where Utpala explicitly claims that the necessarily dyadic structure of relations corresponds to the predicative unity of qualified judgment. At this point in his exposition, though, having apparently established to his satisfaction that ‘relation’ always refers to a strictly dyadic form of unity and diversity, Utpala concludes that,

it is [now] only considered whether or not there can be unity of what is diverse: In that case, this relation is understood (*pratīyate*) in various (*anekadhā*) forms: e.g., “a father’s son,” “a king’s servant,” “the tree’s branch,” “the *khadira* and the *dhava* tree,” “a blue lotus,” “Devadatta cooks porridge in a cauldron with firewood,” “the absence of a pot,” “this is different from me.” Conversely, in the same way, “the son’s father” and “the servant’s king.”

In this regard, is this [*sambandha*]*—*recognized as existing in just such a fashion*—*a mere *conception*, or is it a *real thing* (*vastu*)? If it is merely conceptual, in that case, then the nature of the thing itself must [still] be explained.²³

Although it is not explicitly stated, the array of examples—running the gamut from case relations, entire propositions, compounds, non-existence, to difference and identity—presumably serves to reinforce the intuition that, for relation to be a real entity, a singular form of relation should obtain in these many different circumstances. But given these diverse relations, Utpala queries, is a single ‘relation’ actually being faithfully cognized as a real, distinct entity (*vastu*) in each case? Or is this single designation just an abstract idea, imposed upon what are fundamentally *unrelated* things?

Utpala thus effectively concludes his introduction by drawing attention to the central problem that attends *sambandha*’s interpretation; namely, since ‘*sambandha*’ necessarily

²³ *kevalam anekasya ekatā sambhavannaveti paryālocyate. tatrāyaṃ sambandho 'nekadhā pratīyate: pituḥ putraḥ, rājñāḥ puruṣaḥ, vṛkṣasya śākhā, dhavaśca khadiraśca, nīlamutpalaḥ, devadattaḥ kāṣṭhaiḥ sthālyāmodanaḥ pacati, ghaṭasyābhāvaḥ, asmād idam anyata—ity evaṃ ādinā rūpeṇa / tathā viparyayaṇāpi putrasya pitā, puruṣasya rājeti. tatra kim idaṃ pratītimātram uta vastv eva evaṃ-bhūtaṃ pratīyate / tatra yadi pratītimātram etat vastu-svarūpaṃ tarhi vaktavyam* (SS: 3).

establishes the status of a certain group of terms as *pāryayas*—i.e., it renders them ‘synonymous’ due to the recognition of a common regularity present in many different circumstances—there presumably must be some *singular conceptual type* that corresponds to the universal ‘*sambandha*.’ However, as Utpala has just demonstrated, there *cannot* be a single type of relation that applies in all cases, because the constitutively dependent form of tokenized dyads necessarily *excludes* the possibility of any other relational form obtaining in that very situation. The particular determinacy of dyadic tokens thus leaves us with an apparent deadlock. At this point, Utpala insists that even if someone (i.e., the Buddhist) contends that this relation *is* a mere conceptualization, they will still have to explain the nature of the non-relational thing (*vastu*). I take Utpala here as implicitly posing the question of how, exactly, this constitutively non-relational *vastu causes* a relational impression to emerge, given that the nature of relation is completely alien to the nature of the actual object. This question leads to the next portion of the text, where a Buddhist voice first clearly emerges as the principal *pūrvapakṣin*—one who defends the nominal reality of isolated particulars and the notion that *sambandha* reduces to a conceptual imposition manifest exclusively at the conditioned moment of *vikalpa*.

2. *The Buddhist Pūrvapakṣa*

a. The Non-Relational Status of Real Objects

Now a Buddhist interlocutor responds to Utpala with an answer to the question of what, exactly, the nature of the *vastu* is, independent of any such relational conceptualization:

[Buddhist:] Here it is declared: A real thing (e.g., like a pot), complete just in itself, is excluded (*vyāvṛtta*) from what is different; for only in this way is that construct apprehended (*pratīyate*) through direct perception which only has itself as content—that [cognition] is just constructed. For as [Dharmakīrti] says, “beings are themselves unmixed, and conceptual construction mixes them” (SP 5cd). Likewise, the words ‘lotus’ and ‘blue,’ due to conceptual construction, are otherwise (*param*) understood as the identity of blue and lotus; it is not, however, [so understood] by a perceptual

pramāṇa whose percept (*ālambana*)—i.e., a specific particular which is a non-composite blue lotus—is the appearance of a real thing. And thus they [i.e., the Buddhists] say: “they are neither united, nor divided, the ultimately real objects themselves (*svatas*): the unified and the disunified form of those [objects] are an imposition (*upaplava*) of cognition” (PV 1.87) thus and so forth (*ityādi*).²⁴

The Buddhist lays out his basic ontological approach to relations and their restricted epistemic status: each object (*vastu*) of immediate perception is mutually differentiated from everything else in accord with the self-contained nature of real particulars. Causally efficacious objects, like a particular physical pot, exhibit this self-contained nature.²⁵ Only in its capacity as a distinct, causally efficacious thing can an object appear in the immediate perception (*pratyakṣa*) of reflexive consciousness ‘which only has itself as content.’²⁶ Here Utpala expresses the idea that, for the Buddhist, the reflexive nature of perceptual ‘content’ is the phenomenal counterpart to the unconditioned status of the causally efficacious particular, whose self-characterization equates to the ontological exclusion of all other entities. Hence, the true percept (*ālambana*) is, strictly speaking, non-relational and thus without any parts (*niraṃśa*).²⁷ So what we interpret as the

²⁴ *tatrācakṣate: vastu ghaṭādi svātma-mātra-parisamāptam anyonya-vyāvṛttam, ittham eva hi svātmāvabhāsinā pratyakṣeṇa pratīyate kalpanā kalpitaiva sā | te hi “amiśrāḥ svayaṃ bhāvāstānyo jayati kalpanā” ity āhuḥ, tathā nīlam utpalam iti śābdyā kalpanayā paraṃ nilotpalayor ekātmatā pratīyate | na tu vastvabhāsinā niraṃśotpala-svalakṣaṇa-viśeṣālambanena pratyakṣeṇa pramāṇena | tathā cāhuḥ, “saṃyujyante na bhidyante svato 'rthāḥ pāramārthikāḥ | rūpam ekam anekam ca teṣu buddher uplavaḥ” ityādi (SS: 3-4).*

²⁵ Considering the use of pot as a common stand-in for *jaḍa* objects, Utpala takes for granted that, for the Buddhist, the sort of external relatedness that characterizes the spatiality of causally efficacious macro-objects translates to the self-contained instants of perceptual cognition that constitute ultimate reality. Whether or not this extension is warranted is notoriously ambiguous in Dharmakīrti, for he does sometimes appear to treat gross, extensive objects (like a pot) as a particular object (*svalakṣaṇa*). Dunne (83) attributes this ambiguity to his ‘sliding scales’ analysis and suggests that the causal efficacy of extensive objects emerges from its particular constituents. Yet, it is clear that Utpala is aware of this, for we typically consider physical objects as unified particulars—which is presumably why he proceeds to quote PV 1.87 that affirms real entities cannot ultimately be considered *either* unified *or* disunified. Still, it has important ramifications for the ensuing arguments, insofar as he claims that the content of *relational* conceptions (*vikalpa*) like “this is a pot” also include within themselves reference to a causally efficacious thing (e.g., one can put water into it).

²⁶ See Chapter III on Dignāga’s theory of self-consciousness as perceptual (viz., his theory of *svasaṃvitti* as *pramāṇaphala*).

²⁷ Cf. the first 2 verses of Dignāga’s ĀP: *yady apīndriya-vijñapter grāhyāṃśaḥ (aṇavaḥ) kāraṇaṃ bhavet / atad ābhatayā tasyā nākṣavad viśayaḥ sa tu (aṇavaḥ) // yad ābhāsā na tasmāt sā dravyābhāvāt dvicandravat / evaṃ bāhyadvayaṅcaiva na yuktaṃ matigocaraḥ*. “Even if sense cognition were caused by atomic particulars [viz., things without parts], those [particulars] would not be its object, since, like the sense faculties, they do not appear to cognition. It [i.e., sense cognition] is not due to that whose appearance [it bears], because, like the [image of a]

shared locus exhibited in a predicative form ('the blue lotus') does not denote anything objectively *real*, but is rather a linguistic imposition of a purely formal identity that operates *subsequent to* the non-composite immediacy of the initial percept. The unadulterated function of perceptual cognition, strictly speaking, is not an active 'unification' of any partite 'entity,' since these relative properties emerge only as *post hoc* abstractions of conceptually indeterminate perceptual data.

Utpala's Buddhist elaborates on this point: Given the self-contained nature of particular objects, no real entity can possess the contradictory attributes of unity *and* diversity simultaneously: "Furthermore, a unity of many that is coextensive with multiplicity does not make sense, because [it is] incompatible with the nature of existence and non-existence. There would arise (*udbhavet*) either unity from a manifold material cause (*anekasmād upādānād ekam*), or a manifold from a unity—insofar as they are only mutually unrelated, they would resolve simply in themselves."²⁸ As we have seen, the Buddhist logicians adhered to the nominalist principle that real entities are either strictly identical or distinct. Accordingly, they cannot be synchronously unified in themselves *and* distributed over a diversity of others. The only sorts of 'relationships' allowable between a supposed unity and diversity in this context are *sequential*: viz., when an aggregate of immediately preceding causal conditions contribute to the generation of single thing; or a unified thing diffuses into an aggregate of diverse effects. In both cases, the real entities that comprise the apparent temporal and causal transformation of unity into diversity, or *vice versa*, 'resolve simply in themselves' upon analysis. As we have seen, for the Pratyabhijñā, this encapsulates the central argument of the Buddhists against the ultimate

double-moon, collections are not substantially real. Hence, neither kind of external object makes sense as the object of cognition" (cf. Duckworth, et al.: 38-9).

²⁸ *na ca anekasyānekatā-sahabhāvinī ekatā yujyate bhāvābhāva-rūpatvena viruddhatvāt | anekasmād upādānād ekam ekasmād vā anekam anyonyāsaṃsrṣṭam evātmamātra-paryavasitam udbhavet* (SS: 4).

reality of relation, as well as the realist conceptual categories that require unity and diversity. Since the real percept is proclaimed to be neither unified nor diverse, the Buddhist simply dispatches with the entire premise of the realist approach, exploiting the rational incoherence of our common-sense idea of relation as evidence of its perceptually *post hoc*, and thus purely constructed, status.

b. Relation Only Occurs at the Time of Conceptual Construction

The Buddhist then briefly states his basic epistemic commitments apropos this eliminativist model, which attempts to explain the ramifications of the incoherence of relation in the context of the two modes of cognition that he accepts (i.e., *pratyakṣa* and *vikalpa*). In Part II, we saw that Dharmakīrti’s deconstruction of relation presupposes a strict distinction between two types of cognitions: those of universals, operative in the moment of conceptualization and inference, and those of particulars that causally interact with the sense organs of perception. In virtue of their ‘distributed’ nature (*avayavin*), this binary division necessarily pigeonholes relations into the former category. Since the momentary nature of real particulars demands that nothing causally efficacious can be both unified *and* diverse, the *only* other alternative is, *ipso facto*, that relations must be something akin to common universals.²⁹ With this in mind, Utpala’s Buddhist suggests

²⁹ Cf. ĪPK I.2.11, where Utpala sums up the Buddhist case against relations: *dviṣṭhasyāneka-rūpatvāt siddhasyānyān apekṣanāt / pāratantryādy-ayogāc ca tena kartāpi kalpitaḥ*. ĪPKV: *sambandho dviṣṭho na caikenātmanobhayatrāvasthitir yuktā na ca dvayoḥ siddhayor anyonyāpekṣātmā nāpi svātmamātraniṣṭhayoḥ pāratantryarūpaḥ saṃbandhaḥ / tato yathā jñātrtvaṃ kalpitaṃ tathā kartrtvaṃ apīti katham ātmā sarveśara iti?* “[There are no relations (*saṃbandha*)] since, as it rests on two relata, it cannot be unitary in nature; since a thing that is [already] accomplished cannot ‘require’ (*apekṣanāt*) another and dependence (*pāratantrya*) etc., are not logically tenable. Hence, the agent is also merely a conceptual construction. A relation is based on two terms (*dviṣṭhataḥ*) and it cannot logically rest on both and preserve its unitary nature. Neither is a relation conceivable in the form of a reciprocal requirement between two things which are already accomplished, nor in the form of a dependence of two self-contained things. In light of what has been said, just as the state of being a cognizer is a mental construct, the same holds for the agent. Thus, how can one claim that the Self is the Lord of all?” (trans., with slight changes, in Torella (2013: 97-8)).

that the incompatibility of the causal succession with a co-extension of ‘unity’ and ‘diversity’ entails a corresponding disjunction with respect to the cognition of relation:

Accordingly (*yathā*), there is a distinction (*vyavasthā*) of some things (*keṣāmcit*) in the continuum of awareness.³⁰ For here the unified sensory cognition is a construction (*vikalpa*) resulting from immediately antecedent cognitions (*samanatarapratyaya*) characterized by awareness of such [sense-fields] as sound and touch; or, sound and all five sense-fields are produced from a single preceding cognition. However, a state of unity and state of multiplicity which share the same locus (*āśraya*), or the non-existence of what is existent, is contradicted by *pramāṇas*. It’s just that objects (though mutually distinguished by such a conceptualization to facilitate conventional life in *samsāra*) are bestowed with a form of cause and effect that is entirely unreal. Thus [in the example] “the king’s servant” the mutual function specific to that form is considered (*nirūpyate*) in just this way, and likewise in regard to “in a cauldron with a firewood,” etc... Hence, only at the time of cognition (*pratītikāla*) do we accept a relationship as though universal.³¹

In accord with the preceding *a priori* analysis of unity and diversity, in epistemic terms, a cognition of ‘relation’ must be a *vikalpa* to the extent that it appears to integrate a manifold of sensory information, while the appearance of a manifold of sensory information could theoretically emerge from the reception of a single percept. However, we can never apprehend a *single* cognition that is *simultaneously*, in the very *moment of cognition*, also *inherently* manifold, as this would be a flat-out contradiction—like ‘the non-existence of what is existent.’³²

The point is that, whether at a particular or abstract level of description, a momentary ontology rationally demands that the appearance of one is necessarily *consequent upon* the other. Thus, the

³⁰ See ĪPK I.2.1: *nanu svalakṣaṇābhāsam jñānam ekam paraṃ punaḥ sābhilāpaṃ vikalpākhyam bahudhā*...“But one [type of] cognition is the appearance of a single self-characterized entity (*svalakṣaṇa*), whereas the other, called ‘conceptual construction’ (*vikalpa*), [appears] with name and form (*abhilāpa*) [and is] manifold.”

³¹ *yathā vijñāna-santatau vyavasthā keṣāmcit; tatra hi śabda-sparśādi-jñāna-lakṣaṇebhyaḥ samanantara-pratyayebhya ekam aindriyakam vikalpajñānam | ekasmād vā samanantara-pratyayāt pañcāpi śabdādi-viśayāṇi jāyante | yā punar-ekatā anekatā ca samānāśrayā sā pramāṇabādhitā, bhāvasya vābhāvatā. kevalam-itthaṃ rūpayaiḥ anayā kalpanāpratītyā sāmārika-vyavahāra-nirvartanārtham arthāḥ paras-para-vyāvṛttā api kāryakāraṇarūpatvena avāstavenaiva pratipādyante | rāja-puruṣayor anyonyam svarūpa-viśeṣa-kriyāiva evaṃ nirūpyate sthālyāṃ kāṣṭhair ityādau ca ata eva pratītikāla eva sāmānyasyeva sambandhasyābhyupagamah* (SS: 4).

³² Since both unity and diversity cannot coherently coextend over a particular locus (*āśraya*), any conceptual form of unity defined *relative* to the appearance of a diversity must be fundamentally discontinuous with respect to the immediate perceptual status of the causal procession. Utpala, I take it, wants to emphasize that Dharmakīrti attacks the reality of the *causal* ‘relation’ on the *very same grounds* adduced for the preceding argument against the *kāraka* ‘relations.’ The appearance of either can only occur in the subsequent moment of conceptual construction, and thus neither one is fundamentally *real*. This amounts to the claim that the *abstract forms* of grammatical relations are unreal *for the same essential reason* that the *temporal form* of the causal relation possesses no *ontological* referent—namely, both appearances contradict the non-relational status of momentariness.

opponent makes clear that insofar as relations are ‘like a universal’ (*sāmānyasya-iva*), their occurrence is limited to a particular moment in the causal procession, i.e., the time of conceptual construction after the immediately prior perceptual cognition. There can clearly be no genuine continuity between the *svalakṣaṇa* cognized in the moment of indeterminate *pratyakṣa* and the subsequent determinate activity of *vikalpa*, since this would itself represent an instance of ‘relationality’ between fundamentally distinct moments. The self-contained and non-relational moment is, strictly speaking, neither before nor after anything else.³³

c. Relation is a Conceptual Error

In conclusion, the Buddhist affirms that ‘relation’ must be a kind of stubbornly persistent ‘error’ (*bhrānti*) generated solely within a conventional mindset—just like the conceptual reification of distribution that ‘attaches’ (*saṃlagna*) to the appearance of partite ‘wholes’³⁴:

And since that conception is contrary to the nature of the real object (*vastusvarūpa*), in just the same manner, its referent is only an error; it’s simply that [this conception] does not cease (*anivṛtti*), just like the error (*bhrama*) of a [compounded] whole (*avayavin*), because it is attached (*saṃlagna*) to the appearance of the specific forms of assistant (*upakāraka*) and assisted (*upakārya*), even given the

³³ Indeed, Abhinava stresses that the whole notion of *sequence*, in terms of priority and posteriority of cognitions, is entirely due to conceptual construction on the Buddhist account: “Therefore, the states of priority and posteriority of moments is due to conceptual synthesis (*anusamdhāna*) through cognitions that are conceptual constructions. However, there is not any prior or posterior thing in itself, for there is simply that [momentary] object (*vastu*). Thus sequence, which consists of the before-and-after of action that occurs through conceptual construction, does not touch the momentary reality whatsoever, since the moments do not mutually relate.” *tatra pūrvāpararūpatā kṣaṇānām vikalpabudvyānusamdhānāt, na tu svātmani kiṃcit pūrvam aparaṃ vā, vastumātram hi tat / ato vikalpaprāṇitam pūrvāparībhūtatvaṃ kramarūpatā kriyāyāḥ kiṃcit kṣaṇam na vastu sprśati, te hi kṣaṇā na anyonyasvarūpāviṣṭāḥ iti* (ĪPV 1.2.9).

³⁴ It is worth questioning whether Utpala’s characterization is really the most charitable way to understand the Buddhist position; after all, Dharmakīrti never uses the word ‘*bhrānti*’ or ‘*doṣa*’ to describe relations in the SP. They are considered *kalpanā*, but he does not explicitly state they are *illusions* or *mistakes*. The concept of a *kāryakāraṇabhāva* is arrived at *inferentially*, as we arrive at the concept of ‘cow’ on the basis of perceiving common traits in particular observations. Utpala is likely aware that this is a cheap shot, since, as we saw, his own Buddhist acknowledges that he does not actually consider relations *conceptual* errors like the snake illusion. (Although, as we saw in Chapter III, Dharmakīrti does liken the appearance of *duration* to the mother-of-pearl illusion, even though he does not state anything like this in the SP.) For Utpala, this response begs the very question at issue, i.e., just because all relations are implicated in *conceptual construction* does not mean they are *illusions*, or unreal ‘errors’ of cognition.

presence of an overriding [cognition] (*bādha*) (e.g., as in the illusion of the snake). In this way, though only an error, it is designated by conventional signification.³⁵

Note that for the Buddhist’s argument to hold weight, Utpala gets him to acknowledge that this type of relational error is constitutively *not* like the canonical example of mistaking a rope for a serpent—viz., a *conceptual* illusion that dissipates immediately upon the intervention of an overturning cognition. Rather, it is more like the *perceptual* mode of ‘error’ that construes the mereological distribution of a ‘whole’ over its distinct ‘parts’—an error, most importantly, that is never *practically overturned*, for it ultimately rests on the deeper and more insidious misapprehension of extended macro-objects.³⁶ Utpala thus presents the Buddhists as committed to the position that unity and diversity are simply incompatible properties that function like universal predicates, but they cannot be overturned by empirical investigation (they are ‘closely connected’ to the perceptual appearance of the object).

If we look back upon the introduction of the SS up till now, it may seem that Utpala has merely kowtowed to the Buddhist eliminativist; the general form of relation is an inconsistent notion and thus should only be conventionally accepted at the level of *māyā*.³⁷ From this

³⁵ *vastusvarūpa-viparītatvena ca pratītis tadvad eva bhrānti-viśayaiva; kevalam bādha-pravṛttāv api upakāryopakāraka-svarūpa-viśeṣāvabhāsa-samlagnatvād asya bhramasyāvayavi-bhramasyevānivr̥tīḥ sarpa-bhramavat / tata eva bhrānter apy asyāḥ samvṛti-samjñayā vyapadeśa iti* (SS:4).

³⁶ We have already seen in Chapter III that Vasubandhu’s mereological arguments for Yogācāra idealism conceptually depend upon his denial of relations with respect to partless entities. See Yiannopoulos’ recent dissertation (2020: 71) for a relevant discussion of Dharmakīrti’s account of ‘pseudo-perception’ in the PV: “Dharmakīrti maintains that there are two types of perceptual error (*bhrānti*): conceptual and nonconceptual. Conceptual error accounts for most ordinary cognitions of ordinary objects under ordinary circumstances. That is to say, for Dharmakīrti, the determinate identification of some object—such as a ‘jug’—is not a perception at all, but rather a spurious or “pseudo-perception” (*pratyakṣābhāsa*), in the sense that these cognitions appear ($\bar{a} + \sqrt{bhās}$) as though they were perceptual, but in fact fail to meet the technical requirements necessary for a genuine perception (*pratyakṣa*). Nonconceptual error, on the other hand, arises due to an impairment (*upaghāta*) in the sensory faculty (*indriya*) or, more broadly, in the psychophysical basis (*āśraya*) of sensory experience—whatever this might be. The most important example of nonconceptual error is the dualistic phenomenological structure of perceiving subject and perceived object. Because phenomenological duality is nonconceptual error, all dualistic cognitions must in the final analysis be understood as nonconceptual pseudo-perceptions.” In terms of the present discussion, relation (like any macro-object) would qualify as an instance of ‘conceptual error’; but, notably, insofar as something like a mistaken ‘relation’ is *also* responsible for the misapprehension of subject-object *duality*, it could also perhaps qualify as a *non-conceptual* error as well.

³⁷ See section 5 below on this point.

perspective, he portrays his Buddhist interlocutor as manipulating the Śaivite to endorse the very sort of incoherent vision of ontological relations that Bradley pooh-poohed—namely, one of a predicative logical form that corresponds to the simultaneous inherence of incompatible abstract properties with respect to a particular substance. Based on this incompatibility, the relational realist must either submit to the Dharmakīrtian deconstruction, or rest content with a blatant contradiction.

Yet, in his construal of Dharmakīrti's view, Utpala effectively brings into relief the *a priori* form of the Buddhist arguments in a fashion that will play right into the Śaiva *siddhāntin's* hand. For the Buddhist has deduced that relations are conceptual constructions just like universals, since there cannot be any sort of liminal existent *between* the independent moments of perceptual and conceptual cognition. At the same time, the Buddhist concedes that these relational impressions cannot be practically negated, proven to be groundless conceptual illusions (i.e., like the snake that is revealed to be a rope). And thus, the Buddhist must effectively resort to the non-empirical claim that such relational impressions remain perceptually intransigent because they are 'closely connected' to the *representational appearance* of objects, like the mistaken impression of gross or distributed extension. They must, in short, assume that the perceptual form of relation is simply given in the conventional sphere of empirical judgment, and thus it cannot be expected to be overturned through any practical means.

At this point, we can see how Utpala's approach to Dharmakīrti maps onto Peirce *vis-à-vis* Bradley; the Śaivite wants to highlight that the Buddhist eliminativist must take recourse to explicitly *nominalist* metaphysical commitments bereft of practical justification to legitimize their relational eliminativism. This, in turn, leaves him vulnerable to the Pratyabhijñā transcendental maneuver, whose guiding axiom is the concrete givenness of relational power

(*śakti*). From this point on, then, Utpala's concern is to prove that there is, in fact, no *practical* contradiction in conceiving of unity-in-diversity as concretely 'real'—where 'real' here means not a *mere illusion*, or an appearance that presents reality otherwise than what it *actually* is, but rather a logical precondition for the possibility of determinate conceptual knowledge. Accordingly, insofar as the contentful appearance of perceptual intuitions must be constitutively *continuous* with the nature of the reflexive awareness thereof, the Buddhist can never dispense with relational capacities altogether without also reducing the manifest fact of conventional experience to absurdity.

3. The *Pratyabhijñā Siddhānta*

a. Sambandha Cannot be a Conceptual Error

As we have seen, the Buddhist *pūrvapakṣin* in the SS declares that something's being both unified and diverse is incoherent. While relations do occur in the conventional world, they are not ultimately real, but are constructions that appear in the *vikalpa* state, like the general character of universals. In temporal terms, this means that a present moment of conceptual construction arises *after* an immediately preceding perceptual cognition, one that is ultimately identified with the non-relational particulars of the causal procession. Thus, *pratyakṣa* and *vikalpa* are conceived in terms of discontinuous moments of successive cognition, the latter being a state in which we *impose* continuous properties like duration and extension retroactively upon the causal basis of the former. To combat the dualism of the Buddhist, therefore, Utpala must first establish that relations are not merely conceptual *errors*, or *mistakes* (*bhrānti*)

associated with the imposition of a universal on a particular object, as in the canonical example of mistaking nacre for silver.³⁸

He starts with an inquiry into the relational suppositions of Dharmakīrti's own central thesis in the SP: "With respect to that [i.e., the Buddhist position,] it is said: First of all, this clear apprehension (*pratīti*) is acknowledged even by you for the sake of designating a relation that pertains to the form of a unity of many, such that it is said: 'Thus entities themselves are disjunct; conceptual construction conjoins them' (SP 5cd). And [the fact] that its form is a conceptual construction is not a problem (*doṣa*). Even the distinction (*vikalpa*) 'this is a pot,' 'this is a cloth' is just a conceptual construction (*kalpana*)."³⁹ Utpala points out that Dharmakīrti himself admits that cognitions must exist which actively unify distinct phenomena (*anekaika*). But while Dharmakīrti wants to presumably establish that this relational synthesis is itself *ultimately unreal* (viz., a purely conceptual construction imposed *upon* (*āropa*) the truly momentary real), Utpala instead moves the problem upstream into a transcendental register; namely, he challenges Dharmakīrti's conflation of the *act of conceptual synthesis* (i.e., the cognition itself), with the sort of intentional *content* that could *in the first place* be

³⁸ Utpala explicitly discusses his theory of perceptual error in verse II.3.13 of the ĪPK and its *vṛtti*: *rajataikavimarśe 'pi śuktau na rajatasthitiḥ // upādhideśāsaṃvādād dvicandre 'pi nabho 'nyathā*. ĪPV: *rajate śuktau ca rajatāvamarśaikyena rajatatve 'pi punaḥ śukti-deśa-saṅgatibādhenopādhi-saṃvādābhāvāt tadbuddhir asthairyād bhrāntā / dvicandre 'pi nabhodeśāsaṃvādān mithyā*. "Even if the reflective awareness of silver is one, this awareness 'silver' referring to mother-of-pearl is not valid, since there is incongruence as regards the place, which has a qualifying function [in the cognition] (*upadhidesasamvadat*); also in the case of the double moon the ether appears differently. Even if the cognitions as 'silver' of real silver and of mother-of-pearl are in themselves equally real, insofar as in them the reflective awareness 'silver' [on which its validity is based] is the same, however the cognition 'this is (here there is) silver' referring to mother-of-pearl is to be considered erroneous because of its impermanence, since it is not congruent as regards the accessory quality—place—, as its connection with the place occupied by mother-of-pearl is later found to be contradicted. Also in the case of seeing a double moon there is no congruence as regards the place, occupied in this instance by the ether" (trans. in Torella 2013: 171).

³⁹ *tatrocyate pratītiḥ tavad-aneika-rūpatāyāṃ saṃbandhābhīdhānāya bhavadbhir apy abhyupagantaiva yenoktam "ity amiśrāḥ svayaṃ bhāvās tān yojayati kalpanā"* (SP v. 5cd) *iti / kalpanā-rūpatvaṃ ca nāsyā doṣaḥ / ghaṭo 'yaṃ paṭo 'yam ity api vikalpaḥ kalpanaiva* (SS:4-5). (Note that this citation in the SS slightly differs from the SP, which replaces "miśrayati" with "yojayati".)

conventionally classified as an epistemic ‘defect’ (*doṣa*).⁴⁰ For the mere fact that such a conceptual construction phenomenally *occurs* is not *in itself* conventionally regarded as an error of cognition, and thus an epistemic problem *vis-à-vis* the proper ascertainment of empirical reality. The cognition is thus considered, not with respect to its determinate *content*, but only inasmuch as it manifests a constructive act of thought that exhibits a form of synthetic unity. For this reason, Utpala insists that to even distinguish between a plurality of externally related objects (e.g., ‘this is a pot’ and ‘this is a cloth’) already implicates a synthetic form of conceptualization (*vikalpa*).

The Buddhist voice retorts: “But, in this case, there is also a perceptual appearance such that (*tathā*) there is precisely the form of [determinate, individual] things like pots and cloths, etc.; hence it [i.e., the appearance] is not a conceptual construct.”⁴¹ The Buddhist expresses the familiar nominalist idea that, with respect to the apprehension and identification of distinct objects, cognitions still exhibit perceptual (read:: causal) content that is not merely conceptual. Hence, just to this extent, *perceptual* cognition is not *merely* a conceptual fabrication, but involves real objective content.

Utpala aims to question this sort of reasoning through shifting the conversation further into a phenomenological mode of analysis—that is, from a matter of the supposedly external *basis* of the non-conceptual percept to the conceptually-inflected nature of its actual *appearance*:

However, here as well—i.e., in cases like ‘the king’s servant,’ and ‘rice in a pot,’ etc.—there is also a perceptual appearance; why are [these] not understood accordingly (*tātha*) [viz., as real]? Moreover (*ca*), these perceptual appearances should also necessarily be acknowledged in just this way; or rather (*vā*), it *is* accepted by you, such that you yourself have said, “insofar as it is closely connected with the appearance of aspects of objects, this confusion is difficult even for a defeater (*bādhaka*) to uproot.”⁴²

⁴⁰ In his “Two Varieties of Skepticism” Conant (2004) analyzes this distinction—between knowledge of the veracity of the *content* of cognition vs. knowledge of the veracity of the *means* of contentful knowledge itself—in terms of the distinction between “Cartesian” and “Kantian” forms skepticism.

⁴¹ *athātra pratyakṣāvabhāso 'pi tathā ghaṭapaṭādirūpa eveti na kalpanātvam* (SS:5).

⁴² Try as I might, I could not locate the source of this quotation. Assuming it is from Dharmakīrti, it is not from the PV or the PVS (lamentably, it seems Eltschinger (2021: 115, f.14) and Allport (230) also could not locate it). Since I

For it is not because of its being closely connected with the appearance of an object that it is [difficult to be uprooted] by a defeater; rather, it is just because of the real existence of *similarity* amongst appearances of objects.⁴³

Utpala affirms that for relational cognitions such as ‘the king’s servant’ and ‘rice in a pot,’ something determinate is also present to *perception*. Hence, though the Buddhist denies the reality of the conceptual relations involved, he would still maintain that the perceptual referent in these cases is not *merely* a conceptual construction, insofar as the object *appears* to be constrained by causal factors extrinsic to the conceptualization of the relation itself. Utpala cites a Buddhist passage of unidentified provenance that acknowledges the difficulty of eradicating these errors on a practical basis, insofar as they are ‘closely connected’ to the perceptual appearance of the object itself. We can infer that Utpala takes ‘closely connected’ here in the same manner that the distributed nature of general properties ‘closely attaches’ to the perceptual judgment of compounded objects.

But Utpala proceeds to deny that the Buddhist is entitled to adduce the apparent causal particularity of objects as the criterion for their actual non-relational nature, for the judgment of particularity *itself* already presupposes a form of relational conceptualization (*vikalpa*)—namely, the conceptual exclusion of the *similarity* of the perceptual object to everything else that attends its phenomenal appearance. As a matter of *phenomenology*, that is, ‘relations’ of similarity aren’t difficult to eradicate because they obstinately ‘attach’ to the perceptual content of extended

cannot contextualize this citation, it is unclear whether *sambandha itself* is the error, or rather some extensive *avayavin*. If the latter, though, it would serve to reinforce the parallel that Utpala draws between Buddhist metaphysical forms of argument and the reified conception of relations they entail. Because the illusion of relation is not overturned in subsequent cognitions—as it is “closely attached” to the appearance of the object—it must represent a sort of ‘error’ like extension, one that is ‘hardwired’ into the gross structure of empirical perceptions.

⁴³ *ihāpi rājñāḥ puruṣaḥ sthālyāmodana ity ādāv api pratyakṣāvabhāso; na tatheti kuto 'vagatam? I avaśyam eva ca pratyakṣāvabhāso 'py atra tathāivābhyupagantavyaḥ; abhyupagata eva vā bhavadbhiḥ yenoktam "arthākārapratibhāsa-saṃlagnatvābādhakenāpi duruddharo 'yaṃ bhramah" iti I na hi artha-pratibhāsa-saṃlagnatvād bādhakena api tv artha-pratibhāsa-sādṛśya-sadbhāva-mātrāt* (SS:5). Note that this last compound can be read as a genitive or conjunctive (viz., ‘similarity amongst appearances of objects’ or ‘similarity between appearances and objects’).

objects, but rather because their conceptual exclusion is *constitutive of what it means* for the formal basis (*śarīra*) of a particular object to be *recognized as such*⁴⁴:

Even in the case of the illusion of silver, there actually is the real presence of similarity with mother-of-pearl: For all misapprehensions (*bhrānti*) have *similarity* as their content—and some of those (*cānyā*), by *excluding* similarity, make sense only as being closely connected to the appearance of an object. Owing to the conceptual distinction (*vikalpena*) [between these,] it makes sense (*upapanna*) for those engaged in discourse to take (*vyavahārayitum*) the [physical] basis (*śarīra*) of that object-appearance for the sake of discourse as being precisely that which has just such a form. Otherwise, if the appearance of an object is just unreal (*abhūtīkṛta*) (i.e., it is reduced to (*āpādita*) referring (*niṣṭha*) to the condition of an object that is ultimately just its own self, not participating (*an-anupraviṣṭha*) in the nature of anything else), then this other conceptualization (*vikalpa*) of the relation [between the cognitive exclusion and inclusion of similarity], just like the one of sameness etc., would cease—there is no other possibility (*nānyathā*). And according to the critiques of *nirvikalpatva* in the ĪPK⁴⁵, this

⁴⁴ This portion of the text broadly correspond to verses 6-9 of the SS: “*There is no contradiction of many even given [their] unity as one, just as others have said (āhuḥ pare) ‘existents by themselves are disjunct; conceptual construction joins them.’ Accordingly, it is not in the first place merely conceptual construction, because there is overturning of that [conceptual construction], like the illusion of a serpent; [In contrast,] the resistance to that [overturning] from the closely connected [character of an] appearance, is because being closely attached to an appearance is not [the same as] something being similar to an appearance; rather, being in conformity with an appearance is just a mistaken appearance. In just such an appearance, there is the perception of unity in diversity; this conclusion (upapatti) is also said to be expressed clearly (sphuṭam) in the ĪPK.*” *naikasyaikye 'py anekasya bādha āhur yathā pare | ity amiśrāḥ svayaṃ bhāvāstān yojayati kalpanā // yato na kalpanā-mātram tāvad etad avāraṇāt | sarpa-bhrānter ivābhāsa-lagnatvāt tan-nivāraṇam // yasmād ābhāsa-lagnatvaṃ nābhāsa sadṛśārthatā | kiṃ tv ābhāsānusāritvaṃ bhrānta ābhāsa eva tat // ittham ābhāsa evāsminn anekasyaikatādrśi | vācyopapattiḥ sāpy uktā pratyabhijñānaye sphuṭam (SS: 11).*

⁴⁵ See, in particular, ĪPK I.2.1-3, where the Buddhist theory of perception as constitutively *nirvikalpa* is refuted based on the fact that such a theory cannot account for the temporal synthesis of mnemonic cognitions: *nanu svalakṣaṇābhāsaṃ jñānam ekaṃ paraṃ punaḥ sābhilāpaṃ vikalpākhyam bahudhā nāpi tad dvayam // nityasya kasya cid draṣṭus tasyātrānavabhāsataḥ / ahampratītir apy eṣā śarīrādyavasāyinī. jñānam ekaṃ sphuṭāvabhāsaṃ svalakṣaṇānubhavasvarūpaṃ nirvikalpakam te kathayanti / aparaṃ tu śabdāruṣaṇayā smṛtiśaṃsayotprekṣādibahubhedam vikalpasamjñam / ubhayam apy etan na yujyate bodharūpajñānātiriktasyānyasya sambandhitayā tasyānupalabdheḥ / ko 'sau sthirarūpa ātmā? sābhilāpāhampratayenāpi śarīrādikavedyavastūtīrṇo vedayitā na kaś cid lokair avadhāryate. athānubhavavidhvaṃse smṛtis tadanurodhinī / katham bhaven na nityaḥ syād ātmā yady anubhāvakaḥ. smṛtikāle pūrvānubhavanāśāt katham pūrvārthānubhavaṣṭambhadharmā smṛtir jāyeta yadi tadāpi tadanubhavabodho nānuvarteta, yaś cānekakālasthāyī bodhaḥ sa evātmānubhāvītā. “*There is one type of cognition in which the particular reality appears and another type of cognition, called mental elaboration, inseparably connected with discourse, which appears in manifold forms. For neither of the two is there any necessity to posit any stable perceiving subject, since he does not appear in them. Also, the notion of ‘I’ has in reality as referent the body etc.* One type of cognition, consisting in the direct perception of the clearly manifested particular reality, is called ‘exempt from mental elaborations’; the other type of cognition, on the other hand, which, permeated by the word, appears in the various forms of memory, doubt, fantasy etc., is called ‘representation, mental elaboration. Neither the one nor the other are admissible as depending on another entity distinct from knowledge itself in the form of consciousness, since this other entity is not perceived. Who, then, is this permanent Self? Even on the basis of the notions of ‘I’, which is indissolubly connected with discourse, the existence of a cognizer, who transcends what are simply cognizable realities, namely the body and so on, cannot be ascertained. [Reply] *How could we explain memory, which conforms to direct perception when the latter is no longer present, if there were not a permanent self, who is the subject of the perception?* Since the former direct perception has disappeared at the moment of the memory, the memory, whose essential quality is precisely its dependence on that former perception of the object, could not arise, unless one admits the persistence [or ‘re-arising’ (*āvṛtti*)] of the awareness of this*

conceptualization (*vikalpa*) is not different from the appearance of an object. Likewise, in expressions like ‘the king’s man,’ it is only an appearance that must be understood as a manifestation (*prathā*) consisting of the unity of a manifold, just as in the appearance of an extensive object.⁴⁶

Let’s unpack this rather dense line of reasoning. According to Utpala, all perceptual ‘errors’ presuppose a notion of *similarity*; it is only in virtue of this relational property that the appearance of a *misapprehension* can, in the first place, occur. For if no conceptual similarity *whatsoever* obtained between mother-of-pearl and silver, there would be no rational basis for the *misinterpretation* of the former *as the* latter. In other words, the mere fact that we can understand the process of overturning as a *continuous* event (viz., “that mother-of-pearl really *did* look like silver, even though I now know it isn’t”) means that the general relation of conceptual similarity is not wholly negated by the subsequent *bādhaka* that unfastens the universal attribution ‘*silveriness*’ from its empirical locus. Even though the attribution of silveriness to a particular place may be subsequently undone, that is, the relations involved in the initial synthetic judgment appear in a manner that is never empirically overturned.⁴⁷ Thus, the phenomenological fact that

perception also at the moment of the memory. And this lasting awareness at different times is precisely the self, the perceiving subject” (trans. with slight adjustments, follows Torella 2013: 89-91). The centrality of memory for Utpala in the ĪPK highlights the temporal considerations in play with respect to the conception of the self as a constitutively continuous form of subjective being. According to Utpala, the phenomenon of memory (and thus recognition) could not occur if the subject who experiences the conceptual content of cognition did not also experience its initial perceptual apprehension. The intrinsic durational form of mnemonic faculties therefore refutes the idea that discursive cognitions must necessarily occur at a time when its perceptual causes can no longer properly be said to ‘really exist.’ (Cf. also Torella’s (2007b) exposition of Utpala’s *Vivṛti* on ĪPK 1.4.1-2, which deals in-depth with the nature of memory).

⁴⁶ *rajata-bhrame 'pi śuktikā-sādṛśya-sadbhāvo 'py asty eva: sādṛśya-viṣayā eva hi sarvā bhrāntayaḥ sādṛśya-vyatirekeṇa cānyā artha-pratibhāsa-saṃlagnatayaiva yuktāḥ. yad-artha-pratibhāsa-śarīram evaṃ-bhūtam eva evaṃ rūpeṇaiva vyavahārayitrā vikalpena vyavahārayitum upapannam. anyathābhūtikṛte eva arthābhāse paraspara-svarūpānanupraviṣṭa-svātma-mātra-paryavasitārtha-niṣṭhatām āpādite yadi param ayaṃ sambandha-vikalpah sāmānyādi-vikalpavan nīvarteta nānyathā / na ca vikalpo 'rtha-pratibhāsād bhinnāḥ, nirvikalpatva-dṛṣṇānād īśvara-pratyabhijñāyām / evaṃ 'rājñāḥ puruṣa' ityādāv avabhāsa evānekasyaikātmātā-prathārūpo 'bhyupagantavyaḥ sthūla-pratibhāsavat* (SS:5).

⁴⁷ According to Utpala, the original cognition, even if later proven to be overturned (not a *pramā*), was not *itself* invalid (i.e., a non-*vimarśa*)—rather, the error amounts to the appearance of the presence of the universal as not ultimately corresponding to a particular location in space. See ĪPK II.3.13: *rajataikavimarśe 'pi śuktau na rajatasthitiḥ / upādhideśasamvādād dvicandre 'pi nabho 'nyathā. rajate śuktau ca rajatāvamarśaikyena rajatave 'pi punaḥ śuktideśasaṅgatibādhenopādhisamvādābhāvāt tadbuddhir asthairyād bhrāntā...* “Even if the reflective awareness of silver is one, this awareness ‘silver’ referring to nacre is not valid, since there is incongruence as

this similarity simply *appears as related* to some perceptual object cannot *in and of itself* signify an invalid cognition.⁴⁸

Alternatively, veridical perception associated with the apprehension of the objective form of the percept is practically established through the relative *absence* of such overturning. All veridical judgments in the context of practical inquiry therefore depend upon an implicit understanding of this relational distinction. In this case, certain ‘errors,’ like relation, must ‘closely attach’ to the appearance of the object; but this conception, as the Buddhist himself would openly admit, is semantically coextensive with the *conceptual exclusion of everything*

regards the place, which has a qualifying function [in the cognition]; also in the case of the double moon the ether appears differently. Even if the cognitions as ‘silver’ of the real silver and of nacre are in themselves equally real, insofar as in them the reflective awareness ‘silver’ [on which its validity is based] is the same, however the cognition ‘this is (here there is) silver’ referring to nacre is to be considered erroneous because of its impermanence, since it is not congruent as regards the accessory quality —place—, as its connection with the place occupied by nacre is later found to be contradicted...” (trans. in Torella 2013: 171).

⁴⁸ In the ĪPK, Utpala claims that the appearance of cognitive overturning itself presupposes a relation between cognitions established by the synthetic power of the *ātman*: *bādhyabādhakabhāvo ‘pi svātmaniṣṭhāvirodhinām / jñānānām udiyād ekapramātrpariniṣṭhiteh*. “Even the overturning-overtaken relation between cognitions, which are self-contained and do not contradict one another, obtains [solely] in virtue of their resting on a single knower” (ĪPK I.7.6. trans., with slight changes, in Torrella (1994: 139)). Thus, according to Utpala, a speaker could not even grasp the practical concept of something being overturned unless some sort of relation obtains between the moments of overturning and overturned. For the cognition of a *bādhaka* consists in a *contrast* of a present cognition and a past cognition—and no *contrast* is possible without a synthetic awareness of the *relata as brought into contrast*. See also a subsequent few verses (I.7.12-13), which investigates the invalidating-invalidated relationship in the context of the nacre/silver example: *evam rūpyavidābhāvarūpā śuktimatir bhavet / na tv ādyarajatajñāpteḥ syād aprāmānyavedikā. śuktijñānam eva rajatajñānābhāvarūpaṃ sidhyati, tadānīntanaśuktijñānānubhavana na bhinnasyātītasya rūpyajñānasyāprāmānyam. dharmyasiddher api bhaved bādhā naivānumānataḥ / svasaṃvedanasiddhā tu yuktā saikapramātrjā. śuktikājñānakāle ca na pūrvaṃ rajatajñānam asti / tataḥ sa dharmī na siddha iti nānumānena bādhā, ekapramātrmayasvasaṃvedane tv ekadeśāvaṣṭambhyubhayajñānamayasambandhabhāsanāt sidhyati / paścātsaṃvādaḥ pratyakṣasvasaṃvedane pūrvasyāpi tasya bhāsanād ekaṃ pramāṇam itarad anyatheti bhavati / saṃvādo ‘py ekapramātrkrtaḥ*. “Thus the cognition of nacre may appear as the non-presence of the cognition of silver: however, it cannot reveal the non-validity of the former cognition of silver. The cognition of nacre in itself appears as the non-being of the cognition of silver: but through the direct cognition of nacre which takes place at that particular moment one does not obtain the non-validity of a distinct cognition of silver that occurred in the past. *Not even inference can account for the invalidation of a cognition, due to the property-possessor not being established; on the contrary the invalidation, established on the basis of everyone’s inner experience, is coherently explained as deriving from a unitary knowing subject*. At the moment of the cognition of nacre the former cognition of silver is not established, the invalidation may not be explained in terms of inference. On the contrary, it is explained by maintaining that it is in the self-awareness—consisting in the unitary knowing subject—that the relation constituted by the two conditions referring to a single object is manifested. The congruence with reality which is subsequently ascertained, and which causes one to say that the one cognition is valid and the other is not, can take place insofar as the former cognition is also manifested in the self-awareness of the present direct perception. The determination of the congruence also depends on the unitary knowing subject” (trans. in Torella 2013: 145-6).

similar thereto. Pragmatically speaking, that is, the conceptual appearance of a particular object *just is* something appearing as though essentially characterized in terms of a determinate objective basis (*śarīra*). But this ‘basis’ is itself conceptually apprehended as the *relative exclusion* of all other potential cognitions *just in case* they would entail the ascription of mere general similarity to the current interpretation of the percept.

From Utpala’s perspective, then, it is precisely *in virtue of* the conceptual distinction (*vikalpa*) between these two descriptions of a perceptual referent (i.e., the conceptual exclusion of similarity that pinpoints an *artha-śarīra* and the similarity of *artha-pratibhāsa*) that we can *also* entitle ourselves to evaluate the percept with respect to its manifold similarities, and thus as identical to, or ‘isomorphic with,’ some physical basis (*śarīra*) supposedly extrinsic to its conceptual interpretation. The Buddhist therefore fundamentally misunderstands the significance of his own observation; the obstinacy of relational perceptions is not due to the fact that this ‘error,’ like extension, is a conceptual *imposition* ‘attached’ to the representation of an object that *actually happens to be otherwise* (as if this sort of explanation does not *already* presuppose a problematic givenness of relations!) Instead, it is ‘difficult to eradicate’ because *the conceptual exclusion* of universal similarities that attend the appearance of any given particular object is *constitutive of what it means* for the particular object to phenomenally appear as it does.

We can characterize Utpala’s broadly phenomenological argument as one to the effect that the general *appearance* of causal particularity—particularity *as such*—can only be *experienced* in the first place in virtue of the constant suppression of the myriad universal cognitions that implicitly attend and define the contentful status of any given perceptual appearance; that is to say, *not* when we supposedly come into immediate contact with a constitutively non-conceptual ‘basis’ (*śarīra*), since the phenomenal appearance of a particular

causal basis *just is* the fact that the universal similarities that obtain between any actual percept and its abstract descriptions are continually excluded (*sādrśya-vyatireka*) in a practical account of whatever referent happens to be under consideration. Utpala thus suggests that the practical distinction between perceptual and conceptual cognitions is not actually predicated on the fact that, exclusively in the former case, a causally privileged factor—one that abides completely external to the process of conceptual interpretation—constrains cognition; otherwise, the initial intuition of this object couldn't even be discursively elaborated in the first place! Hence the Buddhist's appeal to the causally privileged status of perceptual forms to justify his eliminativism presupposes reference to synthetic cognitions just as much as the designation of any so-called contentful 'error.'⁴⁹

To sum up: Utpala's explanation of *bhrānti* in terms of real similarity distinguishes the conceptual nature of relation (*bhedābheda*) from anything conventionally characterizable in terms of a cognitive error, or misapprehension; *bhedābheda* cannot be some sort of determinate intentional *content* that could, even in principle, be superimposed upon the appearance of a causal particular, one whose essential nature is radically otherwise than the phenomenal relations that provide the interpretative conditions thereof. If this weren't the case, one could not even *practically recognize* the objective 'basis' from which this *bhrānti* supposedly diverges, namely, through the conceptual exclusion of everything that appears *as similar* to the one's current interpretation of the percept. The upshot is that the Buddhist wants to abstractly distinguish *post hoc* between *two* descriptions of a *single* concrete event without any practical justification; i.e.,

⁴⁹ For the idealistic Śaivites, the need to define particularity in phenomenological terms owes itself to the manifest fact that we only ever have experiential access to an object *as it appears in consciousness*—and thus also its necessary attendant conformity, or lack thereof, with some range of conceptual similarities. Recall in this regard from the previous chapter that since the cognition of *sambandha* is not practically overturned, it must be regarded as *real (satya)*, even if the mode by which relation appears, and all the other fundamental categories (*padārtha*) for that matter, bear witness to the antinomy of simultaneous unity and diversity (*bhedābheda*). See Ratié (2011b) for Śaiva arguments against Sautrāntika externalism *vis-à-vis* the impossibility of proving the existence of objects outside consciousness.

the mere *fact* of a particular thing appearing from the conceptually inflected *way* in which it appears.⁵⁰ While the Buddhist thus causally privileges knowledge of particular objects over distributed conceptual relations, insofar as both kinds of phenomena *perceptually appear as such*, they draw upon the same basic relational and conceptual resources. This result accords with the idealistic conclusions of the ĪPK, which argues that nothing can appear in consciousness without some implicit form of reflexive interpretation (*vikalpa*).⁵¹

b. Are Relations Ultimately Real?

After Utpala defends the intrinsic validity of the cognition of relation against the Buddhist objectors, he immediately proceeds to hedge his conclusions, and walks back from affirming the ultimate existence of relations. More specifically, he argues we should only accept their *conventional* reality:

Whether or not this [ultimately] makes sense, however, should be discussed. In this case, the ultimately real thing, insofar as it consists of pure consciousness, is the universal Self (*viśvātmā*). That all things are distinguished from one another (*viśvasya...anyonyavibhaktatā*) (in terms of the diverse natures (*ātmavaicitrya*) of such things as *tattvas*, creatures (*bhūta*), and humans (*bhuvana*)) is owing to the occurrence (*utthāpana*) of the non-awareness of non-difference, which results from just this very consciousness's subjection to the power of *māyā*. This is elaborated (*pratipāditam*) in detail in the ĪPK. Thus, one should consult that text—it will not be further explained here. And when this

⁵⁰ Although Utpala does not explicitly go in this direction, we can imagine a Buddhist response here: “Well, so what? Of course, that is the case—we have already *acknowledged* that the *kalpana* of *sambandha* is *not* like the case of a false imposition of silver! These sorts of ‘errors’ are ‘closely attached’ to the perception of the object, like the error of gross extension. Thus, our position has not been refuted.” But, for Utpala, this sort of response clearly begs the question, insofar as the Buddhist has no way to decisively demonstrate the conventional unreality of *sambandha* other than with recourse to metaphysical principles that already justify their position. In other words, to the extent that intrinsic validity and defeasible justification is the best we can ever *practically* establish apropos the empirical ‘truth’ of any cognition; and, further, since we cannot overturn the concept of *relation* practically; the Buddhist must justify his position on metaphysical—that is, *a priori*—grounds. We should again note how closely the relational presuppositions that guide Utpala’s Buddhist coincide with the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika realists like Gaṅgeśa, who likewise had to contend with the incompatible logical forms that *samavāya* assumes at different levels of description (i.e., empirical vs. abstract).

⁵¹ Recall ĪPK I.5.19, and see Torella (2013: 125-6, fn. 42) on this verse’s relevance to Bhartṛhari’s theory of nascent linguistic elaboration in the act of perception.

point is established (*siddhe*), only *sāmsāra*, which consists of a unity of the diverse, is engaged with (*anupraviṣṭa*) the meaning of the word ‘relation.’ Hence, in this case, there is not any fault (*dīnatā*).⁵²

For Utpala, the *unconditional* ‘reality’ of relations would inevitably undermine the absolute metaphysical unity of Śiva. If there is no differentiation at the ultimate level of consciousness, there can be no relations either, since relations, by definition, require some measure of *difference*. In absolute terms, then, relations are only ‘real’ with respect to the conventional (*lokayātra*) world of *māyā*.

At this point, some might object to our claim that Utpala is any sort of *robust* ‘relational realist.’ Indeed, since Dharmakīrti also accepted relations at the *conventional* level of description, and simply *denied* their existence in the realm of *ultimate* reality, one might question whether Utpala and Dharmakīrti are even really at odds about relations. Is Utpala overstating their differences in his purported ‘proof’?

These sorts of considerations prompt Allport’s reflection that “Utpaladeva’s conclusion [in the SS], that relations are real, claims to differ from Dharmakīrti’s view that they are not ultimately real. In fact, however, the two views are remarkably similar.... It seems to me that the difference is purely rhetorical, insofar as Dharmakīrti emphasizes that conventional reality is a kind of illusion, whereas the Pratyabhijñā emphasizes that conventional is a kind of reality” (243). While possessing *prima facie* merit, I believe Allport overstates the similarity between Dharmakīrti and Utpala in this case. In particular, Utpala’s view of relations categorically rejects the premise that momentariness can account for phenomenal reality as a *becoming* of *prakāśa* (‘manifestation’) through *vimāśa* (‘reflexive consciousness’). The diverse and disconnected

⁵² *sa tūpapadyate na vetyetāvad vicāryate: tatra cin-mātra-rūpasyaiva pāramāthikasya vastuno viśvātmāṭ / tasyaiva cinmātrasya māyā-śakti-prabhāvād abhedākhyāty utthāpanena viśvasya, tattva-bhūta-bhuvanādy-ātma-vaicitryeṇānyonya-vibhaktatā, itīśvara-pratyabhijñāyām vistareṇa pratipāditam, iti tata eva parīkṣyaṃ nehopanyasyate / asmiṃścārthe siddhe naikaikatārūpaḥ saṃsāra eva saṃbandha-śabdārthānupraviṣṭaḥ,—iti nāstyevātra dīnatā* (SS: 5-6).

entities of the external world can only appear *as determinate content* precisely insofar as they are *continuous* with the intrinsically reflexive nature of consciousness (viz., inert matter, without the power of *vimarśa*, cannot *prakāśa* itself). This is *not* a merely ‘rhetorical’ claim, but an *ontological* one, which offers substantive grounds to suspect that Allport’s framing is misleading.

Remember that Dharmakīrti believed that the ultimately real, *in opposition to the conventional*, is *defined* by its *lack* of internal, constitutive relatedness and/or activity. And his elaboration of *apoha* testifies to the fact that he regarded the causal framework dictated by this ontological principle as the measure of a consistent epistemology. Utpala held, on the other hand, that the conceptual status of actions and relations are ‘real’ (*satya*) *precisely because* the nature of the ‘ultimately’ real—viz., as an undifferentiated awareness of infinite potentials—is *continuous with* the differentiated, conventional appearances of *māyic* self-consciousness. These are not, properly speaking, completely distinct categories of the ‘real’, where the relational activity that generates the appearance of the conventional world is a conceptual *imposition* on a reality that is *fundamentally otherwise*. Rather, they are more like two ways of speaking about one reality whose essential nature is, paradoxically, simply *to manifest* (cf. Singh: 7). In the context of the reflexive and synthetic nature of *vimarśa*, the internal power to manifest reality is coextensive with the relational dynamism of Śakti.⁵³

⁵³ See Dyczkowski (1987: 52) on the unity of becoming and being in the Trika Śaiva system in contrast to the Advaita Vedānta: “The Kashmiri Śaiva approach understands the world to be a symbol of the absolute, that is, as the manner in which it presents itself to us. Again we can contrast this view with that of the Advaita Vedānta. The Advaita Vedānta understands the world to be an expression of the absolute insofar as it exists by virtue of the absolute’s Being. Being is understood to be the real unity which underlies empirically manifest separateness and as such is never empirically manifest. It is only transcendently actual as ‘being in itself.’ The Kashmiri Śaiva position represents, in a sense, a reversal of this point of view. The nature of the absolute, and also that of Being, is conceived as an eternal becoming (*satatodita*), a dynamic flux of Spanda, ‘the agency of the act of being.’” (cf. also Lawrence 1999: ch. 7).

In other words, if *śakti* is *internal* to Śiva, it means the relational *power* to manifest a diverse reality is *constitutive* of what ultimate reality *is*. As Abhinava states in the *Tantrāloka* “If the Ultimate Reality, who manifests in an infinite variety of powers, remained in a body with [only] a single form, He would not be Absolute Consciousness [but would instead be an inanimate object] e.g., like a pot.”⁵⁴ This is precisely why the conventional, changing world of *māyā* is not wholly *unreal* for the Trika Śaivites; its nature is not fundamentally distinct from the ultimate non-dual reality. As already mentioned, for relations to be ‘real’ in this case *just means* for relations to be *given* in precisely the way they are *taken*. This picture is radically at odds with a plain reading of the Buddhist doctrines of *kṣāṇavāda* and *pramāṇaphala*. So, in my estimation, at least, despite the broad appropriation of Dharmakīrti’s ideas into Utpala’s system, the subject of the reality of relations betrays a substantial and important metaphysical divergence.

Granted, some of this will come down to how we interpret these thinkers. It all depends, of course, on what they (and we) mean by ‘real’—and, more to the point, how exactly to interpret the vexed question of Dharmakīrti’s stance on the conventional status of causality at PV 3.3-4 in terms of his ‘sliding scales’ of analysis.⁵⁵ For if we emphasize the fact that relations do not apply to Śiva in his state as an absolutely unified, undifferentiated reality, we may see less daylight between Dharmakīrti and Utpala (*pace* Allport). But, if we take Abhinava’s contention that the Lord would not *be* the *Lord* unless He could also be the infinite variety of the *world*, we might wish to emphasize instead that the relational power of the Lord is *constitutive* of the Lord’s *being* ‘the Lord.’ In simpler terms, though, when we consider his arguments in the SS, Utpala clearly defends a notion of relation that is at least ‘real’ in the sense that it does not actually refer to something that appears *otherwise* than it *is*, because the manifestation of the

⁵⁴ ...*anantaśakti-vaicitrya-layodayakaleśvaraḥ / asthāsyad ekarūpeṇa vapuṣā cenmaheśvaraḥ // maheśvaratvaṃ samvittvaṃ tadatyakṣyad ghaṭādivat* (TĀ: 3.99-100).

⁵⁵ See Chapter III

diverse world as the constructive unification of *śakti* is phenomenal turtles *all the way down*. This objective idealist picture, as I take it, just doesn't jibe with Dharmakīrti's broadly nominalist ontology in the SP, which takes self-contained moments as autonomously intelligible events that comprise some bedrock level of causal explanation. I submit, in any case, that we take Utpala at his word, in that he seeks to 'prove,' or 'establish,' (*siddhi*) a more substantive argument against Dharmakīrti's eliminativism than a mere rhetorical distinction.

c. Relational Unity Only Obtains Relative to a Plurality

In the next portion of the text, Utpala entertains an objection to this line of reasoning; namely, that this notion of absolute consciousness as the cause of every relational appearance entails that every instance of relation should manifest a single general form of *sambandha*. In this case, Utpala cannot help himself to the conceptual distinctions between the different sorts of relata that he apparently admits: "Only the following should be considered: [One might say that] merely in virtue of that one consciousness, there would only be *one* relation with respect to different existents. Hence that [relation] which obtains for "the king's servant" is the very same as "father and son," as well as ["Devadatta cooks] in the cauldron," etc.—and these are acknowledged as multiple. Here as well, however, it is said that there is simply one [relation] with respect to everything."⁵⁶ The Śaivite has just claimed that all relational appearances emerge from the 'non-awareness of non-difference.' The Buddhist counters that, since everything distinct in perception appears through the form of relation that characterizes the *śakti* of *māyā*, isn't there ultimately just *one form* of relation? This suggests that the Śaivite's explanation of relation cannot account

⁵⁶ *kevalam iyad vimṛśyate: yad eka-cin-mātra-rūpatvenānekātmano vastu-bhedasyaika eva sambandhaḥ syāt. ya eva rajapurūṣayoḥ sa eva pitāputrayoḥ sthālyādīnāṃ ceti—anekaśceṣyate | tadatrāpy ucyate syād eka eva sarveṣāṃ iti* (SS: 6).

for its distinct tokens, and thus fails to deal with the problems generated by the Vaiśeṣika conception of *samavāya* as a categorical term. The Śaivites, in other words, are just offloading the same conceptual problems that characterize the *samavāya* relation onto a different sort of relational category—one that is, for the Buddhists, just as incoherent.

In response, Utpala contends that,

this [objection] would be the case if a relation were to consist *exclusively* of unity; [but] a relation is a unity with parts to the extent (*yāvatā*) that the parts are distinct.⁵⁷ And therefore, the unity ‘tinged’ (*uparakta*) by “the king’s servant” is a *different* relation from the one implied (*upalakṣaṇa*) in the ‘color’ (*uparāga*) of “father and son.”⁵⁸ For just this reason (*atas eva*), the real existence of the category “relation” [obtains] solely with respect to *māyā*, which predominantly consists in division due to ignorance. On the other hand, there is only complete Absolute Unity with respect to the Universal Self, but not any sense of relation.⁵⁹

Utpala claims that relation is not a referent with a single categorical form, but rather a unity ‘tinged,’ or ‘colored,’ by the diversity of its elements. In other words, the apprehension of a particular relational unity is defined relative to the implied distinctness of its terms, and thus there is technically no abstract *concept* that encompasses the nature of *bhedābheda*. As we will see below, Utpala argues a particular tokenization of relation refers to the force of the action whereby the relata are apprehended as such. So, the ‘father and son’ are not distinct in strictly the same way as ‘the king’s servant,’ even though both are dyadic relations predicated on the same concealment of non-duality. Although perceptually indiscernible, then, the ‘objective’ form of a conventional relation always conforms to the intentional status of the relata. According to

⁵⁷ lit. ‘relation is a state of unity to the extent that [it is] from parts in a state of non-unity’ (*yāvatānekatāmśād aṁśenaikatā sambandhaḥ*).

⁵⁸ Cf ĪPK I.5.11: *svabhāvam avabhāsasya vimarśam vidur anyathā // prakāśo 'rthoparakto 'pi sphaṭikādijaḍopamaḥ*. “The essential nature of light is reflective awareness, otherwise light, though ‘colored’ by objects, would be similar to an insentient reality, such as a crystal and so on” (trans. in Torella 2013: 118).

⁵⁹ *yadi ekatāmātram eva sambandhaḥ syāt; yāvatānekatāmśād aṁśenaikatā sambandhaḥ | tataśca rāja-puruṣoparakaikatānyah sambandhaḥ pitā-putroparāgopalakṣaṇa-vilakṣaṇa eva; ata eva māyā-daśāyām evākhyātibheda-pradhānāyām sambandha-padārtha-sadbhāvaḥ, viśvātmatāyām punaḥ pūrṇaikataiva na tu sambandhārthaḥ kaścit* (SS: 6).

Utpala, the ‘objective’ character of *bhedābheda* does not succumb to the Buddhist’s critique of relational realism, because there is no single, abstract, static form to which this designation refers.

This suggests that the regress problem Dharmakīrti invokes against the Vaiśeṣika realists is altogether diffused: if the appearance of a tokenized *sambandha* ultimately lacks any nature independent of the appearance of the particular relata, then it cannot be said to require any further relation to relate it to its relata—for it is never *reified* as an independent term to begin with. In other words, the Vaiśeṣikas err when they seek a categorematic term *in addition to the very act of judgment* that corresponds to the ‘objective’ form of relation. For the *bhedābheda* of reflexive awareness is characterized by a spontaneous (*svātantrya*) capacity to manifest conceptual relations in precisely the ‘colors’ practically required to ‘paint,’ if I may, the variegated world of *māyā*. And so Dharmakīrti is also mistaken that relational realism leads to problematic reifications of relation as a categorical term, since in this case the ‘objective’ nature of each relation conforms to the appearance of the relata in virtue of the spontaneous unity of judgment.

4. Utpala’s Pragmatic Elaboration of Relational Realism

a. The Practical Determination of Relational Unity

To defend this relational principle, Utpala moves the conversation further into the intentional register where relation only has a metaphorical, or secondary sense (*gaṇavṛtti*), insofar as it applies to the inferior realm (*apara*) that contains inert objects (*jaḍa*) of conventional experience. Here, sequential occurrences can only *appear* to bear the conceptual characteristics of ‘assister’ and ‘assisted.’ Thus, Dharmakīrti’s epistemology of relations in the middle verses of the SP: We

perceive a present effect, and conceptually *infer* that a cause, or multitude of causes, generated this effect. But these moments are not, strictly speaking, together *as actual realities*; in this case, one simply construes the monadic properties of a present existent (‘effect’) *as though* they have somehow been ‘assisted’ by a previous state (‘cause’) which no longer *actually* exist. As already discussed, since nothing presently established logically depends upon any other being to exist, it is ultimately meaningless to speak of anything akin to ‘dependence’ as an actual referent in the real world.

However, as Utpala pointed out in the opening section, it is precisely at this broadly *intentional* level of description that *temporal* considerations come to play a role in the appraisal of the objective significance of causal relations—namely, as a pre-established capacity to reflexively cognize two asynchronous moments *simultaneously* (*yaugapad*) for the sake of some practically desired end:

Furthermore, in these terms, sometimes the referent of relation could possess a secondary sense (*gaunavṛtti*) because it refers to an inferior aspect (*aparabhāga*) of the superior-inferior state (*parāpara*).⁶⁰ And (*ca*) this [relation] of two terms is distinguished simply as assister and assisted, and this must necessarily occur (*pratipādaniya*); if this [relation] does not occur, then a determination (*pratīti*) of these two sequential [relata] (i.e., assister and assisted) *as simultaneous* for the sake of acquisition and relinquishment could not otherwise be effective (*ghaṭeta*)—and therefore there would be a disruption (*lopa*) of conventional life. And there is not any meaning of assisting action (*upakāra*) independent of assister and assisted (this is only fully explained (*vistārita*) in the ĪPK).⁶¹ And because

⁶⁰ See Bronner (95) for the semantics of *gaunavṛtti* and its development in the context of Kashmir poetics. *Parāpara* refers to one of the three manifestations of Śiva (see, e.g., Muller-Ortega (1984: 128) on this concept and its placement in the *spanda* theory of vibrational emanation.)

⁶¹ Utpala discusses these sorts of issues primarily in the context of causal relations at several places in the ĪPK (see, for instance I.2.10, I.7.2-7.5), in addition to the whole of the fourth *āhnika* of the *Kriyādhikāra* portion of the text. But a critical set of verses in this respect occurs at I.7.2-4 and its *vṛttis*. It is worth quoting these in their entirety due to their relevance to this portion of the text: *tattadvibhinnasamvittimukhair ekapramātari / pratitiṣṭhatsu bhāveṣu jñāteyam upapadyate. anekasamvitsrotomukhair ekapramātr̥sindhū upalīya bhāvabhedāḥ kāryakāraṇatādīvyavahārasamanvayam bhajante. deśakālakramajuṣām arthānām svasamāpinām / sakṛdābhāsasādhyo 'sāv anyathā kaḥ samanvayaḥ / svarūpam avabhāsanam ca bhāvānām svātmapariniṣṭhitam eva / yugapadekābhāsanibandhanaś caisām samanvayaḥ / sa abhinnaḥ pramātr̥līnatayā kalpate / pratyakṣānupalambhānām tattadbhinnāṃśapātinām / kāryakāraṇatāsiddhihetutaikapramātr̥jā. kāryakāraṇabhāva iva tatsiddhir api pratyakṣānupalambhair ekapramātr̥mukhena samanvayam āgatyā kriyate, asamanvitāḥ pratyakṣānupalambhāḥ kramikasvaviśayamātrajñāpanakṣīṇā nānyonyāpekṣopalakṣaṇakṣamāḥ. “Relationship (jñāteyam) is possible if things, through the paths of the various and distinct cognitive acts, come to rest on a single knowing subject. Once they have merged and been absorbed (upalīya) into the sea of the single knowing subject through the currents of the many cognitive acts, the different objects are set in a network of connection pertaining to*

of that, it is only in virtue of that Will of the Lord, consisting of consciousness, owing to which these two categories (i.e., assister and assisted) come to be. Hence, strictly conforming to that [Will], the illumination of just these two other forms (*anyarūpayoh*) as simultaneous is created only by that Will for the sake of establishing conventional life. [This is] due to a single judgment of both these two [referents]—even though they are sequential—as having come to reside in a single cognition. Therefore, there can be no refutation [of our position] (*khaṇḍana*).⁶²

Utpala fleshes out the notion that even when relation merely refers to a metaphorical way of speaking about inert objects, we necessarily recognize its appearance (*pratipādanīya*) whenever we engage in any practical endeavor. For without the capacity for possible and actual cognitions to be interpreted *as together* in a single judgment, we could not carry out conventional tasks that presuppose a synthetic awareness of a present circumstance *relative to* some unrealized future ideal. In other words, the reasons for these actions would be reflexively unintelligible. Therefore, even if only a ‘metaphorical’ or ‘figurative’ (*gaṇavṛtti*) concept of relation binds inanimate objects at the ‘*apara*’ realm together, they still nevertheless always practically *appear* under a constitutively synthetic description. In this case, the spontaneous capacity to take inferior terms of the causal procession *as related* cannot reflect a mere conceptual product of the mind of the subjective individual but must point to a relational feature baked into *the synthetic awareness of purposeful action itself*. For only the reflexive capacity of consciousness can freely interpret

practical reality, such as, for instance, the cause and effect relation, and so on. *A connection between objects having a spatio-temporal succession and being self-contained is established by their manifestation in terms of unification. Otherwise, no connection at all is possible.* Things, both in their own nature and manifestation, are self-contained. A connection between them depends on their simultaneous and unitary appearance. This undivided appearance is possible only if absorbed into the knowing subject. *The perceptions and non-perceptions which in themselves concern this or that separate part, may cause the establishment of the cause-effect relation only if they rest on a single knowing subject.* Perceptions and non-perceptions determine the cause-effect relation and also its establishment (*tatsiddhiḥ*) [only] once they have entered into a connection with one another though a single knowing subject. If they do not enter into a reciprocal connection, perceptions and non-perceptions fade away at the moment in which they make successively known their respective object, and are not able to display any mutual dependence” (trans., with slight alterations, follows Torella 2013:136-7).

⁶² *tatrāpi kadācit parāparadaśāyām aparabhāgāpekṣaṇād gaṇavṛtṭyā sambandhārthaḥ sambhavet, upakāryopakārayor eva ca viśiṣṭayoh sambandhaḥ viśiṣṭarūpaḥ, sa ca pratipādanīyo 'vaśyam eva; tad apratipādane tayor upakāryopakārayoh kramikayor yaugapadyena pratītir hānopādānārtham anyathā na ghaṭeta, tataś ca vyavahāra-lopaḥ syāt. na copakāryopakārayor api svādhīnaḥ kaścīd upakārārthaḥ—ity apīśvara-pratyabhijñāyām eva vistāritam | tataś ca cin-mayeśvarecchaiva sā tādṛṣī yayā padārthau tau tathopakāryopakārayor bhavata iti tal lagnayor eva tayor dvayayor dvayor arthayoh kramikayor api eka-buddhy-upārūḍhayor eka-parāmarśāt tayor evānya-rūpayor yaugapadyena prakāśanaṃ vyavahāra-siddhaye tad-icchayaiva vidhīyate,—iti na kācit khaṇḍanā* (SS:6).

sequential moments *as simultaneous* for the sake of its own self-determined creative pursuits. The pre-established capacity to relate is therefore *internal* to practical inquiry. Naturally, as a Śaivite, Utpala believes this spontaneous power of the mind to draw together alethically distinct appearances in a single cognition corresponds to Śiva's divine and omnipotent will.

Hence, in this passage, Utpala consummates the rhetorical coup he sets up in the opening section with respect to Dharmakīrti's conflation of existential and semantic dependence: the Buddhist is not *wrong* that a cumulative effect is 'bound' to a past sequence of events through a purely *conceptual* relation. But he errs when he infers that this means the appearance of this relation *doesn't 'really' exist*. For Utpala, this conclusion follows only from Dharmakīrti's characteristically nominalist bias that identifies 'reality' strictly with the non-relational essence of self-standing actual entities. But even if self-standing 'causes' are no longer technically present once a respective 'effect' comes into being—and thus the logical form of this type of relation can only be metaphorical—Utpala avers that the practical efficacy of this purely *conceptual* form of togetherness necessarily testifies to the irreducible synthetic power of consciousness itself.

b. The Synthetic Form of Grammatical Relations

Just after this portion, Utpala presents a series of arguments that explicate and defend the entailments of this view with appeal to the grammatical *kāraṅkas*. He has already shown that no general relation applies in the genitive case ('the king's servant') and the conjunctive relation ('father and son'). The various grammatical relations, in other words, cannot represent objective properties, but rather tokens of unity-in-diversity as manifest in the action of *vimarśa*. Utpala

fleshes out this argument with recourse to a principle touched upon earlier—namely, that only dyadic relations exist:

And relation is only of two, not of many. For is [a relation] of many [a relation] of each one with the many others simultaneously; or is [a relation] of many [a relation] of one with each of those in the middle? In this case, if that [relation of many] is [a relation] of each one with the many, then, insofar as those are many, are they within the scope of a single judgment, or, instead, are they the objects of numerous judgments (e.g., “the king’s servant” [vs.] “the king’s foot soldiers, chariots, horses and elephants”)? Even in the case of the *dvandva*, although there is a multiplicity of such things as elephants, etc., there is only a word—known as the “*dvandva*”—due to the unity of judgment. The words such as “elephant” etc., are like letters [of the compound]. For, insofar as it is situated in a single judgement, a word is [itself] singular. Then, due to the application (*adhyāsa*) of a single word, the referent (*artha*)⁶³ is also just singular.⁶⁴

Utpala posits that when we speak of a relation of multiple things, we are either referring to a single dyadic relation that obtains between each member and all the others taken *en masse*—including those that lack direct propinquity to the member in question (fig. 1 [note that the ‘one’ in this case can represent each constituent of the whole]); or a set of dyadic relations that corresponds to a single member and the other discrete members taken immediately contiguous with it ‘in the middle’ (fig. 2), which presumably excludes other dyadic relations from obtaining between any discrete unity and the rest taken *en masse* as a single relatum:

⁶³ Allport (237-9) notes that the polysemy of the word ‘*artha*’—as ‘meaning’ or ‘referent’—renders this sentence ambiguous. If the former, Utpala would apparently be making a point only about the mind of the speaker. That is, if the speaker conceives of the diversity of a ‘many’ as a single idea, then the singularity of the word just mirrors the form of this conceptualization. Accordingly, Utpala merely affirms the relationship between thought and language, which would fail to challenge the Buddhist belief that the meaning of relation is merely defined in terms of subjective intention, and thus does not actually (in Pratyabhijñā terms) ‘touch’ the objective entity. For Utpala to effectively counter Dharmakīrti’s argument, he must establish that the conventional relations that appear to obtain between the perception of particular objects are faithfully conveyed in the logical forms of the grammatical *kāraṅkas*. Thus, we have followed Allport with his translation as ‘referent,’ which communicates the idea that Utpala defends the reality of the relation between the mode of conceptualization in judgment and the actual states of affairs in the world.

⁶⁴ *sa ca sambandho dvayor eva bhavati na bahūnām. bahūnām hi kim ekaikasyānyair aneka-saṃkhyair yugapad eva kiṃ vā bahūnām madhye ekasya ekaikena | tatra yady ekaikasyāneka-saṃkhyais tat kiṃ te 'neka-saṃkhyā eva eka-parāmarśa-gocarāḥ athāneka-parāmarśa-viśayā rājñāḥ puruṣaḥ rājño hasty-aśva-ratha-padātaya iti | dvandve'pi hasty-ādy-anekatve'pi parāmarśasyaikyāt dvandvākhyāḥ śabda eva, hastyādi-śabdā varṇa-tulyāḥ | eka-parāmarśa-sthito hi śabda eko bhavati | tad-eka-śabdādhyāsād artho 'py eka eva (SS: 7).*

Figure 1

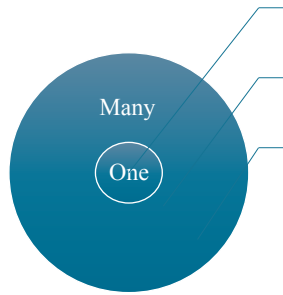
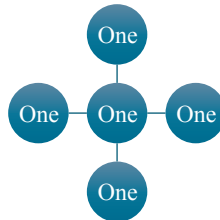


Figure 2



In the latter case, we only have an assemblage of tokenized dyadic relations, and thus no relation obtains between one and many. Let's say we then assume the former circumstance—that is, the relation that obtains is *not* between two members taken as distinct units in an exclusive binary relation, but rather between a single unit and the rest. In this case, to capture the actual referent of this relation, one does not require multiple judgements that correspond to each member of the 'many,' but can instead consider them *en masse* as a single referent through the synthetic unity of judgement.

Utpala turns to grammar to bolster this position. If we compare the genitive relation 'the king's servant' to the genitive relation of the *dvandva* compound 'the king's foot soldiers, chariots, horses and elephants,' one could argue that there is a dyadic relation expressed in the former and a quadratic relation expressed in the latter. But Utpala claims that the *dvandva*

effectively communicates a *single word* in which the individual identities of its constituent members are subsumed in the synthetic power of judgment, which takes the whole assemblage *en masse* as a single unity (viz. ‘things that belong to the king’). That is, the fact that one can express the exact same diversity in one context as a formal unity in another is evidence of the incipient relational capacity of judgment itself, which perforce sublates an implicit diversity of referents within the scope of a single reflexive cognition. Hence, it is the predicative form of judgment itself that ultimately ensures only dyadic relations obtain.

One does not need, in other words, numerous judgements that correspond to a set of *distinct* dyadic relations to understand what belongs to the king (wherein each judgement represents a single genitive relation of each object thereto). Rather, due to the spontaneous unity of predicative judgment, one can freely choose to refer to all these objects *as a single conceptual referent*—which, linguistically speaking, corresponds to a compound wherein all the members function like the ‘different letters of a single word’, rather than, say, self-standing ‘categorematic’ terms in-themselves. We can also discern here how Utpala’s description aligns with Peirce’s semiotic dictum that ‘all thought is in signs’: For Utpala, the synthetic capacity of thought that unifies ‘letter-signs’ into ‘word-signs’ is the very same capacity that renders ‘word-signs’ into ‘propositional-signs’ (‘for insofar as it is situated in a single judgement, a word is [itself] singular’). There is a fundamental semiotic continuity, then, in the reflexive expression of meaning as awareness moves from the concatenation of atomic letters to singular words to propositional judgments.

For the same reason, Utpala continues, attributes of individual words in a compound, such as their gender, become subordinate to the final term without being syntactically or semantically elided:

That is why ‘these’ [i.e., a demonstrative feminine pronoun ‘*etā*’] are ‘ideas and words and things’ (*vastu-śabda-buddhayaḥ* [i.e., a feminine *dvandva*]). That is, since the single sense of the *dvanda* is feminine [viz., with respect to *buddhi*], the particularity of those [others] is simply not considered (*upātta*). The word ‘*etat*’ is strictly feminine, but [the feminine plural] ‘*etā*’ does not indicate [the principle of] ‘the remaining one’ (*ekaśeṣanirdeśa*), according to which the ‘remaining one’ would be neuter.⁶⁵ And here, in the same manner, reference to components like “wives” is plural—thus, in this case, the relation is simply of two.⁶⁶

When a single demonstrative pronoun construes with a *dvandva*, the pronoun will assume the gender of the last member of the compound, even if the other conjuncts do not bear the same gender. Hence subsumption in a single referent doesn’t entail that the constituent members of the compound have that gender intrinsically; otherwise, according to the rule of *ekaśeṣa*, the single referent (i.e., ‘*etā*’) that stands for the many members would have to be neuter rather than feminine (presumably because the elided terms would require an identical grammatical form under this rule). So diverse components of the compound relinquish their own intrinsic linguistic properties in their reflexive assimilation into a single idea such that it can function as a *single relatum* in a qualificative dyad. Likewise, if we dissect a compound of things that belong to the king such that we refer only to his feminine ‘wives,’ the part is now a consistent gender, but its plural referents can still obviously be grouped together in a single term as a *relatum* in dyadic opposition to the king.

Utpala points out that if we compare this feminine case to the previous *dvandva* ‘*hasty-aśva-ratha-padātayaḥ*’ (the king’s ‘elephant-horse-chariot-soldiers’), the compound explicitly enumerates the conjunctive elements referenced by the word. But even here, a single referent

⁶⁵ *ekaśeṣa* is a term of art for the grammarians that indicates “a kind of composite formation in which only one of the two or more words compounded together subsists, the others being elided” (Abhyankar: 90). Thus, *ekaśeṣa* literally means ‘the remaining of one,’ where a sequence of two or more stems that share grammatical form and termination is indicated through a single referent (e.g., the plural *vr̥kṣāḥ* is the only remainder of the sequence *vr̥kṣa* + *vr̥kṣa* + *vr̥kṣa*, etc.). Likewise, *ekaśeṣanirdeśa* is defined by Abhyankar (91) as “a statement by subsistence of one word out of many”, and is a phrase often used in the *Mahābhāṣya* to explain the omission of an individual thing as expressed by a composite that includes the omitted referent in addition to what is expressed (cf. Pāṇini (AṢ I.2.64-73) on this topic.)

⁶⁶ *ata eva vastu-śabda-buddhaya etā,— iti dvandvārthasyaikasya strīliṅgatvāt tadviśeṣo nopātta eva | etacchabdāḥ strīliṅga eva bhavati, na tu ‘etā’ ity ekaśeṣa-nirdeśo ‘yaṃ yena napuṃsakaikaśeṣaḥ syāt | bahu-vacanam cātra dārā itivād avayavādyapekṣayā, - ity eva matra dvayor eva saṃbandhaḥ* (ibid).

stands in dyadic opposition to the king. This is evident when we break the *dvandva* apart into its nominal components and we obtain, not only the words that refer to distinct objects, but also the syncategorematic expressions that convey the relation of conjunction between them. For Utpala, it does not matter how many distinct objects or genders a judgment happens to contain or refer to (e.g., ‘the king’s servant’ or ‘wives’ vs. ‘the king’s elephants, *and* horses, *and* foot soldiers, *and* chariot, etc.), their semantic status as a relational unity can always theoretically be rendered as the synthetic judgment of a single dyad:

Yet, in this [prior] case, there are the king’s elephants, *and* horses, *and* foot soldiers, *and* chariot. Hence, even given that the objects of reflexive judgment are diverse, however many reflexive judgments of “elephants, etc.,” there may be, just that many are “the king’s.” Therefore, the words “and” simply have as their meaning this conjunction (*samuccaya*). Otherwise, in the absence of the word “and,” without syntactic relation (*anukarṣaṇa*) to the expression “of the king,” if there is no further judgment being made regarding dependence upon the king (i.e., as subsumed in a judgment along with these elephants, etc.)—[then] what would the relation of having horses, etc. be with? And therefore, the shared locus of the “elephants, etc.,” is figuratively understood (*pratīyate*). Alternatively, if there is—based on the sameness of sense (*samārthyāt*)—a conception of conjunction even without the word ‘and,’ just this relation of each individual elephant, etc., to one another (as opposed to the action of [merely] existing) is clarified by the word ‘and’ as the relation of being gathered together.⁶⁷

Utpala considers the relational unity implied in the figurative incompleteness of the genitive expression “the king’s_____”. Here the distinct constituents of the *dvandva* that would comprise a formal completion of this referent are implicitly bound together through the syncategorematic operator “and,” which testifies to their conceptual status within reflexive judgement as implicate conjuncts whose contentful ‘saturation’ depends upon their relation to another referent (i.e., the king). The conceptual conjunctions of these relata, therefore, is denoted

⁶⁷ *iha tu rājño hastī cāśvaśca rathāśca padātīśca, ity aneka-parāmarśa-viṣayatve'pi yāvanto hasty-ādīnām parāmarśās tāvanta eva rājñah, iti tat-samuccayārthā eva ca śabdāḥ | anyathā ca śabdasyābhāve rājña ity anukarṣaṇam vinā hastīty anena sahaika-parāmarśa-nimāñjanaikībhūte rājñi paratantre punar-viveka-manāpādyamāne kena sahāśvādīnām sambandhaḥ syāt tataścopacāreṇa hasty-ādīnām sāmānādhikaraṇyam pratīyate / athavā sāmārthyāc ca śabdābhāve'pi samuccaya-pratītau ekaikaṃ sa eva sambandho hasty-ādīnām-nyonyam api ca sattā-kriyām prati-samuccīyamānatā-sambandhaś ca śabdenāvadyotyate | artha-pratibhāso 'pi cāyam itthaṃ sthito 'yamanyatheti nāparāmṛṣto vyavasthāpayituṃ śakyate parāmarśa-virahitasya pratibhāsasyāsambhavād eva (SS: 7) (cf. also ĪPK, II.3.10-11).*

through the syncategorematic signs of language, i.e., not the bare existence of the objects themselves, insofar as these syncategorematic signs bear witness to the concrete fact that reflexive judgment has willfully brought together such and such terms under some practical description. The figurative dimension of relational signs therefore conveys the modal form by which distinct entities are conceptually grouped into a unity for practical purposes—i.e., it indicates *how* terms are interpreted within the reflexive unity of judgement. Utpala therefore maintains that we need not explicitly enumerate a particular conceptual *relation* for each additional element of a given conjunction. Rather, the conjunctive unity that ‘colors’ the many objects is precisely what is given in the judgment of just *two* terms (e.g., ‘the king’ and ‘his possessions’). The predicative opposition of any two terms, in other words, automatically supplies the syncategorematic expressions that distinguish the relational appearance of the relata as such.

c. Perceptual Appearances Depend Upon the Unity of Judgement

Utpala proceeds to apply this grammatical analysis of conceptual relations to causal perceptions. Specifically, given the fact that determinate appearances are established in terms of the dyadic form of conceptual judgment, he claims that anything that is unrecognizable in these very terms cannot, *ipso facto*, appear therein:

And even the appearance of an object unrecognized (*aparāmṛṣṭa*) [in the sense of] “this is like this, that is otherwise” cannot be established, precisely because it is impossible for an appearance to be independent of judgment. For even with respect to one moving along a path (*mārgagati*), appearances such as those consisting of the sensations of things—e.g., like the grass (*tṛṇa*) situated (*vartin*) on the side (*pārśva*) [of the path]—are not admitted as existents (*sattvena*) apart from judgment, due to not being remembered (*smāyamāṇa*) [later]. Neither, in that case (*tadā*), does it make sense to establish the existence of those entities (*sattā*) by inference (due to the presence of the collection of sense organs such as sight), because of the absence of the attention of mind.⁶⁸ When that is present [i.e., attention], there will necessarily be a judgment at that time (*tadānīṃ*) of such things as “grass” etc.,

⁶⁸ Cf. the AKBh (I.6) on the types of non-arising of knowledge: *pratisamkhyānirodho yo visamyogaḥ pṛthak pṛthak / utpādātyantavighno'nyo nirodho'pratisamkhyayā*.

and that is now a memory. And this is determined in the ĪPK.⁶⁹ In this way, the appearance of the object makes sense as just consisting of judgment.⁷⁰

As we discussed in the last chapter⁷¹, following Bhartṛhari, Utpala explains that without the synthetic capacity (*anusamdhāna*) of cognitive judgement, particular objects that may be perceptually experienced are never cognitively established as such. When moving along a path (*mārgagati*), the causal sensations of myriad objects perceived in transit (e.g., the blades of grass on the side of the road) are only apparent to a subject insofar as they can be apprehended in a form amenable to mnemonic expression. Utpala's phenomenally tautological claim is that we are only actually entitled to infer the empirical existence of some perceptual 'datum' insofar as we can recollect that it was actually present to the mind at the time of perception. For subjects do not generally pay direct attention to every bit of perceptual data that factors into awareness while busily engaged in practical activity. And, when we *do* pay direct attention, such that a determinate referent is intentionally *recognized*, this perceptual data has necessarily thereupon, in that very act, been rendered into a conceptual form suitable to its recollection. Insofar as

⁶⁹ Utpala focuses on the role of memory in appearance throughout the ĪPK IV 1.4.1-7, but see in particular 1.4.2-3: *bhāsayec ca svakāle 'rthāt pūrvābhāsitam āmṛśan svalakṣaṇaṃ ghaṭābhāsamātreṇāthākhilātmanā*. ĪPV: *smṛtisaktyā sa iti pūrvānubhūtaṃ svalakṣaṇaṃ parāmṛśann ābhāsayaṭy evānyathā prakāśitasya parāmarśo na kṛtaḥ syāt svasattākāla eva ca, tena smaraṇakāle naṣṭasyāpy ābhāso na duṣyati / kadā cit tv arthitāvaśād ghaṭakāñcanadravyasattādyanyatamaikābhāsarūpeṇaivāsyā sphuṭāvabhāsaḥ, anyadā tu sarvātmanārthitvena tathaiva / atīṣayanirantarāvahitacetasa tu drṣṭārthapratyakṣikāra eva // na ca yuktaṃ smṛter bhede smaryamāṇasya bhāsanam tenaikyaṃ bhinnakālānāṃ saṃvidāṃ veditaiṣa saḥ // ĪPV: pūrvānubhūtaś cārtho 'nubhavana saha tātkālikasmṛtiprakāśe 'vabhāsamānaḥ smṛtyabhinna eva prakāśād bhinnasya prakāśamānatānupapateḥ / evaṃ cānubhavasṃsmṛtyādisaṃvidāṃ aikyaṃ sa eva cātmā vedakaḥ / tathā hi // (cf. Torella, 2013: 104-6).*

⁷⁰ *artha-pratibhāso 'pi cāyam itthaṃ sthito 'yamanyatheti nāparāmṛṣṭo vyavasthāpayituṃ śakyate parāmarśa-virahitasya pratibhāsasyāsambhavād eva / na hi mārgagatipravṛttasyāpi pārśvavartitṛṇādīvastusparśarūpādipratibhāsāḥ parāmarśarahitāḥ sattvenābhyupagantuṃ pāryante smaryamāṇatvābhāvāt / nāpi teṣāṃ tadā cakṣurādīkāraṇasāmagrīsadbhāvenānumānasiddhā sattā yujyate manovadhānābhāvāt / tadbhāve'vaśyambhāvī tadānīm tṛṇādīparāmarśa idānīm ca smaraṇam / etacca pratyabhiññāyāṃ nirṇītam / evaṃ ca vimarśamaya evārthapratibhāsa upapannaḥ (SS: 8).*

⁷¹ See previous chapter (V: 4.a) and Berger (2023). The example of the perception of one moving along a path is lifted from the auto commentary to the VP (in Iyer's or Rau (1965: 1.123) or 1.131 (Torella 2013: 125, fn. 42). MacCracken (2022: 6) suggests that the implicit citation of Bhartṛhari emphasizes Utpala's departure from Somānanda's 'adversarial disposition' toward the grammarians (cf. Nemeč: 2011).

sensory cognitions can be said to appear in consciousness at all, then, they must still be cognitively apprehended in a form potentially suitable to predicative elaboration. Like grammatical conjunctions, no matter how many causal factors contribute to the perception of a particular object, they can only be said to *appear as such* insofar as they are intelligibly recognizable in the dyadic form of conceptual judgement.⁷²

d. The Common Conventional Determination of Causal and Semantic Relations

As we saw in the chapter on the SP, Dharmakīrti tries to reduce knowledge of a causal relation to a *post hoc* inference causally generated by the monadic, essential properties of the particular object. In other words, it cannot really be an *ontological or temporal relation*, but reflects a single conceptual understanding. So, e.g., the inferential warrant that a particular fire will always produce smoke is explained in virtue of an essential property of the perceptual appearance of ‘fire’ that immediately marks the separate term ‘smoke.’ Thus, the cognition of ‘fire’ includes ‘smoke’ *qua* ‘fire-smoke’ or ‘smoke-fire.’ But Utpala proceeds to critique this picture:

⁷² Consider here Pred’s description of pre-propositional awareness with reference to James: “[Objects] are pre-propositionally present to the percipient...[if] they do not involve reference, in the sense that they are without connection to a delimited or specifically indicated object clearly located in relation to the percipient or position in the percipient’s visual field, or they do not involve predication, in the sense that they are not assuredly describable by a definite predicate, without inspection or further mental activity. That which is pre-propositionally present is not experienced as having a determinate, differentiate content; it has vague continuous and color, is not in focus and is not of central interest in the moment...[It’s] “content” is quasi-predicative and quasi-referential...[and] can be described by means of a noun phrase: one sees, say, a generally located visual expanse of uncertain color—‘a reddish patch over there’—but that expanse is only vaguely discriminated, and while it is off in some specific direct it is at an indefinite distance. With adequate discrimination, there is, at once, reference and predication, propositional content, perceptual experience, and intentionality, directedness on an object. By contrast, pre-propositional awareness is not properly intentional directed; it cannot be represented, accurately, as involving referential and predicative components” (90). I believe what Utpala would say, in this case, is that the judgement of ‘a greenish patch over there’ is just what is *actually present* to awareness at the time of conceptual determination of the adjacent grass; if I can only *remember* a greenish patch over there, I am not inferentially entitled to claim an experience of anything else over and above the vague quality of this green appearance. But the very fact that even the vague—insofar as it is *recognized* at all—always gives itself over as a potential affordance for predicative elaboration suggests that the cognitions that comprise the nascent background of intentional life are *ultimately* experienced *as continuous with* the rational unity of reflexive judgment.

According to him, the unified understanding of ‘fire-smoke’ already implies a *temporal* comprehension of the *asymmetry* between ‘fire’ and ‘smoke’ (viz., that smoke is the *effect* of fire and fire is the *cause* of smoke):

And according to the recognitive judgment “when there is smoke there is fire,” the one with complete understanding (*samskṛtasya*) also [recognizes that] the fire is the cause of the smoke [and] the smoke is the effect of this [fire] (*asya*).⁷³ Thus, in this way, the function of cognitions with respect to objects’ manifestation ultimately culminates in (*āpatti*) a state of unity—a state of mutual disconnection, however, is never achieved based merely on illumination (*prakāśa*). A judgment of relation in the form of the unity of what is manifold is precisely the judgment of the existence of the mutual relation between characteristic and characterized. A knower based in *māyā* with respect to the activities of conventional existence, just insofar as he is engaged in the operation of a single judgment, cannot at that very time also (*arhati*) contact (*sparśa*) another judgment⁷⁴; since *māyic* knowers [themselves] consist in judgment that is a conceptualization of a relation of distinction (*bheda*) that results from the non-cognition of the unity of consciousness. This too is elaborated in the ĪPK.⁷⁵

Utpala explains that, for the learned individual (*saṃskṛta*), the understanding of a non-relational fact based on mere positive and negative concomitance—viz., ‘when there is smoke, there is fire’—already implies the *relational* knowledge of the *causal roles* of the separate relata. In

⁷³ See ĪPK(V) II.3.8: *tatrāviśiṣṭe vahnyādau kāryakāraṇatoṣṇatā / tattacchabdārthatādyātmā pramāṇād ekato mataḥ. kadā cid deśādi-sahabhāvāvachinna-svalakṣaṇa-rūpa-viśeṣaty-āgenaikasāmānya-rūpāgny-ābhāsa-mātra eva trailokyatraikālyagāmitvena nijapramāṇād ekasmād eva viśiṣṭa-kārya-kāraṇat oṣṇordhvabhāg agni-śabda-vācyatādi-svabhāva-siddhiḥ. “Faced with a non-specific manifestation of fire etc., a single means of knowledge knows what the outcome or cause of it is, its being hot, its being able to be denoted by this or that word and so on. On a particular occasion, when faced with the bare manifestation ‘fire’ in which only the universal ‘fire’ is present, without its particular features consisting in the single individuality delimited by the association with a particular space etc., there is through the means of knowledge operating at that moment—and through that means only—and in a way that embraces the three worlds and the three times, the establishment of the various specific features of its own nature, such as its effect, its cause, its heat, the fact that it goes upwards and is denoted by the word ‘fire’ etc.” (trans. in Torella 2013: 168).*

⁷⁴ As discussed in the previous chapter, it is a well-known doctrine of Pratyabhijñā that cognitions cannot take other cognitions as objects due to the intrinsic self-consciousness, or self-illumination, of every cognition. See ĪPK(V) I.3.5-7: *evam anyonyabhinnānām aparasparavedinām // jñānānām anusaṃdhājanmā naśyej janasthitiḥ. jñānāni svātmamātrapariniṣṭhitāni svasaṃvidrūpatayā aparasaṃvedyāni / teṣām anyonyasaṃghaṭṭanāmayaḥ paramārthopadeśaparyanto lokavyavahāraḥ katham // na ced antaḥkṛtānantaviśvarūpo mahēśvaraḥ // syād ekaś cidvapur jñānasmrtyapohanaśaktimān // cittatvam eva viśvarūpamato 'tiriktasyānupapatteḥ, aśeṣapadārthajñānānām anyonyānusaṃdhānam / asyaiva jñānādikāḥ śaktayaḥ (cf. Ferrante (2017)).*

⁷⁵ *vimarśaś ca yathāgnir dhūme iti bhavati , tathā saṃskṛtasya pramāturasya dhūmasyāgñiḥ kāraṇam asya dhūmaḥ kāryam ity api bhavati—ity evam ekātmatāpatti-paryanto 'vabhāsa-vyāpāro 'rtheṣu jñānānām, na tu parasparāsaṃlagnatā prakāśa-mātrāt parisamāpyate / paraspara-viśeṣaṇa-viśeṣya-bhāva-parāmarśa evān ekaikatārūpa-saṃbandha-parāmarśaḥ / eka-parāmarśa-vyāpārāviṣṭa eva sāmsārika-vyavahāreṣu māyīyaḥ pramātā na tadānīm eva parāmarśāntara-sparśam-apy arhati cid-aikyākhyātibheda-nibandhana-vikalpana-parāmarśātmakatvāt māyāpramātīṇām iti etadapi tīvara-pratyabhijñāyām eva prapañcitam (SS: 8).*

accord with his previous arguments, the mere intentional *manifestation* of a particular object already intimates that it abides as a particular locus for certain relational appearances—albeit ones whose conceptual forms ultimately conform to the reflexive unity of judgment.⁷⁶ In this way, even singular manifestations of smoke can reflexively convey the fieriness of its causal basis. Or, as Utpala puts it, mere undifferentiated cognition (Firstness), or *prakāśa-sans-vimarśa*, does not itself have the capacity to realize mutual disconnection (Secondness). For this reason, each dyadic cognition of a *māyic* knower, in virtue of being self-reflexively intelligible in that very form, cannot take any other qualified cognition as its object (viz., no cognition can ‘touch’ any other).⁷⁷

⁷⁶ See, e.g., ĪPK(V) II.3.3: *yathāruçi yathārthitvaṃ yathāvīyutpatti bhidyate / ābhāso 'py artha ekasminn anusamdhānasādhite*. ekasminn eva caikapratyavamarśasāmarthyopapādite vastuni svecchāvasād arthitvānurodhād vā naipunyavaśād vāvabhāsabhedah. “In an object, though its unity is established by the unifying power of the mind, various manifestations may be distinguished according to the inclinations, practical requirements and specific experience [of the subject]. For the object, though it is unitary, having been assumed as such thanks to a single [unifying] reflective awareness, there are different manifestations depending on the will, practical requirement, and experience of the subject (translation in Torella, 2013: 163-4).

⁷⁷ This portion of the *vṛtti* broadly corresponds to verses 10-17: “And in being so (*evam ca sati*), the unity of things, which exist in the form merely of consciousness, is not hard to comprehend (*adurghaṭam*), even though they have divisions created by *māyā*. This [unity] also [pertains] to the object of judgment of a worldly knower, whose essence is a distinction of nature in the manifestation (*prathā*) of undivided consciousness. That activity [of the knower] disrupted by this [object of judgment] could not contact another conceptual construction, because, when there is contact with another conceptual construction, it entails a distinct cognizer. Even a manifold object could attain (*vrajat*) unity due to the superimposition of a single expression (*śabda*) that performs one judgment (*āmarśa-vartin*) with respect to that (as, e.g., ‘a pot, a cloth’). And so now, there is another [relation of] characteristic and characterized, and that [relation] can be understood to have the sense of assisting action. Even when there is multiplicity, characteristic and characterized would be two; just as the case of the soldiers, chariots and horses of the king subsist in a twofold judgment. The judgment “of the king” is one [of the two]; the other [term of the relation] refers to (*unmukha*) its own universal. Thus this “servant” [is ‘of the king’ insofar as he] bears a general relation to a master (*svāmin*). Afterwards, he is to be construed as [within the] scope (*gocara*) of the relation “the king’s servant”; or rather (*atha vā*) the two [terms] as previously constructed by you are altogether threefold [i.e., the two terms and the relation between them].” *evam ca sati vastūnām cin-mātra-vapuṣām satām | māyā-nirmita-bhedānām apy ekatvam adurghaṭam // tatrāpi yaḥ parāmarśa-viṣayo laukikasya saḥ | cid-abheda-prathā-rūpa-bheda-sārasya vedituḥ || vyāpāro 'nena ruddho 'sau na vikalpāntaram spr̥set | vikalpāntara-samsparśe mātr-bheda-prasaṅgataḥ || tad ekāmarśavarty-ekāśabdādhyāśavaśād vrajat | aneko 'py ekatārtho yathā ghaṭa-paṭāv iti || ity asti tāvad anyas ca viśeṣaṇa-viśeṣyayoḥ | sambandha upakārārthaḥ sa jñātum upayujyate // bahutve 'pi bhaved dvitvaṃ viśeṣaṇa-viśeṣyayoḥ | dvi-vimarśa-bhuvo yadvad rājño 'śva-ratha-pattayaḥ || vimarśo rājña ity ekaḥ svasāmānyonmukhaḥ paraḥ | svāmi-sāmānya-sambandha-sahaḥ puruṣa ity ayam || rājñah puruṣa ity eṣa paścāt sambandha-gocaraḥ | kalpyo 'nenātha vā kalpyau pūrvau te sarvathā trayah* (SS: 11-12).

Utpala proceeds to emphasize that the grammatical form of the relation—i.e., as either qualifier or qualified—always conforms to precisely the one required for engaging in practical action: We always predicate an object—or isolate a primary subject (*viśeṣya*) of a qualifier (*viśeṣaṇam*)—according to the practical intention of our inquiry:

In conventional life, either the king or the servant could be investigated as primary and intended to be explained (*pratipipādayiṣitaḥ*). Thus, only that [primary element] is said to be the qualified, and the other is the qualifier [i.e., the subordinate attribute]. Hence here, in this case too, there is not any fault. Even given the unity of the two, the qualifier, insofar as its nature is taken as something to be qualified, is clearly evident (*cakāsti*) as consisting in something to be qualified, and even appears by itself, i.e., in “*rājñāḥ puruṣa*.” But [in the compound] “*rājapuruṣa*”, “the king”—insofar as that is made a qualifier—appears (*prathate*) as having completely (*ekāntena*) assumed (*āpanna*) the identity of the qualified, its own form being altogether relinquished. Thus, in this case, there is no sense in expressing a relation. In the case of “blue lotus” as well, the blue is subsumed within (*praviṣṭa*) the lotus, and thus the blossom *that possesses blueness* is the principal member (*pradhāna*). Here also with respect to “in the pot with firewood,” things such as pots, insofar as they are absorbed into (*upalīnāḥ*) an action, appear as dependent upon the agent. In the case of “the absence of a pot” as well, an absence, in which a pot is included within the conceptualization, appears as primary. “This is other than this”—in this case, without at all [*eva*] relinquishing the sense of otherness, the meaning of ‘other’ is ‘something [*artha*] different from another that includes [the former],’ i.e., what is to be characterized. This should be acknowledged in all cases.⁷⁸

Utpala points out that the relational form that binds the king and the servant depends upon practical circumstances *vis-à-vis* the intentions of our inquiry. When we wish to ascribe a property to ‘the servant’ such that it is unified with a term ‘king’ through a genitive relation in the form of ‘*rājñāḥ puruṣa*,’ although the two terms are conceptually united, they retain their own independent forms (viz., they express a unity-in-diversity). However, in the compound ‘*rājapuruṣa*’ (‘king-servant’), the king’s independence (*svarūpa*) as a distinct qualifier is entirely

⁷⁸ vyavahāre rājā puruṣo vā prādhānyena jijñāsitaḥ pratipipādayiṣitaś ca bhaved iti sa eva viśeṣya ucyate paraśca viśeṣaṇam ity atrāpi na kācit kṣatiḥ | dvayoś caikyē 'pi viśeṣaṇam viśeṣyīkṛta-svarūpaṃ viśeṣyātmanā cakāsti svarūpeṇāpi cāvabhāti 'rājñāḥ puruṣa' iti | 'rājapuruṣa' iti tu viśeṣaṇa-bhūto rājā sarvathā parihārita-svarūpo viśeṣyātmatām evaikāntenāpannaḥ prathate—iti na tatra saṃbandhavāco yuktiḥ | nīlam-utpala-mityatrāpi utpalāntaḥ praviṣṭam nīlamiti nīlavatpalam pradhānam | sthālyāṃ kāṣṭhair ity atrāpi kartrāsritam kriyām upalīnāḥ sthālyādayaḥ prakāśante | 'ghaṭasyābhāva' ity atrāpi abhāvo vikalpabuddhāv antarnīta-ghaṭaḥ prādhānyenāv abhāti | 'ayamasmādanya' ity anyārtho 'nyatvāparityāgena ivāntarnītaparāny-ārtho viśeṣya iti | evaṃ sarvatrānumantavyam (SS: 8-9).

‘relinquished’ in its identification with the qualified.⁷⁹ Utpala thus concludes that, “in this case, there is no sense in expressing a relation” (*na tatra sambandhavāco yuktiḥ*), because no mutual distinction attends the conceptual interpretation of the sign—there is no diversity, and thus no relation.

The same, he affirms, holds for the blue lotus, which becomes its own *non-relational* unity when it functions as a *pradhāna* of a compound. When we refer to ‘blue lotus’ as a single term in a compound, the independence of ‘blue’ has been relinquished in its unification with ‘lotus’; the blue is no longer a relational predicate of the particular lotus. So, e.g., in the judgment “that blue lotus is pretty,” the ‘blue lotus’ is conventionally taken as a non-relational term for the sake of predication, which distinguishes some property as relevant for purposeful action. But when we want to, say, pick up flowers of a specific color for a bouquet, we distinguish the *blueness* of the appearance from the conglomeration of qualities that define the particular appearance—e.g., ‘that lotus *is* blue, not green.’ Here, the very same ‘blue lotus’ is referred to as a *relational* unity in accord with practical reason, which necessitated the intentional specification of this predicative form.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Utpala explains this grammatical analysis, and its expression of the general form of relation, in ĪPK II.2.4 and its *vṛtti*: “Things that are self-contained and manifested separately possess a unity in the sense of mutual connection within the unitary knowing subject. This is the basis of the idea of relation.” *svātmaniṣṭhā viviktābhā bhāvā ekapramātari / anyonyānvayarūpaikyayujah sambandhadhīpadam* (translation in Torella (1994: 159)). The *vṛtti* elaborates that the “various ideas of relation” (*sambandha-dhīyah*) are based upon the unity of the terms with respect to the “internal plane” (*antaḥ samanvaya*) and their simultaneous mode of externality: *rājñāḥ puruṣa ityādisambandhadhīyo ’ntasamanvayād aikyaṁ bahiḥ sambandhibhedam cālambante* (ĪPKV II.2.4). Thus the ‘king’ and ‘servant’ have an autonomous existence insofar as they are considered as externally related terms, but they are not separate when united in consciousness as “the king’s servant.” Utpala stipulates in the next verse that the same relational structure characterizes the constructions (*vikalpanāḥ*) of ‘universal’ (*jāti*) and ‘particular substance’ (*dravya*).

⁸⁰ See verses 18-20: “The relations expressed in cases such as the [genitive] sixth pertain to the qualifier. And, when it enters into unity with the qualified, it doesn’t relinquish (*an-ujjhati*) its own form. Upon relinquishment (*hāni*) of one [term], there would be a state of suitability with respect to one or the other with the primary term (used in its primary sense (*śuddha*)), [which would be] of a quality, e.g., like “the king’s servant [or] a Brahmin.” In the same way, the unity which applies to one or the other [of these] as the primary term should be called a relation of quality, e.g., [whether] ‘the king’s servant [or] horse.’” *vimarśo rājña ity ekaḥ svasāmānyonmukhaḥ paraḥ | svāmi-sāmānya-sambandha-sahaḥ puruṣa ity ayam || rājñāḥ puruṣa ity eṣa paścāt sambandha-gocaraḥ | kalpyo ’nenātha*

Utpala also addresses the various instrumental *kāra*kas; the objective distinctions between ‘pot’ and ‘firewood’ are practically negated to the extent that they are bound together in judgement as a single dyadic referent *vis-à-vis* the action of the agent. If we expand upon this principle, we can infer that propositional unity expresses a recognition of the fact that when a continuous action (*kriyā*) unites a diversity of elements in a single judgment, the particular appearances of the elements will depend upon their internal relation to this action. For example, in the judgment ‘Devadatta cooks porridge in the pot with a stick,’ the relational constitution of the ‘pot’ as bearing a *saptamī* case is determined through its constitutive role in the unified judgment of the agent’s activity. Thus, the instrumental terms of a propositional judgment do not signify externally related items whose essential natures stand independent of the determinate act of judgment, but elements *that only appear as they do* insofar as they are somehow internal to the force of judgment that recognizes them as such.⁸¹ Hence, Utpala holds that to even establish an external relation between two mutually disconnected entities—‘this is other than this’—

vā kalpyau pūrvau te sarvathā trayah || śaṣṭyādi-vācyah sambandho viniviṣṭo viśeṣaṇe | viśeṣyaikatvamāpanne svaṃ ca rūpam anujjhati || ekahānyā pradhānena śuddhenānyānyayogitā | syād guṇasya yathā rājñah puruṣo brāhmaṇasya ca || tathānyena pradhānena yaikatānyāpareṇa vā | sambandhākhyā guṇasya syād rājño 'śvah puruṣo yathā (SS: 12-13).

⁸¹ In a footnote of Chapter IX in the *Principles*, James entertains the relevant doctrine of ‘experiential holism’—viz., the idea that some degree of phenomenal interdependence obtains with respect to perceptual appearances in virtue of their synthetic prehension within a single self-consciousness. He references an observation by Rev. James Wills: “At every instant of conscious thought there is a certain sum of perceptions, or reflections, or both together, present and together constituting one whole state of apprehension. Of this some definite portion may be far more distinct than all the rest; and the rest may be in consequence proportionately vague, even to the limit of obliteration. But still, within this limit, the most dim shade of perception enters into, and in some infinitesimal degree modifies, the whole existing state. This state will thus be in some way modified by any sensation or emotion, or act of distinct attention, that may give prominence to any part of it; so that the actual result is capable of the utmost variation, according to the person or the occasion... To any portion of the entire scope here described there may be a special direction of the attention, and this special direction is recognized as strictly what is *recognized* as the idea present to the mind... Our mental states have always an *essential unity*, such that each state of apprehension, however variously compounded, is a single whole, of which every component is, therefore, strictly apprehended (so far as it is apprehended) as a part. Such is the elementary basis from which all our intellectual operations commence” (1983: 156). We can view the thesis that the grammatical form of objective appearances differs with respect to their situatedness in a given judgment as an expression of this sort of doctrine of experiential holism. Note in this case that the content of intentional and perceptual cognitions are both equally informed by their embodied context in the synthetic unity of judgment (cf. Dainton: 183-194).

requires a synthetic *contrast* whereby the conceptual quality of otherness derived from the latter must be implicitly included in the intentional unity that defines the ‘isolated’ status of the former.

In summation, then, the same perceptual appearance(s) can be conventionally regarded as relational *or* non-relational depending on its (their) intentional modality within judgment. Since things can only be said to appear insofar as they appear within consciousness, this has the curious consequence that the relationality of an empirical appearance can constitutively alter depending on whether I decide to employ a single term or a multiplicity of terms to describe it. Allport concludes on the basis of this observation that “not only is there an intimate connection between the way objects appear in sense-perception and the way we conceive of them, Utpaladeva also believes that our conceptualizing activity determines the way objects appear, and not vice-versa” (240). Insofar as any determinate appearance appears as *one* or *many* only with respect to the conceptualizations of judgment, its relational form will depend upon *how* one decides to group distinct elements together into intelligible unities for the sake of some desired end. With respect to practical reason, then, the *capacity* to take diverse elements as related in some way logically precedes the determination of the relational characteristics of the appearance of the particular relata in question.

5. The Objective Significance of Relation

a. A Single Manifestation Discloses Śiva’s Relational Nature

Utpala has just explained that the conceptual appearances of both causal and grammatical relations are conventionally determined in virtue of the modal unity internal to the force of judgment. In the next portion of the text, Utpala leverages this conclusion to advance a metaphysical point. Namely, while the diverse knowledge of sequential relations depends upon

the personal dispositions of the *māyic* knower and their recognitive capacities, the non-sequential disclosure of Śiva *as relationality itself* manifests in the appearance of any *single* thing:

When there is a relation of action and the instruments of action (*kāraka*), there is at that [same] time the appearance of a relation that consists of the existence of assisted and assister. But when there is a relation that remains (*śeṣa*), [it] consists of an [act of] assisting, that is, being remembered; and even in the state (*avasthā*) of memory, it is said that it is only the appearance of an object seen previously in virtue of the unity of judgment. And the activity of manifesting objects does not solely culminate in (*pariyavasāyin*) the knower of *māyā* that is delimited through contact (*sparsin*) with a unity that consists of relation, insofar as the act of knowing an object continually (*pratikṣaṇam*) depends on (*viśrānta*) the illumination of Śivahood, which consists of limitless consciousness. Yet (*ca*), it is said that there is no sequence of understanding [i.e., with respect to the disclosure of Śiva]; just the single manifestation of an object at just one moment—precisely *this* discloses (*āviśkaroti*) the nature (*svarūpam*) that consists only in the fact that Śiva is relation (*saṃbandhaśivatā*).⁸²

Utpala explains that at the time when a diversity of *kāraṅkas* appears as relationally unified through a single concrete action, this action is also conceptually rendered into the dyadic form of assister and assisted. For this very reason, the dyadic unity identified with the activity of recalling a qualified relation is not different from the action transmitted in the cognitive apprehension of the initial appearance that included a variety of instrumental factors. In other words, the recall of an empirical action with diverse constituents amounts to the fact that a particular object appearing in judgment *now* appears *as similar to* something that appeared in a *past* moment of the very *same consciousness*.⁸³ When a memory of the same relation occurs—

⁸² *kriyākāraka-saṃbandhe tāt-kālikopakāryopakārahāva-maya-saṃbandhābhāsaḥ / śeṣasaṃbandhe tu smaryamāṇopakāramayaḥ smaraṇāvasthāyām api ca pūrva-dṛṣṭārthāvabhāsa eva parāmarśaikyād ity uktam / na kevalam ca saṃbandha-mayaikatāsparsi-parimitamāyāmātr-pariyavasāyī vastu-prakāśana-vyāpāro, yāvad-ananta-cin-mayaśivatāvabhāsa-viśrāntaiva pratikṣaṇam vastu-saṃvitkriyā / na ca saṃvidah kramo 'sti ekaivaikatraiva kṣaṇe 'rtha-prakāśanā, saiva saṃbandha-śivatā-mayam eva svarūpam āviśkaroti, ity ucyate (SS:9).*

⁸³ See ĪPK I.7.5: *smṛtau yaiva svasaṃvittiḥ pramāṇam svātmasaṃbhāve pūrvānubhavasadbhāve sādhanam saiva nāparam. ĪPV: pūrvānubhasvasaṃvedanasya abhāvāt smṛtisvasaṃvedanam eva atraikārtthābhāsamayapramāṭṛrūpam smṛtisvarūpa iva pramāṇam / smṛteḥ pūrvānubhavābhāsābhāve kāryakāraṇabhāvāsiddher na kāryaliṅgatā. “The self-consciousness which in memory is the proof of memory’s very being, that same self-consciousness and nothing else establishes the subsistence of the former direct perception. Since [at the time of the memory] the self-consciousness of the former direct perception no longer exists, it is the self-consciousness of the memory and nothing else which establishes the existence of the former perception, as it does for the memory itself. This self-consciousness consists in the knowing subject characterized by the manifestation of a single identical object. The status of effect—acting as logical reason—may not be attributed to memory since, as the manifestation of the former perception is no longer present, it cannot be said that a cause-effect relation has been established” (trans. in Torella 2013: 138). In a footnote Torella comments that Utpala intends to preempt a possible objection here: We do not need to resort to a continuous *svasaṃvedana*, since memory can explain the recognition of something’s being perceived previously as a causal*

i.e., it is no longer present and thus purely conceptual—the referent of relation in this case represents a manifestation of the same conceptual *unity* that was present at the time the initial perception of action occurred.⁸⁴ Phenomenologically speaking, in other words, mnemonic awareness *just is* the continuous form of a reflexive action that straddles the transition from the diversity of elements present in perceptual cognition to a dyadic conceptual rendering of the exact *same* event; a capacity that only makes sense *from the perspective of a single consciousness that experiences both times*—as these two moments, in themselves, are fundamentally *asynchronous*. Hence knowing the object ‘continually’ (*pratikṣaṇam*) must presuppose a form of awareness that goes beyond the *māyic* knower associated solely with *conceptual* knowledge, because immediate perception must itself bear a nascent *capacity for* conceptual elaboration.⁸⁵ For Utpala, this designates the relational nature of Śiva Himself, which is revealed in the constructive apprehension of even a single object.

Recall, in this regard, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti’s theory of self-consciousness as the result of cognition (*pramāṇaphala*)—which Dharmakīrti, at any rate, interprets in terms of a *momentary* effect of the causally efficacious real. There is thus no function (*nir-vyāpāra*) with respect to the momentary nature of self-consciousness. For this very reason, self-consciousness is non-dual with respect to the external object of conceptual knowledge—as all dualistic

impression. Utpala does not accept this inference because its logical basis already makes recourse to the synthetic representation of the nature of the effect in memory. “Between the perception that occurred in the past and the present memory there is no cause-effect relation, which presupposes a continuity...Therefore those who invoke memory as the unifier of cognition which are in themselves separate implicitly finish up by involving precisely that knowing subject they wanted to avoid, who, as we have seen, is identified with the continuity of self-consciousness on which memory is based” (ibid.: fn.9).

⁸⁴ I interpret James as expressing the same basic phenomenological insight when he writes (rather inelegantly for James), “The judgment that my own past thought and my own present thought are of the same object is what makes *me* take the object out of either and project it by a sort of triangulation into an independent position, from which it may *appear* to be both. *Sameness* in a multiplicity of objective appearances is thus the basis of our belief in realities outside of thought” (1983: 272).

⁸⁵ To be more precise, Utpala does not mean that a fully formed determinate judgment occurs at the initial moment of causal perception—this would indeed be oxymoronic. Rather, the Pratyabhijñā thinkers explain that a latent form of conceptuality is ‘contracted’ (*saṃvartita*) and ‘subtle’ (*sūkṣma*) in the perceptual cognition (see Chapter V).

knowledge, *ipso facto*, cannot be *functionally given* in the momentary result of the immediate self-conscious cognition.⁸⁶ Yet Utpala, in another characteristic switcheroo, cites Dharmakīrti himself on the dualistically unsullied nature of pure cognition to buttress his own Śaiva conclusions:

Accordingly, the teacher Dharmakīrti says: “And this awareness which bears the appearance (*pratibhāsa*) of the object appears (*bhāti*) as though facing outward, but (*ca*) the cognition that apprehends cognition is always facing inward at itself” (PV 2.428). “Facing inward” and “at itself”—by these it is said that self-consciousness is empty (*śūnyam*) of the appearance of the object and does not occur separately [from the *arthaparakāśanā*]. It is likewise said in the ĪPK, “And this knower, who is defiled by various categories of limitless appearing, that is Maheśvara, who consists of consciousness without sequence and limit” (I.7.1)—this is shown (*pradarśitam*) at length (*vitatya*) only in that [text].⁸⁷

Taking after Dignāga, recall that Dharmakīrti interprets self-consciousness (*svasaṃvedana*) as that reflexive aspect of the cognitive image which result from causal impingement upon the perceptual organs. But for Utpala, the reflexive nature of cognition does not show that consciousness is coextensive with a cognitive *image*, but rather, quite to the contrary, that subjective consciousness is that which is wholly *unrepresentable*. As we have seen, it is precisely the taking of the diversity of external objects *as unified* that identifies the very essence of Śiva/ātman as a *sui generis* relational capacity—viz., not in any ‘intentional relation’ apropos some well-defined universal or particular object.⁸⁸ Soteriologically speaking, then, Utpala agrees with the Buddhists that no functional ‘sequence’ (*krama*) obtains with respect to the ultimate realization of self-consciousness; that is, self-consciousness coextends with experience of the

⁸⁶ See regress arguments for this conclusion in Chapter III.

⁸⁷ *tathā cācāryadharmakīrtiḥ: “bahir-mukhaṃ ca taj jñānaṃ bhāty artha-pratibhāsavat / buddheś ca grāhikā buddhir nityam antar-mukhātmani”*(PV 2.428) *iti | antarmukheti, ātmanūti ca svasaṃvedanam arthābhāsa-śūnyam aprthag bhūtaṃ coktam | tathā pratyabhijñāyām ukta—’yā caiṣā pratibhānanta-padārtha-krama-rūṣitā | akramānantacidrūpaḥ pramātā sa maheśvaraḥ’* (ĪPK I.7.1) *ity etat tatraiva vitatya pradarśitam* (SS: 9-10).

⁸⁸ Compare Carr (55) on Hegel’s reception of Kant’s transcendental “I”: “[In] being conscious of them [objects/concepts] I also distinguish myself from them. Hegel has a description—or definition—of consciousness that is apt here: Consciousness ‘distinguishes something from itself to which it at the same time *relates itself*.’ It is the self-consciousness implicit in this notion of consciousness that best approximates, I think, what Kant has in mind. It is the ‘self’ that distinguishes itself from anything of which it could possibly be conscious, particular or general. Thus it is itself neither general nor particular but *prior* to any distinction between the general and the particular.”

real. But this is because the very act that culminates in intentional knowledge just *is* the disclosure of Śiva, whose actional essence is the unity of reflexive consciousness. Note that one can construe Utpala's interpretation of Dharmakīrti here as a 'Madhyamaka' sort of critique; insofar as the representational object cannot arise independently of the unrepresentable subject, the reflexive nature of self-consciousness is fundamentally "empty" (*śūnyam*) of any determinate content. We will return to this comparison in the concluding chapter.

b. Relation Does not Itself Manifest as a Distinct Referent

Quite in opposition to the Buddhists, Utpala has argued that perceptual objects cannot be mere conceptual representations of existents whose intrinsic natures remain divorced from the practical modalities through which they are self-consciously apprehended. The relational act of *taking* particular properties ('milk-producing,' 'grazing,' 'spotted,' etc...) as *inferentially related* with others *just is* what it means to recognize a thing in terms of a singular universal ('cow'). The 'what' and 'how' of judgment cannot be practically distinguished; thus, typical knowledge of tokens cannot merely result from a *post-hoc* process of inference based on discrete perceptions. From this perspective, there is no sense, as the Buddhist wants to claim, that relations only occur in the perceptually *post hoc* moment of *vikalpa*, because for anything to appear *at all* in awareness—including moments of perception—presupposes the temporal action of self-consciousness.

Utpala now extends this reasoning to counter both the Buddhist and the Nyāya logicians insofar as the judgment that unifies diversity into a predicate—and thus the *samavāya* relation itself—does not manifest as something distinct from the act that comprehends the referent of the proposition through some appositional predicative contrast:

[With respect to] what was also said—i.e., “there is an admission of relations, like universals, exclusively at the time of determinate cognition”—then that [statement] is not only of that [relation], as much as it is (*yāvat*) simply of *everything*, because nothing whatsoever exists outside of awareness. And a single universal, even externally consisting of multiplicity, is completely distinct from determinate characteristics (*svalakṣaṇas*) insofar as they consist of a multitude of universals.⁸⁹ And this [one universal] is made known by just a single word as being the locus of unrestricted (*aniyata*) characteristics. Further, this [universal], which bears a conceptually constructed (*kalpita*) relation to particular characteristics, is just indicated by a single word (e.g., “cow”).⁹⁰ For this very reason, relation is said to designate “inherence” (*samavāya*); even when there is apposition of the two, they possess a single referent. And, in that case, this one thing is indicated by the copulative expression ‘blue lotus.’ The relation of these two, however, is their unity with respect to what is characterized (*viśeṣya*), but it does not manifest in this way as an additional thing—hence, this is just a *viśeṣa* [i.e., an occurrence of a word that defines or limits another word]. Alternatively, even when they are in apposition, the very fact that ‘blue lotus’ refers (*niṣṭhatā*) to a [single] lotus, which is the thing to be characterized (*viśeṣya*), just *is* the fact of their relation.⁹¹

Utpala implicitly refers to the Pratyabhijñā theory that universals and particulars refer to distinct modes of appearance (*ābhāsas*), i.e., the former being singular while the latter denote a locus of manifold universal appearances. When we designate a particular object through a single word, we deploy a term *as a stand in* for the conceptual recognition of a locus of unbounded relational features—this is the unrestricted (*aniyata*) scope of particular objects with respect to their virtually infinite universal characterizations (viz., their ‘Firstness’). It is only because unity-in-

⁸⁹ According to Utpala and Abhinava, particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*) are understood in terms of their own modal appearance as a unity of diverse *ābhāsas* ‘restricted’ through their connection with space and time (cf. Torella 2013: 168-89). Hence, in conformity with the theory that everything manifests in virtue of its modal appearance in consciousness, particulars are not a category of distinct non-relational and non-conceptual existents. As Abhinava explains in his commentary on ĪPK 4.7, “Here [in the Pratyabhijñā] it is claimed that objects are only appearances (*ābhāsa*). Sometimes they are mixed through the unification of judgment when they possess the form of a particular; sometimes they are judged merely as unmixed when they have the form of universal.” *ihābhāsā eva tāvadarthāḥ ityuktam te ca parāmarśaikyena kadācinmiśrīkriyante yadā viśeṣarūpatā, kadācidamiśrā eva parāmrśyante yadā samānyarūpatā...* (ĪPV: 4.7).

⁹⁰ See SP (v. 15) on the conceptual construction of causal relations with respect to the inference of ‘cow’ on the basis of observations of particular features like dewlaps, etc. The contrast Utpala draws here involves the order of operations in giving an account of our knowledge of causal relations. For Dharmakīrti, we *infer* a relation between cause and effect based on conceptual marks (*liṅga*) generated by perceptual effects, much like we establish the general concept of ‘cow’ on the basis of the relations between particular empirical observations of many dewlap-laden creatures.

⁹¹ *yad apy uktam 'pratīti-kāla eva sāmānyasyeva sambandhasyābhyupagama' iti, tan na kevalam asya yāvat sarvasyaivārthasya bodha-bahir-bhūtasya kasyacid abhāvāt | sāmānyam caikam anekam ayam bahir api pṛthag eva sāmānya-nikuramba-rūpebhyaḥ svalakṣaṇebhyaḥ | tac caikenaiva śabdenāniyata-svalakṣaṇāśrayatvena pratipādyate, tac ca kalpita-svalakṣaṇa-sambandham eka-śabda-pratipādyam eva gauriti | ata eva samavāyākhyāḥ sambandha ucyate | sāmānādhikaraṇye'pi dvayor ekaniṣṭhatā! tatra caikam tad-vastu astivākya-pratipādyam nīlam-utpalam iti | sambandhaḥ punar dvayor viśeṣyaikyātā na tvevam vastvantaram prakāśate—ity ayam viśeṣaḥ | sāmānādhikaraṇye 'pi vā nīlam-utpalam iti viśeṣyotpala-niṣṭhataiveti sambandhataiva* (SS: 9-10).

diversity reflects a power of consciousness that we can use atomic terms to designate the complex appearance of objects. So grammatically speaking, the relational reality of the copula (e.g., the ‘blue lotus’) refers to the fact that one is taking a term as a *viśeṣa*, i.e., as a word that limits or determines *another word*. The unity of predication thus does not require a *distinct* ontological referent ‘*samavāya*’ to manifest, for the objective ‘form’ of the relation is once again identified with the synthetic force of the *judgment* thereof.

Utpala’s point is radical but consistent with his objective idealist framework: the relational apposition of predicative judgement does not manifest as an additional thing because it is no different than the unity of the self-consciousness that interprets them as such. Or, in other words, only the spontaneous power of the *ātman* can manifest a relational unity whose form is nothing other than the reflexive unity of the act that *recognizes* the relata *as such*. In this context, there is nothing particularly special about *samavāya*—and thus the determinate form of *propositional* judgment—in an ontological account of the objective or categorical significance of *sambandha*. For the reflexive capacity that enables one to designate perceptual diversity in terms of a single referent also enables one to realize the semantic content of the proposition. The entire debate over the objective form of the copula assumes that categorematic terms represent the real features of the world, and then they are conceptually expressed in terms of the syncategorematic form of predication. But for Utpala, like Peirce, *all thought* is in triadic ‘signs’—*not just the proposition*. Thus, the popular coextension of intentional cognition with the propositional sign is fundamentally a mistake; the determinacy of propositional knowledge cannot claim for itself an epistemically special or privileged mode of cognition because unity-in-diversity comprises its reflexive ‘ground’ *all the way down*.

c. *If Relation is just an ‘Erroneous’ Sign, so too is the Whole Universe*

In closing, Utpala submits that if one claims relation is an ‘error’ or ‘misapprehension’ (*bhrānti*) due to conceptualization, then the whole universe might as well be an ‘error,’ for everything in this case is just a dualistic ‘sign’ for the non-dual reality:

[With respect to] what was also said—i.e., “a relation is that whose object is an error (*bhrānti*) due to generalization”—that also says exceedingly little (*ati-alpam*). For this (*viśvam*) whole universe is just a sign (*pada*) of the misapprehension (*bhrānti*) that consists of the non-cognition of the non-division of consciousness (*cid-abhedākhyāti*). And even though it is ‘error,’ it’s being erroneous is not, however, like the [illusion of] two moons [or] the state of dreaming, etc., due to consensus [in those cases]—all of this is resolved in the *īkā*.⁹² Therefore, for this reason, those who deny the meaning of relation—being incapable (*akṣamā*) of the consideration (*paryālocana*) of the nature of consciousness which is complete [in itself], with an intent (*abhiniveśa*) merely to that extent (*tāvan mātra*)—babble nonsensically (*asaṃbaddhābhidhāyin*). [Thus it is said:]⁹³

Utpala affirms that, from a non-dual perspective, even if *everything* is ‘erroneous,’ the ‘error’ of two moons is still not the ‘error’ of relation, insofar as anything that can be conventionally designated would represent the same sort of latter ‘error.’ The one who claims relations are

⁹² This is a reference to the lost ĪPKVṛ (as mentioned, Utpala discusses the Pratyabhijñā theory of error in the ĪPK, II.3.13). But we can here consult Abhinava’s commentary on ĪPK II.2.1: *cittattvāt anyatra yā kriyābuddhiḥ kartṛkarmakaraṇādiṣu caitro bhrajati taṇḍulā viklidyante edhā jvalanti iti, tasyā ekānekarūpaścāitrādyartha āśrayaḥ ālambanam / tathāhi — tattaddeśakālākārahinnāḥ tatra caitradeho’nekasvabhāvo’pi sa evāyam iti ekarūpatām aparityajanneva nirbhāsate, sa eva ca ekānekarūpā kriyā tathaiva pratibhāsanācca pāramārthikī, dvicandrādi tu tathābhāsamānamapi uttarakālaṃ pramāvyāpārānuvṛttirūpasya sthairyasya unmūlanena dvicandro nāsti ityevaṃ rūpeṇa asatyam , iha punaḥ calati caitraḥ ityevaṃbhūto vimarśaḥ anuvartamāno na kenacit unmūlyamānaḥ saṃvedyate* “The cognition of action as regards something which is not the reality of [pure] consciousness, [i.e. the cognition of mundane action] as regards the agent, the act, the instrument of action, etc., in such [experiences as] ‘Caitra is walking’, ‘the grains of rice are being cooked’, or ‘the fuel is burning’, has a ‘substrate’, [i.e.], a resting place that is an object such as Caitra, etc., consisting [both] in unity and multiplicity. To explain—in that [experience of mundane action], the body of Caitra, although having a plural nature [since it] is different as regards this and that places, times and forms, [nonetheless] shines without abandoning its unitary nature in the form ‘his is the same [body]’. And it is this same object having a form [both] unitary and multiple that is action, and because it [continues to] shine exactly in the same way [later], this [action] is real; whereas the two moons and other [illusory manifestations of this kind], even though they are shining [now] in such a way, are not real, because of the destruction later—in the form ‘there aren’t two moons!’—of the stability (*sthairya*), i.e. of the continuity of the activity of [this cognition of two moons]. Whereas in the case [of action], the conscious grasping (*vimarśa*) having such a form as ‘Caitra is moving’ is experienced as persisting, as not being destroyed by anything” (ĪPV vol. II: 29–31; trans. in Ratié 2007: 351).

⁹³ *sāmānyād bhrānti-viśayaḥ saṃbandhaḥ—ity api yad uktaṃ tad apy atyalpa-muktaṃ / viśvam apīdam cid-abhedākhyāti-maya-bhrānti-padam eva / bhrāntāv-api cāsyāṃ punaḥ svapna-dvi-candrād-ivad-bhrāntatā nāsti saṃvādāditi—sarvam etan nirṇītaṃ īkāyām / tad-evam pūrṇa-cit-svarūpa-paryālocanākṣamās tāvan mātrābhiniveśena saṃbandha-padārtha-pratyākhyānakāriṇo ‘saṃbaddhābhidhāyina iti / [tadāha] (SS: 10).*

conceptual ‘errors’ is thus simply enacting a kind of performative contradiction.⁹⁴ For those who question the extent to which Utpala really departs from Dharmakīrti on the question of relations (*pace* Allport above), here Utpala makes clear that he considers the denial of relation fundamentally ‘incoherent’—the word ‘*asambaddha*’ in this case perhaps ironically indicating both the referent under discussion and the self-evident absurdity of its ontological denial.

Conclusion: Utpala’s Relational Realism and Objective Idealism

In this chapter, I translated and analyzed the arguments of the SS, and interpreted it as advocating the view I called ‘reformed relational realism.’ This pragmatic doctrine stipulates that the objective form of relation, or unity-in-diversity (*bhedābheda*), does not refer to a categorematic term like *samavāya*, but to a *sui generis* form of transcendental *action* (‘*śakti*’)—namely, the one constitutive of reflexive judgment (*vimarśa*). I suggested that, through the implicit adoption and development of Bhartṛhari’s doctrine of *sambandha* as a ‘*śakti-of-śaktis*,’ Utpala’s idealistic theory of relations avoids the pitfalls of reification and regress that attend the naïve realism of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, as well as the radical eliminativism and epistemic idealism of Dharmakīrti’s SP. Even though ‘relation’ entails an apparently paradoxical coextension of unity and multiplicity, it is nevertheless ‘real’; that is to say, ‘real’ in the strict sense that it is not, as the Buddhist maintains, a mere conceptual fabrication, or a false imposition on an ‘objective’ reality that is *fundamentally otherwise* than it phenomenally or conceptually *appears*.

⁹⁴ I am inclined to consider this portion of the text as summarized in verses 21-23 of the SS: “*Thus thoughts (dhiyaḥ), explained as methods of relating that discern diverse objects [and] are suited to knowers proceeding from māyā, generate conventional reality. To that extent (tathā), these are not chiefly (param) mistakes, because every one of them, at every moment, is produced by judgment, which results from boundless consciousness under the description of reflexive awareness. However, this implied relation—which is unobstructed (nirbādha) and efficacious (upayogavān)—is fully explained in the ĪPK as established by self-consciousness.*” *iti sambandha-gaty uktā māyīya-jñātr-niṣṭhitāḥ | dhiyo vibhinnārtha-dṛṣo vyavahāra-pravartikāḥ || na param tāstathā bhrāntāḥ sarvā api pratikṣaṇāt | svasaṃvit-saṃjñākānanta-cid-vimarśa-pratiṣṭhitāḥ || uktāḥ svasaṃvit-siddho'yaṃ nirbādha upayogavān | sambandhaḥ pratyabhijñāyāṃ pūrṇaḥ parikaraḥ punaḥ* (SS: 14).

In his identification of relation with the modal activity of *vimarśa*, Utpala refutes the Dharmakīrtian ontology of *kṣaṇavāda* on transcendental grounds. For Utpala, the intentional action of *vimarśa* discloses a continuity of experience between the indeterminate perceptions (*pratyakṣa*) and their conceptual elaboration (*vikalpa*). Since the continuity of cause and effect in this case *constitutes* the cognitive form of practical judgment itself, causal relata cannot be understood as autonomously intelligible occurrences independent of the synthetic judgment thereof. Thus Dharmakīrti's strict nominalism cannot ever hope to *explain how* a *nirvikalpa* moment of 'pure' perception *causes* the experience of a *vikalpa* moment of conceptualization without already presupposing a direct experiential acquaintance with the irreducible temporal and synthetic relationship between the two forms of cognition.^{95 96} Contrary to Balslev (1983),

⁹⁵ This holds even with, I would add, the structures of karmic imprints and *apoha* in place, *pace* Prueitt's (2018) sensitive defense of Dharmakīrti's model of *apoha* with appeal to beginningless karmic imprints. I would submit that as long as momentariness is the primary metaphysical assumption about the ultimate constituents of the world—and thus that causality (as an ontologically non-relational process of successive events) itself is not *merely* 'conventionally real'—Utpala's arguments against Dharmakīrti hold water. Again, similar to Madhyamaka, the Pratyabhijñā wager is that if Dharmakīrti really *does* finally concede that causality itself is only *conventionally real*, a phenomenological analysis of the intentional dimension of 'causality-at-work' becomes *just as relevant in describing its 'ultimate nature' as the efficient causation of successive particulars*. In other words, one ends up with a classic Madhyamaka critique of Pramāṇavāda-Sautrāntika doctrines. At this point, though, we have already negated the doctrine of momentariness as an exhaustive description of the 'ultimate' nature of things.

⁹⁶ For Dharmakīrti, of course, it would be oxymoronic to say that conceptuality could pervade the initial, non-conceptual state of perceptual self-consciousness. That is, an intentional state of conceptual elaboration is identified precisely by its thoroughgoing *lack* of perceptual indeterminacy. On this note, consider Abinava's commentary on ĪPK II.2.3, which entertains this important Buddhist objection: "The subject determines even when still in the domain of indeterminacy. But the internal sense (*antaḥkaraṇam*) makes those constructs, such as action and relation, etc., manifest by means of its activity which is subsequent to indeterminate experience, outside the latter, and of the nature of ascertainment called 'reaction' (*anuvyavasāya*). These constructs rest on unity in multiplicity. It should not be supposed that because they merely appear in *vikalpa*, therefore, they are of the same nature as the appearance of two moons. For it has been already asserted that all that shines in determinate cognition cannot be considered unreal, because the essential nature of reality is nothing other than luminousness. If the determinate cognition were not luminous, it would not be right to say that such functions as those of superimposition, judgment, and self-reference are performed in relation to what appears in it. And therefore, such statements [of the Buddhist] as 'They superimpose externality on what is not external' would be meaningless...But if the opponent would say 'How could [determinate] conceptual construction (*vikalpa*) grasp that which is illuminated by sense-perception and particular [indeterminate]?' We reply that this would indeed be the case if *vikalpa* were an independent function; [but] it [i.e., *vikalpa*] is the activity of the knower. And this knower is that very self-consciousness that was present in the former [indeterminate] experience. To have the impression of this former experience consists only in retaining the former experiences even at the time of determinative activity. Therefore, just as there is the former experience that consists in the appearance of [indeterminate] particulars, so too does *vikalpa*—i.e., an action of the subject who is one with the former experience—have that same object [as that former experience]. This is what the teacher has said in the following verse: 'The knower is said to have the impression of the former indeterminate cognition insofar as that

then, Utpala shows that *kṣaṇavāda* does *not* establish “the ontological inseparability of the instant and instantaneous” (85), or capture the Buddhist ideal that “being, time and causality form a conceptual whole” (91). Instead, a world exhaustively described by intrinsically discontinuous moments ensures that the *kinds* of dynamic, internal relations that weave together the very fabric of experience are noumenally severed from the fixed, sequential nature of the real—never the twain shall meet.

In sum, Utpala diverges significantly from Dharmakīrti over the objective nature of the relational capacities of awareness. For the Buddha, the pure self-consciousness of cognition must necessarily refer to the moment of immediate perception; it is non-relational in essence. But for Utpala, the spontaneous intelligibility of the action of *vimarśa* discloses the transcendental continuity of the *ātman*, whose power of recognition straddles the asynchrony of indeterminate perceptions and their subsequent determinate conceptual elaboration. In direct opposition to Dharmakīrti, *svasaṃvedana* cannot be a state that is fundamentally inactive (*nirvyāpāra*), perceptual (*pratyakṣa*), and momentary (*kṣaṇavat*). Whether or not what is left over after this analysis merits the conventional title of ‘self,’ however, is another matter altogether (see next chapter). Ultimately, I intend for this presentation and interpretation of the SS to buttress Utpala’s case that Pratyabhijñā offers a robust form of *metaphysical* idealism in comparison with

[cognition] persists even at the time of differentiation’[possibly from Utpala’s lost *Vivṛtti*]. Therefore, that activity of mind, that consists in joining unity and multiplicity, in this way creates all the various conceptual constructs such as action, etc., that refer to things that are a unity-in-multiplicity.” *paścādbhāvinam vyavasāyam niścayātmakam vikalpakam anuvyavasāyaśabdavācyam vidadhadantaḥkaraṇam etān kriyāsaṃbandhādivikalpān sampādayati / te ca vikalpāḥ taddvayam ekatvānekatvarūpam avalambante, nahi vikalpeṣu pratibhāsamānam avastusat iti hi uktam prakāśataiva vastutvam iti / na ca vikalpasya prakāśarūpatām muktivā āropanādhyavasāyābhimānādināmadheyam vyāpārāntaram yuktam, tato 'bāhye bāhyam āropayanti ityādi vaco vastuśūnyam...atha brūyāt paro yat indriyajñānena prakāśānīyam svalakṣaṇam tat katham vikalpaḥ sprśediti, bhavedevaṃ. yadi vikalpo nāma svatantra bhavet yāvatā pramāturasau vyāpārah pramātā ca pūrvānubhavāntaḥ-svasaṃvedanarūpaḥ tadasya ca ayameva pūrvānubhavasamkāro yat vikalpanavyāpārakāle 'pi pūrvānubhavātmavam anujjhanneva āste. tataḥ pūrvānubhavo yāvat svalakṣaṇakāśānātmā tāvat pūrvānubhavatādātmyāpanna-pramātrtattvavyāpāro 'pi vikalpaḥ tadviśaya eva. ata evamuktam ācāryena 'pūrvānubhavasamkārah pramāturayameva saḥ yadapohanakāle'pi sa pūrvānubhavaḥ sthitaḥ' / iti / tasmāt pramātuh yo vyāpāra ekatvānekatvasaṃyojanātmā sa eva prakṛto tatra tādrśīḥ kriyādikalpanā ekānekavastuviśayā etā iti (ĪPKV II.2.3; cf. Pandey: vol. III, pp., 131-2).*

the representationalism of Sautrāntika-inspired schools of Yogācāra. Specifically, in virtue of its triune metaphysics, the reformed realism of the Pratyabhijñā system more consistently objectifies the *processual* nature of mind than the dichotomous ontology that underlies Buddhist eliminativism; that is to say, Utpala's relational philosophy better expresses the non-duality of *becoming* and *thinking*. Through his transcendental recuperation of relation, Utpala, much like Peirce, seeks to raise philosophy above the skeptical darkness of nominalism to illuminate the objective nature of mind. In the final concluding chapter, we speculate upon the teleological and scholastic ramifications of this doctrine of relational realism.

CONCLUSION:

‘GROUNDLESS TELEOLOGY’ AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

We praise Śiva who, having [first] manifested the universe as the initial premise (pūrvapakṣa) of diversity (bheda), leads it to the final conclusion (uttarapakṣa) of unity (abheda).

-Abhinavagupta (IPV benedictory verse on ĪPK 1.2)¹

As far as the process of nature is intelligible, so far is the process of nature identical with the process of reason; the law of being and the law of thought must be practically assumed to be one.

The very being of the General, of Reason, consists in its governing individual events. So, then, the essence of Reason is such that its being never can have been completely perfected. It always must be in a state of incipency, of growth.

-C.S. Peirce²

The present project consisted of two broad scholastic endeavors: to analyze three relational theories in classical Indian philosophy, translating and analyzing two of its representative treatises along the way; and to propose a constructive taxonomy of relational philosophy through mapping the relational axioms of these Indian schools onto a trio of 20th century Western counterparts. Through this study, I hoped to not only explicate the relational doctrines of three prominent Indian traditions, but also provide a cross-cultural defense of the notion that this triad of relational ‘schools’ ultimately enumerates the axiomatic commitments *any* philosopher might reasonably take toward the reality of relations. Pursuant to this goal, I framed the conversation, and broadly structured the project, into three corresponding parts.

In Part One (Chapters I & II), I provided a basic overview of the multifaceted problem of relations in modern Anglo-American philosophy. I touched upon conceptual tools for the logical analysis of relations; the problem of the GLFR and its relation to the objective nature of continuity; the modern Western representatives of the three relational ‘schools’; the central place

¹*pūrvapakṣatayā yena viśvamābhāṣya bhedataḥ / abhedottarapakṣāntaṁ nīyate taṁ stumaḥ śivaḥ.*

² (1890: MS 956); (1903: Lecture I [R]. MS [R] 449:45; EP 2:255).

of the asymmetry of temporal relations vs. the symmetry of spatial relations in these debates; as well as the parallel epistemic issues of synthetic judgment and propositional unity. The next chapter proceeded to compare the ‘naïve relational realism’ of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika with the early logical atomism of Russell and Moore. Taking their philosophical cues primarily from the formal structures of grammar, we saw that this relational school defined the ontological form of ‘relation’ chiefly in terms of the mutually exclusive opposition of objectively determinate terms or categories—i.e., the relation of inherence, or *samavāya*, in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika case. Given their shared assumption that ‘relation’ must correspond to a substantive grammatical or categorematic *referent* in this manner—i.e., defined as a potentially predicable subject in dyadic contrast to other monadic terms—I suggested that the naïve realists chiefly view the meaning of ‘relation’ through the lens of Peirce’s semiotic category of Secondness.

In Part Two (Chapters III & IV), we turned to the Buddhist scholastic tradition of Abhidharma-Sautrāntika and its negative ontological appraisal of relations, arguments distilled in Dharmakīrti’s SP. We saw that, according to the joint doctrines of impermanence and universal causality, the impersonal constituents of ultimate reality come to be systematically defined as atomic, adamantine particulars with a certain self-defined (*svalakṣaṇa*) intrinsic nature (*svabhāva*). This view led to a mereological nihilism that denies the existence of all extended wholes and the conceptual properties conventionally ascribed thereto. Among other things, I noted that these basic *nominalist* assumptions force the Buddhist to implicitly assimilate the category of *relation* into that of *universal*. This not only enabled the Sautrāntika to reduce our comprehension of continuity to momentary causes, but, for similar reasons, leads Dharmakīrti to potentially conflate semantic and existential forms of dependence in the SP. In cross-cultural terms, I contended that Dharmakīrti propounds a ‘relational eliminativism’ akin to Bradley based

on shared *a priori* conditions of rational intelligibility. Since this common ‘Hochbergian’ dialectic consistently results in some skeptical form of epistemic idealism, I also argued that their oppositional metaphysical characterizations (as monist vs. nominalist, respectively) belies a deeper concord *vis-à-vis* the primary reality of Firstness, or Peirce’s semiotic category that designates the vague feeling of immediate, pre/non-conceptual intuition, the monad of pure qualitative experience.

In Part Three (Chapters V & VI), I presented the ‘reformed relational realism’ of Bhartṛhari and the Pratyabhijñā tradition. I first showed that, although not explicitly mentioned in the SS, Utpala develops his own views based on Bhartṛhari’s theory of relations. In particular, the grammarian’s metaphysics of *sphoṭa*—or the progressive holistic unfolding of divine ‘language’—re-describes *sambandha* as a pragmatic-transcendental category: a ‘capacity of capacities,’ or ‘*śakti-of-śaktis*.’ Here ‘relation’ is not a categorematic *referent* (i.e., naïve realism), or a wholly conceptual *nonentity* (eliminativism), but rather a transcendental form of *action* that is neither unified with, nor distinct from, its relata (*bhedābheda*); it designates the holistic process whereby one comes to understand the inner meaning of signs in terms of the practical designation of other signs. Since ‘relation’ in this case designates a logical condition that enables these discursive practices to transpire, we cannot, *ipso facto*, ever hope to *represent* its objective form in those very terms. In the previous chapter, we saw Utpala leverage this pragmatic redescription to prove that the objective locus of relational action is reflexive judgment, or *vimarśa*. I therefore contended that Utpala’s basic relational doctrine accords with the transcendental position of the classical pragmatists: *Tokens of the general type are given in precisely the manner they are self-consciously or reflexively taken*. To this extent, the Trika system of Pratyabhijñā also strongly resonates with Peirce’s objective idealist view that the

semiotic form of practical reason discloses irreducible Thirdness—viz., a temporal continuity, or duration, internal to the recognitive event, which actively mediates between Firsts and Seconds.

By way of a conclusion, I would like to venture down a few speculative avenues of thought that result from the preceding relational discussion. As Rorty mentioned, the attitudes one adopts towards relations is itself internally related to every other philosophical position one might hold. Here, then, I will limit myself to what I consider some significant points for South Asian philosophy and the broader study of philosophy of religion. In particular, I want to suggest that Pratyabhijñā's relational and temporal views can perhaps find a sympatico Buddhist counterpart—not in Yogācāra idealism, as perhaps Abhinava himself believed—but rather in the Madhyamaka doctrine of emptiness. I conclude that such a comparison could contribute to contemporary debates concerning descriptive and prescriptive methodologies in the study of philosophy of religion.

Groundless Teleology

Among the many social and historical factors that drove the development of classical Indian philosophy, perhaps the central dualistic tension is the religious concern of the ontological status of the ultimate vs. the conventional; that is to say, how is the reality of a metaphysically unconditioned and absolute principle reconciled with the practical action that constitutes the cosmic round of *samsāra* and the diversity of finite, embodied life therein. Likely to address relevant inconsistencies in the Pali *sutras*³, in Buddhism this pan-Indian dilemma became transformed into an array of discourses on the two truths. In grappling with this problem,

³ Cf. Karunadasa (2006: 1; 1996: 25–6, n.139); The Cowherds (2011: 5).

philosophers faced three basic choices: Affirm the former and deny the latter; deny the former and affirm the latter; or, somehow, strike some *via media* between the two.

Arguably, the revisionist metaphysics of the early Buddhist Sautrāntika-Pramāṇavādin tradition represents a prime example of the first option: They claim that ultimate reality consists wholly of a contingent assemblage of constitutively impersonal causal factors, or perhaps ‘tropes’. Thus no necessary relations or common universal ‘patterns’ *really* obtain amongst these self-standing, autonomously intelligible atomic occurrences. Accordingly, the conventional world—filled with medium-sized, spatio-temporally extended objects determined through the purely conventional ascription of predicates—is not finally ‘real.’ Ultimately speaking, the general ideas and internal relations we reflexively employ to render our apprehension of the world intelligible do not align with their objective, causal ground that is constitutively *otherwise*.⁴

In the non-dual traditions of Kashmir Śaivism, we have seen the ‘realistic idealism’ of Pratyabhijñā attempt to strike its own middle ground. In this system, the conventional world is perfectly ‘real’ *just insofar as the dynamic unity of reflexive consciousness (vimarśa) is coextensive with the substantial fact of manifestation (prakāśa)*. Hence the scholastic principle of *ens et unum convertuntur* still applies to Pratyabhijñā, but only because the reflexive unity that realizes diversity is no different from the unity that comprises substantial or objective existence. To recognize the conventional world is thereby to make it ‘ultimately real’—but, by that very token, *only ‘real’ in the very manner it phenomenally appears (ābhāsa)*.

⁴ Recall that Dharmakīrti argued that the beginningless nature of *karma* explained the emergence of conceptual differentiation apropos an ultimate reality that is constitutively untethered from *karma*. Utpala would go on to challenge Dharmakīrti’s ability to explain this transformation of undifferentiated reality into differentiation based strictly on his own nominalist principles (cf. Prueitt: 2020).

As already discussed, for Utpala and Abhinava, Śiva is an absolutely free and sovereign (*svātantrya*) mind (*cit*), identified with the true Self who resides in the heart of all beings. According to the cosmogonic play (*krīḍā*), Śiva recognizes that the creative power (i.e., Śakti) to ‘conceal’ Himself from Himself necessarily inheres within His own omnipotent being. As Śiva enacts his primordial play of hide-and-seek, the manifold universal ‘drama’ appears within the ‘stage’ of His own infinite consciousness. In the very act of *knowing* His own boundless nature, then, Śiva thereupon necessarily *creates* a bounded world seemingly independent of Himself. In this way, the inherent playfulness of Lord Śiva—a testament to the creative feminine energy of Śakti—serves as a bridge between the divides of conventional and ultimate reality.⁵ In Pratyabhijñā, Śiva’s cosmogonic departure entails the metaphysical union of the three primary *śaktis* that manifest reality: knowledge (*jñāna*), action (*krīya*) and volition (*iccha*) (one might choose to render these *śaktis* in Peircean terms as forms of Secondness, Thirdness, and Firstness, respectively).

Accordingly, for Pratyabhijñā authors, the triadic relation of Śiva-Śakti consists of the *ekstasis* (*ānanda*) of spontaneous creation—literally an eternal state of God ‘stepping-outside of Himself’ to relish in the free exercise and development of His innate power. Śakti therefore embodies Śiva’s intrinsic capacity to participate in the joy of creation through freely giving Himself over to the incomprehensible mystery of His own spontaneous being. This is why knowledge of the *ātman* in Pratyabhijñā consists in the transcendental rapture of ‘wonder’ or ‘astonishment’ (*camatkāra*). Indeed, for the aesthetic philosophy of Abhinava, in particular,

⁵ In chapter 3 of the Kashmir Śaiva text the *Vārāṇasīmāhātmya*, Brahmā explains the apparent paradoxical activity of Śiva as such: “Those who have no faith see the path of the world, viz. the Laukika and Apavargika, on the one hand, and the great path, the Lokottara, on the other, as a contradiction. But in God the two paths are united. In him there is no contradiction. His ways are inscrutable; only he can unite these contradictions and he does so because he delights in play (*krīḍā*)” (Bisschop: 27). The verses read: *ekataś ca jaganmārgaṃ laukikaṃ cāpavargikaṃ / lokottaraṃ mahāmārgaṃ viparītam aho tvayi / drśyate bhuvanādhāra yatra śraddhā na vidyate. krīḍayā yāni deveśa karmāni kuruṣe prabho / tāni lokeṣu drśyante paramārthapradāni tu* (VM 3.6-7).

spiritual perfection consists, not in absolute conceptual *knowledge* of a pre-established infinite totality, but an *affective awe* at the bottomless depth of the Lord’s spontaneous creative power: “For the “I”—which is wonder [and] the self of all that appears—is the spontaneous, innate power, the mantra of the supreme goddess *vāc*. As it is written, ‘the essential nature of all visible phenomena rest within the ‘I.’” This alone is the mystery that surpasses all mysteries.”⁶

In her recent philosophical study on the centrality of *camatkāra* in Abhinava’s system, Biernacki insightfully notes that “[w]e usually imagine transcendence as a space of timelessness, above the change and flux of the world. Abhinavagupta instead rewrites time back into this transformed notion of transcendence” (2023: 52). Biernacki brings attention to the important fact that Abhinava’s acceptance of the willful essence of the intentional *ātman* also speaks to its irreducible *temporality*: For the dynamic nature of self-knowledge necessarily entails constant surprise relative to the constitutively unknown horizon of pure ‘openness’ (67). Abhinava’s rejection of transcendence as a ‘view from nowhere’ thus insists that “subjectivity is foundational and all-pervasive; even if we imagine a transcendent deity, the idea of a foundational subjectivity entails that it is located within a particular, immanent “I,” with a specific orientation in time and place” (ibid). Likewise, although Śiva is *beyond time* in ultimate terms (since the nature of *ātman* is never fully representable to itself), we suggested in Chapter V that Utpala’s conception of Śiva’s creative act of self-recognition nevertheless can be thought to exhibit a certain irreducible *temporal* structure.

On a more processual reading of Pratyabhijñā, then, one should rightfully say that the reflexive nature of the *ātman* entails some measure of necessary ignorance, incompleteness, and even ‘*apekṣā*,’ on the part of the Godhead itself. Though Pratyabhijñā presents Śiva as the one

⁶ *prakāśasya hi svābhāvikaḥ trima-paravān-mantra-vīrya-camatkārātma aham iti / yathoktam prakāśasyātmaniśrāntir ahaṃbhāvo hi kīrtitaḥ iti / tad eva guhyam atirahasyam* (PTV: 204).

supreme and perfect being, I think its surface absolutist and monistic pronouncements often belie this more processual interpretation of the tradition. For the creative, aesthetic, and affective essence of the *ātman* effectively suggest that even an all-powerful consciousness must, paradoxically, *surrender to the unknown* for any *positive* sense of metaphysical freedom to ever occur—that is, not merely a freedom *from* the will of independent entities and knowledge of limitative principles or regularities. At least to this extent, the Kashmir Śaiva tradition potentially overcomes Hartshorne’s Whiteheadian critique of traditional theology in the Indian context: The notion of absolute omniscience in a timeless ‘view from nowhere’—in the very attempt to establish a foundational ground for teleological and axiological ideals—inadvertently puts forth a ‘nihilistic theology’ that denies objective validity to the human and temporal sense of freedom, purpose, and value fulfillment.

Indeed, the very fact that Śiva—i.e., ‘mind-at-large’—can spontaneously and reflexively realize general signs to mediate its phenomenal encounter with its own unboundedness testifies to the transcendental *continuity* of determinate, finite knowledge with the unconditioned and unrepresentable. On our temporal, Peircean reading of the Trika system, then, the power of the self to sense its own groundless will is what we conventionally call the monadic feeling of the ‘indeterminate future’ or Firstness; the power of the self to give itself to itself—and thereby generate conceptual diversity in the mnemonic trace of habitual actions and conventions—is knowledge of ‘the determinate past’ or Secondness; and the power of the self to mediate between indeterminate unity and determinate diversity is the ‘recognitive present,’ i.e., the irreducible action of unity-in-diversity, or Thirdness. This is why, no matter how deeply the self probes its own nature, it can never give itself over to complete epistemic closure; the reflexive nature of the action that manifests appearances can, by that very token, never reveal itself as their objective

causal ground. And this is also why wonder, or mystery, will always comprise the irreducible essence of experience; the constructive self-realization of Reason eternally defers its arrival at any completed state of total rational unity, an ‘isomorphic’ disclosure of perfect self-representation.⁷

In mapping the Triadic process that manifests the cognitive event onto the mythological creation of the objective universe, Pratyabhijñā seeks to identify personal mental activity with the middling *śakti* whose vibrational movement between the realms of unity and diversity realizes the objective world. Touching upon this point, Lawrence writes that “the midpoint of the Trika cosmic triad...the Pure Wisdom that animates the Pratyabhijñā system[,] is located at a stage of the homologous emanation and return. It is located at the midpoint between origin/goal and ordinary experience—as it were, a midpoint to the midpoint” (ibid.). At this ‘midpoint of midpoints’ the tantric practitioner recognizes Śiva’s ritual play of ‘past’ cosmogonic departure and ‘future’ teleological reunion as the cognitive event—the ‘presencing’—of their own individual mind. In this way, the Pratyabhijñā system represents a strong contender for the most comprehensive philosophical attempt in India to reconcile conventional and ultimate reality through a transcendental synthesis of pluralistic realism and monistic idealism, and thereby secures the validity of its own non-dualistic metaphysics.

⁷ I have discussed the set-theoretical problems with this totalizing notion of omniscience apropos the Jains in Berger (2022). My thinking about these formal approaches to the problems of omniscience has been heavily influenced by Hofstadter’s trailblazing work in cognitive science and the limitative theorems of formal and symbolic systems. For instance, in one of his most provocative passages, he writes: “The other metaphorical analogue to Gödel’s Theorem which I find provocative suggests that ultimately, we cannot understand our own mind/brains...Just as we cannot see our faces with our own eyes, is it not inconceivable to expect that we cannot mirror our complete mental structures in the symbols which carry them out? All the limitative Theorems of metamathematics and the theory of computation suggest that once the ability to represent your own structure has reached a certain critical point, that is the kiss of death: it guarantees that you can never represent yourself totally. Gödel’s Incompleteness Theorem, Church’s Undecidability Theorem, Turing’s Halting Problem, Tarski’s Truth Theorem—all have the flavour of some ancient fairy tale which warns you that ‘To seek self-knowledge is to embark on a journey which will always be incomplete, cannot be charted on a map, will never halt, cannot be described’” (697). This view of mind also buttresses the phenomenological metaphor of the ‘blind spot’ in the visual field to critique overly scientific approaches to understanding reality in terms of the causal closure of particular objects and deterministic laws (cf. Frank, Gleiser, and Thompson: 2024).

There is another Indian philosophical tradition, of course, that explicitly claims to forge a ‘middle path’ between these extremes: Madhyamaka. We have avoided discussing Madhyamaka, given its tangential relevance to Dharmakīrti and the Pramāṇavāda tradition, which also happen to represent Utpala’s main interlocutors on the problem of relations.⁸ However, we have occasionally gestured to the fact that, like Pratyabhijñā, Madhyamaka purports to offer some theoretical *via media* that reconciles the traditional disjunction between ultimate and conventional reality. For Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti, to be co-dependently originated in *samsāra*—viz., in the Madhyamaka sense of being ‘empty of intrinsic nature’—*just is* to be ultimately ‘real’ from the perspective of *nirvāṇa*.⁹ Like Pratyabhijñā, then, Madhyamaka eschews the radical revisionism of Abhidharma metaphysics and seems to offer some theoretical bridge between conventional and ultimate reality that eventually brings the embodied practitioner to the perfection of Buddhahood.

Of course, like all Buddhist and Hindu schools of philosophy, these two traditions disagree profoundly, *inter alia*, about the ontological status of *selfhood*: In the Madhyamaka system, the *ātman*, along with all conventional designations, is empty of intrinsic nature; there is no sense in which a ‘self’ can be said to subsist *independently* of the diverse phenomenon of the world and *vice versa*; indeed, this is just what it means for self and world to arise co-dependently, and thus not bear any intrinsic nature.¹⁰ For Pratyabhijñā, on the other hand, the

⁸ A short section of Abhinava’s TĀ, which deals with causation, references the Madhyamaka school. As far as I know, Utpala does not explicitly mention Madhyamaka in his works.

⁹ In perhaps the most famous verses of the MMK (24.18-19) Nāgārjuna tells us that “Whatever is dependently co-arisen, that is explained to be emptiness. Being a dependent designation, that is itself the middle way. Something that is not dependently arisen, such a thing does not exist. Therefore, a non-empty thing does not exist.” *yah pratīyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatām tām pracakṣmahe / sā prajñaptir upādāya pratīpat saiva madhyamā // apratītya samutpanno dharmah kaścīn na vidyate / yasmāt tasmād aśūnyo hi dharmah kaścīn na vidyate* (cf. Siderits and Katsura: 2013).

¹⁰ In a relevant comment regarding the Yogācārin discourse with Pratyabhijñā, Kaul (2020) notes that for Buddhists, “the universe is dynamic albeit this dynamism does not belong to any potential agent. They reject the existence of a permanent self (*ātman*) and only admit the existence of mind. For them, the mind is able to perform all roles of self, and so there is no need to admit to the idea of self. There are actions but no permanent agent to those actions.”

ātman represents the panentheistic ground of all phenomena; while it constitutes the known world, it also transcends it.¹¹ In this regard, we might say that the direction of metaphysical causation always moves *asymmetrically* from Self to World for the Śaiva realists, while in the Madhyamaka discourse it would appear *symmetrical*, insofar as both are empty and arise together, and thus depend upon each other in equal measure (cf. Odin: 1982). Rhetorically, at least, these two schools therefore appear to adopt familiar oppositional stances towards the nature of selfhood and the vectoral properties of causation.

Yet, it is precisely *because* world and self are both *equally empty* in Madhyamaka that one might simply deem ‘conventional’ and ‘ultimate’ reality *practically coextensive*; to be ‘conventionally’ real *just is* to be co-dependently originated, which, *ipso facto*, *just is* to be ‘empty’ of intrinsic nature, and thus to be ‘ultimately’ real. For this very reason, some argue that Madhyamaka ends up counterintuitively *affirming* the ‘ultimate reality’ of practical reason—but, again, only to the extent that ‘practical reason’ is also ‘empty’ of any intrinsic nature. On this reading, Madhyamaka effectively reinscribes the conventional world back into the true *dharma* through a pragmatic-transcendental construal of ‘emptiness.’ In this case, it does not designate a final *description* of any ‘ultimately real ground of *dharma*s,’ but rather a *methodological commitment* to avoid hypostatization of the referents of conventional discourse as though they existed independently of their situational context—which, on this pragmatic reading, would also necessarily include reference to the conventional ideas of the reflexive and temporal *knower*.

On these sorts of readings, the pragmatic arguments of Madhyamaka consists in their unwillingness to hang the hat of co-dependent interrelatedness onto the hook of mere *logical necessity* between two theoretical terms—as though ‘emptiness’ was *itself* some *internal*

Although Madhyamaka does not admit the ultimacy of mind (insofar as mind is empty) the basic point about agency still holds.

¹¹ Note that Nemeč (2014) proposes a distinction between Somānanda’s ‘pantheism’ and Utpala’s ‘panentheism.’

‘property’ of every existent.¹² Instead, there is nothing ‘more real’ than our conventional discursive practices because the co-dependence in virtue of which they themselves arise does not itself differ from the manner whereby anything *at all* can even be intelligibly said to arise. For this reason, the purported ‘emptiness of emptiness’ does not reflect the annihilation of the teleological and soteriological path of Buddhism, but rather a necessary condition for its practical realization. We can consider everything equally ‘real’ or ‘empty’—it does not really make a semantic difference, insofar as both only refer to the co-dependent *manner* whereby anything *at all* may be meaningfully said to arise, viz., not in terms of any reified ground somehow ‘outside’ of the total process of co-dependent realization.

Hence, while the directionality of the relationship that manifests reality might have important *metaphysical* ramifications for whether one finally throws in their lot with Pratyabhijñā or Madhyamaka, I submit that, *strictly with respect to the transcendental logic of practical reason*, it does not make a substantial *epistemic* difference: In both cases, a similar relational limit on the representational capacities of knowledge is derived from the intrinsically *constructive* nature of experience itself. As Whitehead notes with regard to the transcendental project of Kant: “[He was] that great philosopher who first, fully and explicitly, introduced into

¹² Arnold expresses this pragmatic construal of Madhyamaka: “[E]mptiness,’ if it picks out the fact that things *necessarily exist in relationship*, may be a logical category as basic as the principle of non-contradiction—one such that any attempt even to imagine alternatives to it inevitably *presupposes* it. To the extent that is right, we could be thought here to have an argument that exploits the kind of self-contradiction that goes with something more like *logical necessity*—which would perhaps be to say that this is a transcendental argument in the mode of theoretical reason. But that would seem to be just what Madhyamaka refuses when its proponents urge (as they often do) that *emptiness itself is empty*. That is, proponents of Madhyamaka thus apply their analysis (of everything as “empty”) *to the analysis itself*, in order to foreclose the possibility that their own analysis will be taken for another example of precisely the kind of independent level of description they want to refute. “Emptiness,” the proponents of Madhyamaka thus urge, is not itself what there really is; rather, it characterizes what exists—specifically, *as existing dependently*, which is the only way that anything can—and is therefore only intelligible *relative to existents*” (2008b: 143-44). These sorts of *constructive* pragmatic readings, among other things, challenge Rortyan interpretations of Madhyamaka (e.g., Brons: 2020). Such ‘deconstructionist’ pragmatic approaches tend to over-emphasize, I think, its purported anti-essentialism, such that they inadvertently reify the notion of anti-essentialism itself in a way that the Madhyamaka would balk at; for this overlooks its principal significance as a *methodological commitment*, not a positive predicative claim *about* the ultimate nature of reality. Although Siderits does not invoke Peirce as a more fitting pragmatic counterpart, he notes that “Rorty’s form of antirealism is precisely the sort from which I have been at pains to distance Madhyamaka” (2015, fn. e).

philosophy the conception of an act of experience as a constructive functioning, transforming subjectivity into objectivity, or objectivity into subjectivity; the order is immaterial in comparison with the general idea” (2010 [1929]: 156).¹³ Just to the extent, then, that the *order* of the cognitive relation is ‘immaterial’ to a more transcendental account of experience as a processual constructive functioning, I would argue that some of the theoretical and methodological common ground between Pratyabhijñā and Madhyamaka represents a profitable and neglected area of South Asian philosophical scholarship.

Specifically, I would urge that their common desire to refute Abhidharma in explicitly non-dualistic frameworks prompts transcendental arguments from practical reason that characteristically limit the scope of radical skepticism or revisionary metaphysics. Both schools may be said to appeal to a pragmatic semantics that challenges the sense of Ābhidharmika’s rational *use* of the terms ‘ultimate,’ ‘conventional,’ and ‘reality’ given their own practical situatedness: Put rather crudely, the Ābhidharmika cannot really *mean* anything *more* by ‘*ultimate* reality’ than the continuous constructive activity that reflexively constitutes their own *conventional discursive practices*. These traditions therefore propose a salvation *of* the conventional—not, that is, a salvation *from* the conventional. Recall in this regard, as well, that even for the theistic Pratyabhijñā school, although the self is a universal agent, it is not an agent ultimately distinct from the pure dynamism of *śakti*. In both cases, the pragmatic referents of ‘conventional’ and ‘ultimate’ must make some sort of contact because *the subjective dynamic that realizes the meaning of general ideas cannot be intelligibly distinguished from the objective dynamics that comprise the causal ground thereof*. These reflect prescriptive and descriptive accounts of a *total movement*. While the *metaphysical source* of this dynamic movement is

¹³ Personally, I would suggest that the project of transcendental philosophy ought always to attempt to forge some *via media* between these oppositional descriptions; like ‘inhalation’ and ‘exhalation,’ both sides are probably required to make sense of concrete experience.

doubtlessly distinct for Madhyamaka and Pratyabhijñā, I would urge that—again, just to the proposed epistemic extent—there is not much philosophical daylight between their final transcendental conclusions.

Much of the viability of this thesis, as I see it, would hinge upon the doctrine of *svasaṃvedana/svasaṃvitti*—and, specifically, whether the Madhyamaka thinkers have a theoretical stake in refuting the intrinsic self-consciousness of cognition. Several scholars have discussed the divide between Candrakīrti’s Madhyamaka and Śāntarakṣita’s more Yogācārin views on the matter.¹⁴ I do not have the space here to go into the complexities of this debate, let alone its Tibetan reception. But I believe several interesting, constructive upshots might attend a comparative analysis of Śāntarakṣita’s more moderated stance towards *svasaṃvedana* and the Pratyabhijñā system.

For example, insofar as Pratyabhijñā and Yogācāra-Madhyamaka both give similar *pragmatic* accounts of intentional and semantic content, one could potentially leverage this fact to splice Indian *philosophical* and *metaphysical/theological* claims with a characteristically Jamesian razor: If the final ‘cataphatic’ nature of the *ātman* and ‘apophatic’ nature of *śūnyatā* are, for all *practical* intents and purposes, coreferential *qua* boundless or groundless reflexive action, then *what exactly* are these non-dualist schools arguing *about*?¹⁵ This question prompts a

¹⁴ The unregenerate Mādhyamika Candrakīrti refuted the Yogācāra doctrine of *svasaṃvitti* at length, arguing that, not only is Dignāga’s theory of self-awareness not *ultimately* real, but—perhaps more surprisingly—it is not even *conventionally* real. Śāntarakṣita’s more moderated Yogācāra-Madhyamaka stance accepted the conventional reality of self-consciousness, but still denied its ultimate reality in accord with the universal doctrine of emptiness. Cf., e.g., Williams (1998); Arnold (2010; 2021) Garfield (2006); and Thompson (2011).

¹⁵ Compare Dyczkowski (1987: 54) with respect to the interpenetrative nature of yogic knowledge in Kashmir Śaivism: “Here the part is discovered to be the whole, that is, consciousness *in toto*. In the sphere beyond relative distinctions, the yogi realizes that (all) the categories of existence are present in every single category. The yogi experiences every individual particular as the sum total of everything else. He recognizes that all things have one nature and that every particular is all things. This is the ‘essence’ (*sāra*) or co-extensive unity (*sāmarasya*) of all things.” This sort of non-dual language of symmetrical categorical interpenetration obviously has strong descriptive resemblances to Madhyamaka and later Mahāyāna discourses on the *dharmakāya*—and, despite my current interpretive commitments, brings home just how tricky the symmetrical vs. asymmetrical debate over relations is in the Indian non-dual traditions.

mutual challenge for each school to clarify the meaning of certain terms in their particular ‘language game’: If the substantial meaning of ‘*ātman*’ or ‘Śiva’ is really just a rational unity of *pure dynamism*, in what sense can such a ‘self’ really coincide with, or resemble, our *conventional, personal, embodied* sense of ‘self’? And, alternatively, if everything is equally ‘empty’ of *all* intrinsic properties—perhaps even the reflexive nature of awareness itself!—then how do we make sense of the Cartesian appeal to the irrefutable presence of the phenomenal subject, let alone the manifest temporal *asymmetry* of the causal process?

Given the fact that Utpala did not appear to engage directly with Nāgārjuna, there has been very little comparative work done with respect to these two schools. But, in my view, one constructive result is the bringing into relief of a paradigm I call ‘groundless teleology’: This is the principle that the *normative, aesthetic, and axiological levels of description that characterize personal reflexive judgment need not derive their objective validity from any causal ground extrinsic to the nature of the very process that provides the logical conditions for its practical manifestation*. In simpler terms, this expresses an Indian theory of the enactive metaphor that the nature of cognition consists in ‘laying down a path in walking.’¹⁶ We do not, in other words, need to posit a noumenal realm or omniscient God, independent of the temporal and constructive nature of practical reason, to find a sufficiently satisfactory home in the cosmos for human and personal concerns; through this middle path, we avoid the ugly alternatives of nihilistic relativism and dogmatic absolutism.

I regard the notion of groundless teleology as implicit in James’s phenomenological analysis of the transitive form of ‘causality-at-work,’ which stresses that the inchoate relational

¹⁶ See Varela, et al. (2017: 235-52) for an exploration of this theme in the context of embodied cognition, and, in particular its relevance for avoiding nihilism in the face of ontological groundlessness.

causes of cognition do not manifest as any distinct fact or object independent of the qualitative flux that comprises agential experience. To bring attention to an illustrative passage by James:

Our outcome so far seems therefore to be only this, that the attempt to treat “cause,” for conceptual purposes, as a separable link, has failed historically, and has led to the denial of efficient causation, and to the substitution for it of the bare descriptive notion of uniform sequence among events. Thus intellectualist philosophy once more has had to butcher our perceptual life in order to make it “comprehensible.” Meanwhile, the concrete perceptual flux, taken just as it comes, offers in our own activity-situations perfectly comprehensible instances of causal agency. *The transitive causation in them does not, it is true, stick out as a separate piece of fact for conception to fix upon.* Rather does a whole subsequent field grow continuously out of a whole antecedent field because it seems to yield new being of the nature called for, while the feeling of causality-at-work flavors the entire concrete sequence as salt flavors the water in which it is dissolved (1979: 109 [emphasis mine]).¹⁷

The qualitative ‘flavor’ of causality-at-work is not something that sticks out like a *term* in experience—one that we can ostensibly point to and say “Look, here it is! I found it—the causal relation!” This is clearly a category error for James, in the same way that I cannot pick up and throw the tartness of a lemon, or the redness of a flower. Indeed, ‘causality’ in its *intentional, lived* sense, is the ineffable *feeling* (*‘flavor/color’*) of partaking in a reality that is *being created as it is happening*. The continuity between perceptual feelings and conceptual objects, in other words, refers precisely to what the experience of causation *is*. To this extent, Utpala and James concur that the relational unity of mind does not constitute a personal perspective *on* a wholly ‘objective,’ impersonal reality, but is itself rather the essential expression *of* that very reality.¹⁸

And while Madhyamaka, of course, emphasizes the ultimacy of emptiness as the middle path, we have seen that on some constructive pragmatic interpretations, at least, we can reasonably read Nāgārjuna as effectively viewing human experience as a spontaneous ‘constructive functioning’ whose relational essence places a certain necessary limit on the

¹⁷ Cf. Pred (46-8) on this point.

¹⁸ Cf. Arnold (2021: 67), who makes a similar point with respect to Peirce and James in a discussion on the transcendental category of Thirdness. For the Pratyabhijñā thinkers, though, this is just another way of saying that nominal ‘reality’ and modal ‘realization’ are non-dual. As Kṣemarāja writes in his commentary on the *Stanzas on Vibration*: “Indeed, all things are manifest because they are nothing but manifestation. The point being that nothing is manifest apart from manifestation” (SN: 12; trans. in Dyczkowski 1987: 52). Like Arnold, I interpret this sort of claim to be in the same ballpark as the Peircean thesis of the irreducibility of Thirdness.

capacity of cognition to apprehend its own objective ‘ground.’¹⁹ In Madhyamaka, this limit manifests as a methodological commitment to *never regard the referents of conventional discourse as somehow ‘more real’ than the co-dependent mode of their arising*. Similarly, in Pratyabhijñā, we have seen that the transcendental unity of *prakāśa* and *vimarśa* entails that the conventional manifestation of the world is perfectly ‘real,’ *but only in precisely the dynamical way it self-consciously appears*—no more and no less. The constructive functioning of mind therefore horseshoes apophatic and cataphatic dialectics into a model of ultimate reality as a fundamentally groundless creative process, albeit one whose existential *modus operandi* is necessarily structured through our own reflexive discursive practices.

I hope this brief presentation has communicated something about how a constructive theory of ‘groundless teleology’ might be profitably abstracted from a comparative pragmatic interpretation of the non-dualism of Pratyabhijñā and Madhyamaka.

Time, Freedom, and Philosophy of Religion

In closing, I would like to reflect upon how the notion of ‘groundless teleology’ impacts contemporary debates in philosophy of religion. It is a truism that the relationship between philosophy and religion hinges on the ultimate nature of reason. In the West, the movement from

¹⁹ On this point, recall that, according to Peirce, the Firstness of mind does not signify contact with a determinate objective ground, because aboriginal intuition is not the appearance of a *positive representation* (which requires semiosis), but merely a definite *limit on the mind’s own representational capacities*. He expresses this in an unpublished MS around the time of the ‘cognition series’ in *Mind*: “Therefore, there is nothing absolutely out of the mind, but the first impression of sense is the most external thing in existence. Here we touch material idealism. But we have adopted, also, another idealistic //conclusion/doctrine//, that there is no intuitive cognition. It follows that the first impression of sense is not cognition but only the limit of cognition. It may therefore be said to be so far out of the mind, that it is as much external as internal. Our experience of any object is developed by a process continuous from the very first, of change of the cognition and increase in the liveliness of consciousness. At the very first instant of this process, there is no consciousness but only the beginning of becoming conscious. It is also not a real state of mind because it instantaneously passes away” (1868: MS 149).

the critical approach of Kant to the absolute idealism of Hegel represents two transcendental approaches to this question: That is, does the ultimacy of reason consist merely in the deduction of *a priori* limitations on knowledge and action that necessarily attend the rational unity of synthetic apperception? Or does mind manifest ‘objectively’ in a manner that entails some temporal and historical *development* with respect to the general form of ‘Reason’ *itself*?

In the epigraph, Abhinava expresses the dialectical synthesis of reason as the metaphysical movement of *śakti* from apparent disjunction (*bheda*) to ultimate conjunction (*abheda*). On this Hegelian, dialectical construal of Pratyabhijñā, the conventional appearance of pluralism represents a necessary premise for its ultimate ‘sublation’ in synthetic unity. Yet, as just discussed, this movement of reason cannot ever come to rest in a substantial or static state, because the mind’s mediation between syllogistic or inferential signs must necessary instantiate the same creative principles that govern the objective concrescence of the recognitive event. Reason, like the natural world, is thus always in a restless state of incipient growth and evolution. For Peirce, the person only touches base with concrete reality—and thus does not remain skeptically alienated from the teleological object of inquiry—precisely insofar as the temporal form of practical reason itself reflects the creative process of nature.²⁰ Empirical knowledge therefore does not simply consist in ignorance of the *necessary logical relations* that obtain between pre-existent and general terms in the substantial mind of God (*pace* Bradley and Blanshard), but in the ever-present existential reconciliation of unbounded possibility and bounded actuality—or what we might otherwise simply call ‘thinking.’

²⁰ It is for this reason that Peirce strongly defended the idea that ‘abduction,’ or the invention of novel hypotheses, testifies to the irreducible Thirdness of inferential reasoning: “It is true that the whole universe and every feature of it must be regarded as rational, that is as brought about by the logic of events. But it does not follow that it is *constrained* to be as it is by the logic of events; for the logic of evolution and of life need not be supposed to be of that wooden kind that absolutely constrains a given conclusion. The logic may be that of the inductive or hypothetic inference” (1897-8: CP 6.218).

The triadic and temporal form of practical reason leads to an important clarification of the internal relationship between the disciplines of philosophy and religion. In particular, it has been fashionable in recent years for religious scholars to deemphasize doctrinal and philosophical motivations for religious commitments, and instead focus on things like physical embodiment, ritual practices, relics, narrative devices, and other expressions of religious life. Part of this shift doubtlessly reflects the pervasive influence of scientific, behaviorist, and cognitivist approaches to religious practices and human behavior more generally.²¹ But another reason for the shift involves a general cultural movement towards embodied or standpoint epistemology and the particular historical, anthropological, and sociological factors that led to the material formation of doctrinal and textual positions.²²

Furthermore, in the study of South Asia, the specter of Said's (1978) orientalism has often understandably led modern scholars to deemphasize the 'etic' abstractions of translations of original manuscripts and attempt to communicate the 'emic' practice of Indian religions 'on-the-ground.' For example, Schopen (1997: 1-2) writes that Buddhist studies should take its bearings from archeological and epigraphical material that "can be reasonably well located in time and space," as these resources reflect "at least a part of what Buddhists—both laypeople and monks—*actually* practiced and believed" [emphasis mine]. This is opposed to the 'heavily edited' canonical or sacred material, which only survives in 'very recent' manuscript traditions and was primarily "intended...to inculcate an ideal[, one that only] a small atypical part of the Buddhist community wanted that community to believe or practice" (3). Hence texts do not convey the 'real' or 'actual' spirit of Buddhism as a distinctly religious form of life.

²¹ Cf., e.g., Xygalatas: 2014; Guthrie, S, et al.,: 1980; Barrett: 2010; Boyer: 2002; Dennett: 2006; Pyysiäinen: 2009; Lawson, E. T., & McCauley, R. N.: 1990.

²² Asad's defense of St. Augustine is representative in this regard: "The relation between power and truth is an ancient theme...Augustine developed his views on the creative religious function of power after his experience with the Donatist heresy, insisting that coercion was a condition for the realization of truth, and discipline essential to its maintenance" (34).

While these sorts of materialist and behaviorist approaches have important insights to contribute to various areas of humanities and the social sciences, I believe they often overshoot their own explanatory scope when it comes to philosophical interpretations of religious belief. In particular, views like Schopen's betray a decidedly *nominalist* conception of authentic religious life; things only count as genuine *explanations* of religious belief insofar as they correspond to relatively 'well determined' objects or actions in a particular time and space. Roberts explains this perspective:

[The] historicist social formation theory entails that concepts such as 'religious experience,' 'religious identity,' and 'religious impulses' are not useful explanatory categories because they obscure the historical and social causes of human behavior. On this view, the human subject is but a function of his or her social and historical context, an 'artifact': all our thoughts, feelings, and actions—including those we call 'religious'—can be explained as always the effect but never the cause of historical change and religious behavior... To consider human beings and their experiences and meanings simply as 'artifacts' of social formation is to reject the analytic and explanatory usefulness of concepts such as 'subjectivity,' 'freedom,' and 'creativity'" (2013: 58–9).

Accordingly, on this reductive account of religious life, the constitutively *general* reasons one reflexively adopts for religious belief only make rational sense when we determine the efficient causal bases for their emergence—whether those be cognitive modules or neuronal networks; the psychological pressures of contingent socio-cultural power dynamics; the physical laws of biological evolution; or any other number of other causal explanations of religious phenomena. In short, then, we need not take religious adherents at their word, since *the general reasons they give for their own religious beliefs do not actually correspond the causal or material ground thereof*, which is wholly objective, impersonal, and constitutively otherwise.

However, as we have seen, the 'bald naturalism' of this view betrays a certain deflationary conception of the religious agent—namely, their free 'responsiveness to reasons.' In this regard, some recent literature in philosophy of religion primarily critiques the current materialist paradigm in religious studies with a Kantian appeal to the necessary *positive freedom*

of practical reason.²³ Brandom summarizes this Kantian conception of freedom: “The central feature...of any vision of human freedom is the account offered of *positive freedom* (freedom to)—those respects in which our activity should be distinguished from the mere lack of external causal constraint (freedom from) exhibited by such processes as the radioactive decay of an atomic nucleus” (ibid.) For Kantian theorists, ‘positive freedom’ is measured in terms of the spontaneous capacity of a rational agent to reflexively adopt and relinquish normative commitments based on the self-professed *reasons* given for such and such practical decision. Here the sovereign freedom to do something corresponds to the reflexive capacity to bind oneself to a law or rule that one must thereupon dutifully choose to follow.²⁴ One is free to consciously create, then, just insofar as one has the capacity to reflexively conform to normative standards one did not consciously create—otherwise, one is merely a causally determined *object*, and thus, by that very measure, negatively free *from* the practical—and temporal—considerations of a decision-making *agent*.

In Brandom’s expressivist form of pragmatism, he has consistently sought to balance this Kantian conception of freedom—defined in terms of the personal responsibility one reflexively accrues through the implicit normative commitments of contentful judgment—with a Hegelian givenness of conventional social constraints that make possible the shared language game of ‘giving and asking for reasons,’ and thus the constitutive *normativity* of intentional experience. Here the free exercise of reason that leads to individual development (*Bildung*) depends upon reflexive conformity to a system of collectively instituted socio-cultural norms (viz., ‘culture’) that one did not consciously institute:

²³ For example, see the recent work of Schilbrack: 2014; Godlove: 2002; Cottingham: 2014; Lewis: 2015; Roberts: 2013; Mundra: 2017; and Arnold: 2021c.

²⁴ Korsgaard’s conception of *practical identities* answers to this Kantian sense of expressive freedom. A practical identity is “a description under which you value yourself, a description under which you find your life to be worth living and your actions to be worth undertaking” (2009: 101).

The self-cultivation of an individual consists in the exercise and expansion of expressive freedom by subjecting oneself to the novel discipline of a set of social practices one could not previously engage in, in order to acquire the capacity to perform in novel ways, express beliefs, desires, and intentions one could not previously even have...The cultivation of the community consists in the development of new sets of social practices, at once the result of individual self-cultivation (producing novel performances which, institutionalized as responses to other performances make possible new social practices) and the condition of it. It is in this sense that we speak of the “culture” of a group as the set of social practices they engage in (1979: 195).

On Brandom’s Hegelian reading of Kant, the normative relations that ultimately comprise semantic content are not merely ‘formal facts of constraint’ that resemble necessary relations of an *a priori* sort, but are reflexive representations of the social habits of the sovereign will of the collective—in Brandom’s terms, ‘the social synthesis of objective spirit’. For only “the language-using community has the last word about the linguistic correctness of the performances of its members” (188).²⁵ In this case, the ability to speak a language—and thus engage in the social habits that provide the normative grounds for intentional content—are dialectically co-enacted through the negative freedom of the entire objective community and the positive freedom of the human subject.²⁶ In this case, the ‘*groundless*’ autonomy of the community is itself a necessary presupposition in the cultivation and exercise of individual creative action and its authentic expression: “[It] is only by virtue of being constrained by the norms inherent in social practices that one can acquire the freedom of expression which the capacity to produce and understand novel utterances exhibits” (ibid). Though the linguistic norms that the

²⁵ Brandom addresses this Hegelian, ‘socialized’ reading of Kant in-depth in his recent (2019) monograph. Pippin (1989) also endorses a similarly influential version of Hegel’s notion of self-determination as extending Kant’s conception of spontaneity to the dialectical sphere of social norms: “Some kind of independent reflective activity (logically and causally independent of what can be directly apprehended), thought’s own projection of the structure within which the determinacy of its objects can be fixed, is required in order for thought to have objects (i.e., to be able to make cognitive claims about objects)” (1989: 201). For Pippin, the normative conditions for objective rationality rest upon the self-organization of concepts that abide completely free of natural determination. Intentional knowledge reflects a possession of prescriptively-laden concepts—that is, ones that are able to reflexively determine what another thing is in the normative ‘space of reasons’. See also Lewis (2005: 38), who explains that “[f]or Hegel, action can be free only when it is determined by the agent’s essence...Freedom as self-determination also precludes random or arbitrary action, precisely because such action is not determined by the self...Here freedom and necessity coincide.”

²⁶ As Lewis writes, “through its further development spirit can abstract from and reflect upon any of its particular habits. And, if spirit is fully free, it can change these habits as well” (2005: 57).

community *as a whole* adopts are purely conventional in the sense that they have no ground outside of the collective and impersonal ‘will’ or ‘*Geist*,’ the individual experiences their own creative freedom through reflexive conformation to the habits inherited from the shared history of an evolving social reality.

Although Brandom’s system reflects a much more naturalistic explanation of intentional content—namely, in terms of the non-intentional activity of collective social practices—like Pratyabhijñā and Madhyamaka, Brandom seeks his own pragmatic *via media* between the extremes of ‘pluralistic realism’ and ‘monistic idealism.’ While I am uncertain whether Brandom is right that one can explicitly delineate the minimal requirements of a system such that “it can be taken as [reflexively] making a claim that something is the case” (ibid., f.9), I believe his ‘idiom of expressive freedom’ improves upon Dennett’s materialistic theory of the ‘intentional stance’ (1996) insofar as one cannot—even *in principle*—determine ‘in advance’ the expressive capacities cultivated in a given culture. For “expressive freedom consists in the generation of new possibilities of performance which did not and could not exist outside the framework of norms inherent in the social practices which make up the language” (194). Hence “the production of *novel* expressive possibilities...in principle escapes classification and prediction by a priori theorizing” (ibid., 195-6). In other words, even the impersonal system of social norms that provides the objective basis of conceptual experience presupposes some indefinable ‘sense,’ let’s say, of ‘anticipation’ or ‘expectation’—viz., *apekṣā*—of its constitutive relevance to an open and indeterminate future.

On this more Hegelian view, the nature of religious life can only be fully understood from an irreducibly first-person perspective that grants humans a positive freedom for self-determination through reflexive conformation to a shared heritage of intersubjective standards of

correctness.²⁷ As Roberts affirms, scholars of religion therefore cannot make sense of religious beliefs without “commit[ting] ourselves to asking what practical difference it makes to study people...as if they were free” (2013: 94). For Roberts, we need not approach religious studies in strictly prescriptive or descriptive ways, but rather as “a complex dynamic of dependence and freedom, a freedom made possible in and through certain practices of inheritance, commitment, and inhabitation” (ibid., 106). While historical, social and scientific descriptions, etc., may contribute to half of this picture, the other half must refer to the constitutively *general reasons* autonomous agents articulate when making sense of their own religious experience.

In this constitutively normative—and, as I have stressed, *temporal*—account of the needful freedom of practical reason, the relational etymology of ‘*re-ligio*’ (meaning ‘to bind back’ from the Latin *re-ligare*) discloses its intrinsic philosophical import. For not only does the proper practice of ‘religion’ invariably entail some measure of reasoning about the nature of ultimate value, but one might equally say that ‘reasoning’ itself denotes the irreducibly ‘religious’ practice of ‘binding-back’; that is to say, just to the extent that the transcendental reality to which one ‘binds oneself’ here can only possibly refer to the *spontaneous conformation of thought to whatever modes of givenness it requires to make sense of its own practical action*. Since the autonomous adoption of general principles that bind one back to the conventional orders of the *past* necessarily thereby grant the capacity for personal and spiritual freedom in the ideal *future*, we can conclude that justified belief in any religious or soteriological doctrine is

²⁷ Godlove, e.g., writes that “I do not see how—except by taking the agent herself to be taking herself to be pursuing religious ends—to situate her movements in a specifically religious context, and so to see her movements as religious” (2002: 22; cf. Arnold: 2021c).

internally related to the evolving practices of the sovereign agents who reflexively grant these very doctrines their only possible measure of ultimate significance.²⁸

²⁸ Mundra (4) makes a similar point, citing Clayton on the existence of God: “If theistic arguments no longer make sense to so many of us today, this may be because we no longer find it possible to participate fully in the forms of life in which they were once so firmly embedded...It is not because they make no sense to us that we no longer participate, but because we do not participate, they no longer make sense” (Clayton 2006: 177).

APPENDIX 1

THE *SAMBANDHAPARIKṢĀ* OF DHARMAKĪRTI WITH THE *SAMBANDHAPARIKṢĀVṚTTI* BY DEVENDRABUDDHI

I. Refutation of Relations in General (1-6)

1. Refutation of Relation as Dependence

In order to refute relation as a substantial [or real] (*vastubhūtam*) entity, it is said—[in regard to] **dependence**, etc....

For if relation is dependence, what dependence could there be in regard to an [already] actual relatum? Therefore, in reality, there is no relation between any existents.

Dependence is being dependent on another. That [state of dependence] is a **relation** that could obtain in regard to a relatum that is actual or non-actual. Because an unactual entity has the nature of absence, the relation is not a substantial existent. But if [the relatum] is **actual, what is ‘being dependent’?** This is nothing at all; thus, there is no relation.

[Opponent:] Even an actual entity has some non-actual [aspect].

[Reply:] When that [entity] is actual, dependence also does not obtain, because the conceptual error of being both actual and non-actual is not overcome (*anatikramāt*). Further, one thing does not possess two forms, i.e., actual and non-actual. Since (*yatas evaṃ*) in this manner there is no dependence in regard to what is actual or otherwise [i.e., not actual], it follows that **in reality there is no relation between any existents**. There is no refutation (*apraśedha*) of conceptually elaborated entities [like ‘relation’] because they are not realities¹

2. Refutation of Relation as a Fusion of Forms

For how could relation be a fusion of forms if there are two? Therefore, in reality, there is not any relation on the part of things with distinct natures.

[Opponent:] Then **relation is a fusion of forms**, not dependence.

[Reply:] This is not so. **Given the twoness** of the relata, **how could this be**, i.e., a fusion of forms characterized as a *single* form? Surely it could not. Since there are no two relata even in the case of a unity, what relation is there (i.e., due to that [relation] being situated in two places)?

¹ *vastubhūtaṃ sambandhaṃ nirākartum āha – pāratantryam ityādi. pāratantryaṃ hi sambandhaḥ siddhe kā paratantratā / tasmāt sarvasya bhāvasya sambandho nāsti bhāvataḥ. pāratantryaṃ parāyattatā. sā sambandhaḥ sambandhinaḥ si-ddhasyāsiddhasya vā bhavet. asiddhasyābhāvarūpatvān na vastubhūtaḥ sambandhaḥ. siddhe ‘pi sambandhini kā paratantratā. naivety asamban-dhaḥ. siddhasyāpi kiñcid asiddham astīti. tatsiddhau pāratantryam api na saṅgacchate, siddhāsiddhabhāvidōṣavikalpānatikramāt. na caikasya niṣpannāniṣpanne rūpe staḥ. yata evaṃ na niṣpannasyetarasya vā pāratantryam. tasmāt sarvasya bhāvasya sambandho nāsti bhāvato vastu- taḥ. vikalpanirmitasyāpraśedho ‘vastutvāt.*

[Opponent:] It could be [said that] fusion is not a unity of natures.

[Reply:] What then?

[Opponent:] Being without interval.

[Reply:] So be it! What is then negated? Being without interval is only an *absence* of an interval, and thus there could be no real relation.

[Opponent:] Well, if being *without* interval is accepted as a relationship, why isn't being *with* an interval?

[Reply:] Because either way, there is no difference with respect to the intrinsic identity of the relata. Also, union (*prāpti*), etc., possess the same meaning as being without an interval; thus they need not be mentioned (*utghuṣ*). In this way, since relation is not even characterized by a fusion of forms, **therefore, in reality, no relation obtains with respect to things with distinct natures** (i.e., all entities) other than those superimposed by conceptual construction.²

3. Refutation of Relation as Reference-to-Another

Then, surely, relation is reference-to-another [viz., not a fusion of form]; [But] as a non-existent entity, how does it refer? And how does an existent entity, being indifferent to all, refer to [anything else]?

Then [*atha*] “**surely, relation is reference-to-another**, not a fusion of forms.” Even in this case, if relation is reference with respect to another that is referring, [then] the referring [entity] refers as either existent or non-existent. If non-existent, **how does a non-existent entity refer?** For a being whose nature is not complete in itself (*anabhinivṛtta*), there could be no property that is ‘reference’ of [another] being. What, therefore, is this relation *of*? **And as existent, being indifferent to all**—i.e., its own nature not referring to the nature of anything else—**how could [an entity] refer**, viz., how could there be a relation whereby there is reference? The rest [of the relations] are to be addressed like the case of dependence.³

² *rūpaśleṣo hi sambandho dvitve sa ca katham bhavet / tasmāt prakṛtibhinnānām sambandho nāsti bhāvataḥ. rūpaśleṣo hi sambandhaḥ, na pāratantryam iti cet, tan na. dvitve sambandhinoḥ sva. ...sa svarūpaśleṣaḥ svabhāvaikātmyalakṣaṇaḥ katham bhavet. naiva bhavet. aikye 'pi tayoḥ sambandhinor abhāvāt kaḥ sambandhaḥ, dviṣṭhatvād asya. syād etat – naikasvābhāvyaṃ śleṣaḥ. kin tarhi. nairantaryam iti. bhavatu. kaḥ pratiśedhaḥ. kevalam nairantaryam antarābhāva iti vastubhūtaḥ sambandho na syāt. yadi ca nairantaryam sambandhaḥ, sāntaratā kin na sambandha iṣyate, ubhayatrāpi sambandhinoḥ svabhāvasthiter abhedāt. prāptyādayo 'pi nairantaryārthasamāveśina ity anudghoṣyāḥ. yata evaṃ na rūpaśleṣalakṣaṇo 'pi sambandhaḥ, tasmāt prakṛtibhinnānām sarvabhāvānām sambandho nāsti bhāvato 'nyatra kalpanāsamāropitāt.*

³ *parāpekṣā hi sambandhaḥ so 'san katham apekṣate / saṃś ca sarvanirāśaṃso bhāvaḥ katham apekṣate. atha parāpekṣā hi sambandho na rūpaśleṣa iti. atrāpi parasyāpekṣamānasyāpekṣayā sambandhitve 'pekṣamāṇaḥ san vā 'pekṣate 'san vā. yady asan so 'san katham apekṣate. svayam anabhinivṛttasva bhāvasya bhāvasyāpekṣā na dharmāḥ syād iti kaḥ kasya sambandhaḥ. saṃś ca sarvanirāśaṃsaḥ sarvasvabhāvasvabhāvānapekṣo bhāvaḥ katham apekṣate yenāpekṣā sambandhaḥ syāt. śeṣam pāratantryavad vācyam.*

4. Denial of Monadic Relations

If a relation between two [relata] is due to one relationship, what is the relation of the two [relata] with that [one relation]? Furthermore, there is an endless regress; thus, there is no sense of relation.

Lest this problem be met, **if** one assumes that **relation is due to a single relationship between two relata**—viz., due to a relation with a single conjunction (*saṃyogena*), which is known as a distinct referent called a quality (*guṇa*), or with some real existent (i.e., an inexpressible property (*dharmā*) that is not a distinct referent (*anarthāntareṇa*))—, then in the case when there is no distinction [i.e., between the ‘relation’ and the ‘relata’], the two ‘relata’ would be conceived as isolated (*kevala*). Therefore, there is not any relationship. Furthermore, this is because the two relata are one, insofar as they are not distinct from the relation; and a real thing, even if inexpressible, cannot reasonably transgress the alternatives of being either a distinct or a non-distinct entity. In the case when [relation] is *not* a distinct entity, there cannot be any relation or relata. That is to say, let it be the case that a relation is separate or otherwise [i.e., not separate], then **what is the relation of those two with that**, i.e., what is the relationship of those two relata with that one [relation]? There is no such relation. For just as there is no relation between two relata because of the errors just mentioned, so too there is also no relation of the relata with that [relation]. Otherwise, why deny the case [above] of a relation between two ‘relata’ that are isolated?

Moreover, if one assumes that there is a relation on account of a relation with a single object, then a relation with a single object would also have to obtain for the relation and the relata. In accord with this acceptance of relation, in this case there would be a further relation to a single object; hence, there would be an **endless regress**. And thus, a relation to a single object is nowhere established. **Therefore**, if there is no relation anywhere, **there is no determination of a relation**. The idea of a relation does not correspond to a real thing if it could not come to rest [in a particular object]. If there is some conceptual construction of relation without a relation to a single object, there could be no [such] relation because the relation to a single object would also [obtain] with respect to the initial two relata. Yet, if there is a relation of those two relata taken as isolated, the errors have [already been] stated. This also addresses the conception of other properties such as ‘not having an interval’ etc.⁴

⁴ *dvayor ekābhisambandhāt sambandho yadi taddvayoḥ / kaḥ sambandho ‘navasthā ca na sambandhamatis tathā. mā prāpad ayaṃ doṣa iti. dvayoḥ sambandhinor ekābhisam-bandhāt – ekenārthāntareṇa guṇākhyena saṃyogenānarthāntareṇa vā dharmenāvācyena vastubhūtena sambandhāt kāraṇāt – sambandho yadīṣyate, tadā ’narthāntarapakṣe sambandhinou kevalau kalpitau syātām iti na kaścit sambandhaḥ. tato ’pi vā sambandhāt sambandhinor avya-tirekeṇaikatvāc ca, vastubhūtasyāvācyasyāpi nyāyato ’rthāntarānarthānta-ra vikalpānatikramāt. anarthāntarapakṣe na sambandhaḥ sambandhī vā kaścit. bhavatu vā sambandho ’rthāntaram anyo vā, tathā taddvayoḥ kaḥ sambandhaḥ, tenaikena dvayoḥ sambandhinoḥ kaḥ sambandhaḥ. na- iva. yathā sambandhinor yathoktadoṣān na sambandhaḥ, tathā ’nenāpi sambandhinor asambandhaḥ. anyathā kevalayoḥ sambandhinoḥ sambandhe kaḥ pratiṣedha iti. kiñ ca. yady ekārthasambandhāt sambandha iṣyate, tadā sambandhasambandhinor apy ekārthasambandhena bhavitavyam. tathā sambandhābhyupagamāt punas*

5. Existents are Distinct and Relation is a Conceptual Construction

And those two relata, along with that other [supposed entity], all abide in their own nature. Thus, in themselves, existents are unmixed; conceptual construction mixes them.

Since such a conception of relation is also insufficient (*jyāyān*), **those two existents**, which are acknowledged as being in relation, **and that which is different from them** (i.e., the relation), **all of them** are said in this manner to **abide in themselves** (i.e., they exist in their essence only in themselves (*svasmin svasmin*)). For this reason, **existents themselves**, abiding in their own nature, are **unmixed**, that is, unrelated.

[Question:] Why then do we designate forms of dependence in this, or in that, by relationships?

[Reply:] It is not really a relationship. Those existents are only unmixed, and **conceptual construction mixes them**. And that [construction] arises by causing something to appear *as though* possessing the forms of dependence⁵

6. Words are Used to Indicate a Distinction Between Entities

And by those [people] conforming to precisely this [conceptual construction], words that signify actions and their instruments are employed to indicate a distinction between entities.

And by those people conforming to precisely this conceptual construction, **words that signify actions and their instruments** (i.e., that denote actions and their instruments) **are employed**, i.e., introduced as such: ‘this [word] is the designation of the action’ and ‘this [word] is the designation of its instrument.’ **The purpose is to indicate a distinction between entities**, viz., for the sake of demonstrating (*pratyāyanāya*) that the distinction between entities is the exclusion of others. However, there is no real relationship between an action and its instruments.⁶

II. Ontological Refutation of the Causal Relation (7-11)

tatraikārthābhisambandha ity **anavasthā** bhavet. tataś ca kvacin naikārthasambandhaḥ sidhyati. asambandhe sarvatra **na sambandhamatis tathā**. na vastvanupātīnīsambandhabuddhir anavasthāyām satyām. kvacid ekārthābhisambandham antareṇa sambandhakalpanāyām prathamayor api sambandhinor ekārthasambandhāt sambandho mā bhūt. kevalayor api sambandhe doṣa uktaḥ. etena nairantaryāder dharmāntarakalpanāpi pratyuktā.

⁵ *tau ca bhāvau tadanyaś ca sarve te svātmani sthitāḥ / ity amiśrāḥ svayaṃ bhāvās tān miśrayati kalpanā*. yata evam api sambandhavikalpo na jyāyān, tasmāt, **tau ca bhāvau** sambandhitvenābhimatau **tadanyaś ca** sambandhākhyāḥ **sarve te** yatho-ktāḥ **svātmani sthitāḥ** svasmin svasmin svabhāve sthitā **iti** tasmād **amiśrā** asambaddhāḥ **svayaṃ** svātmanā **bhāvāḥ**. kathaṃ tarhy āyattarūpās tais taiḥ sambandhair vyapadiśyanta iti cet, na bhāvato ’sti kaścit samban- dhaḥ. kevalaṃ **tān** bhāvān amiśrān api **miśrayati kalpanā**. sāpi parāyattarūpān iva kenacin nimittenopadarśanty utpadyate.

⁶ *tām eva cānurundhānaiḥ kriyākāravācīnaḥ / bhāvabhedapratītyartham saṃyojyante ’bhidhāyakaḥ*. **tām eva ca** kalpanām **anurundhānaiḥ** puruṣaiḥ **kriyākāravācīnaḥ** kriyākāravācīnāḥ **cābhidhāyakaḥ saṃyojyante**, ayaṃ kriyā bhidhāy ayaṃ kāravācīnāḥ bhidhāyīti niveśyante. **bhāvabhedapratītyartham**. bhāvānām bhedo ’nyāpohaḥ, tasya pratyāyanāya, na punar vastubhūtaḥ kriyākāravāsambandho.

7. *Dviṣṭha* is not Possible for a Particular Cause and Effect

How is the cause-and-effect relation even established as something situated in two [places], since the two do not occur together? [Alternatively], if something is not situated in two [places], how is it a relationship?

[One might say] “then the relation established is one of cause and effect (*setsyati*).”

[Response:] This is not correct, for **how** (i.e., not in any way), **could the relation of cause and effect even be established** as a *relationship*? What kind of [relation] is it?

[Opponent:] A relation situated in two [places].

[Reply:] Why? **Since these two [places]**, i.e., cause and effect, **do not occur together**. For when the cause is present, there is no effect—and, at the time of that effect, there is no cause, as it doesn’t make sense for both cause and effect to exist at the same time. Further, because non-momentary things do not exist, there is no existence of cause and effect or a simultaneous existent. Even reference to the doctrine of non-momentariness does not apply in this case, since two real things that occur at the same time could not be found such that there would be a present relation between the two. Alternatively, if something is **not situated in two [existents]**, **how is it a relationship?** Not at all. A relation distinguished by cognition would [only] be constructed by conceptualization.⁷

8. *Even Sequential Properties are Asynchronous*

A thing occurring sequentially in one [entity], regardless of the other, is not a relation that occurs in one, because it exists even when [the other] does not exist.

[To say] ‘the relation occurs sequentially (*kramaṇa*) in either the cause or effect’ is also not proper. Namely, even **sequentially, a thing occurring** (*varṭamāna*) **in one** (i.e., in the cause or the effect), called a ‘relation,’ obtains **regardless of the other**. Present in the cause, it is not conditioned by the effect, and present in the effect, it is not conditioned by the cause. Therefore, [something] successively occurring in the two [viz., in one and then the other] is not a relation between them. What is **occurring in one [entity]** (i.e., being successively in the cause or effect) regardless [of the other] cannot be a relation thereof, **because it exists even when the other does not exist** (i.e., since the object called a relation exists even in the mutual absence of the cause or effect).⁸

⁷ *kāryakāraṇabhāvo 'pi tayor asahabhāvataḥ / prasidhyati katham dviṣṭho 'dviṣṭhe sambandhatā katham.* kāryakāraṇabhāvaḥ sambandhas tarhi setsyatīti cet, tan na, ya-smāt **kāryakāraṇabhāvo 'pi sambandhaḥ katham**, naiva, **prasidhyati.** kimbhūtaḥ. **dviṣṭhaḥ.** kiñ kāraṇam. **tayoḥ** kāryakāraṇayor **asahabhā-vataḥ.** tathā hi yadā kāraṇam tadā na kāryam, tatkāle vā na kāraṇam, tulyakālam kāryakāraṇānupapatteḥ. akṣaṇikānām apy abhāvāt vān na kāryakāraṇabhāvaḥ sahabhāvo vety akṣaṇikavādodāharaṇam apy atrāyu-ktam, yato na vastubhūtau sahabhāvinau vidyete yena dvayor varṭamānaḥ sambandhaḥ syāt. **advīṣṭhe** ca bhāve **sambandhatā katham.** naiva. buddhyā vyākṛtya sambandho vikalpena nirmītaḥ syāt.

⁸ *kramaṇa bhāva ekatra varṭamāno 'nyaniḥsprṛhaḥ / tadabhāve 'pi tadbhāvāt sambandho naikavṛttimān.* kāraṇe kārye vā kramaṇa sambandho varṭata ity apy ayuktam. ta-thā hi

9. Non-Existent Entities Cannot Assist

If this [relation], with reference to one of the two, engages in the other, then the referent would certainly be an assisting [factor]. But how could a non-existent [entity] assist?

Lest such a problem obtain, it is assumed that **this** relation **engages** successively **in the other** (i.e., in the cause or effect) **with reference to one of the two** (i.e., the cause or effect), [and] thus is certainly based on two in virtue of ‘requiring’ (*saspr̥hatvena*). In that case, the referent must be an assisting [factor]. Why? Because then **the referent would certainly be an assisting [factor]**, i.e., not anything else.

[Opponent:] Then [simply] let the referent be an assisting [factor]!

[Reply:] **But how could a non-existent [entity] assist?** When at the time of the cause, what is called ‘the effect’ does not exist, and at the time of the effect, what is called ‘the cause’ does not exist, there can be nothing that assists because it lacks the capacity.⁹

10. The Causal Relation Cannot Obtain from a Relationship to a Single Property

If the fact that these two are effect and cause is due to a relationship to one [other] thing [i.e., a single property], it would likewise obtain with respect to the right and left horn of a cow because of their relation to properties such as twoness.

Further, **if** one assumes that **for the two relata**, i.e., the cause and effect, that **causality exists** because of a **connection with one [other] thing [viz., a relational property]**, then the cause and effect also **obtains for the right and left horn of a cow**, because of relation to their being two, e.g., which is known as their number. And that [relational property] is not admitted, lest it be allowed in other cases, too. The mention of the words “**such as...**” includes [e.g.] due to the relation of distance, proximity, horn-ness, etc.¹⁰

krameṇāpi bhāva ekatraikasminn api kāraṇe kārye vā **vartamānaḥ** sambandhākhyo ‘**nyaniḥspr̥haḥ**. kāraṇe vartamānaḥ kāryānapekṣaḥ kārye vartamānaḥ kāraṇanirapekṣa iti dvayoḥ krameṇa vartamāno na tatsambandhaḥ. yo yasmin niḥspr̥ho na tasyāsau sambandho bhava-ty ekavṛttimān, krameṇa kāryakāraṇabhāvī, **tadabhāve ’pi bhāvāt**, kāryakāraṇabhūtayoh parasparābhāve ’pi sambandhākhyasyārthasya sattākāraṇāt.

⁹ *yady apekṣya tayor ekam anyatrāsau pravartate / upakārī hy apekṣyaḥ syāt katham copakaroty asan. mā bhūd eṣa doṣa iti. yady apekṣya tayoh kāryakāraṇayor ekam kāryam kāraṇam vānyatra kārye kāraṇe vāsau sambandhaḥ krameṇa pravartata iti saspr̥hatvena dviṣṭha eveṣyate, tadā tenāpekṣyamānenopakārīṇā bhavitavyam. kiñ kāraṇam. yata upakārī hy apekṣyaḥ syān nānyaḥ. apekṣyamānam upakāry astv iti cet. kathañ copakaroty asan. kāraṇakāle kāryākhyo ’san kāryakāle kāraṇākhyo ’san naivopakaroty asāmarthyāt.*

¹⁰ *yady ekārthābhisambandhāt kāryakāraṇatā tayoh / prāptā dvitvādisambandhāt savyetaraviṣāṇayoh. kiñ ca. yady ekārthābhisambandhāt kāraṇāt kāryakāraṇatā tayoh kāryakāraṇatvenābhimatayoh, tadā sañkhyākhyena dvitvādinā sambandhāt prāptā kāryakāraṇatā savyetaragoviṣāṇayor api. na ceṣyate, tadanyatrāpi mā bhūt. ādigrahaṇena paratvāparatvaviṣāṇatvādinā sambandhāt.*

11. 'Relation' is Only Something Situated in Two Places

For a relation is something situated in two places; there is no definition other than this. If being cause and effect is a union with the qualities of presence and absence...

[Opponent:] There is no relation due to a relation with anything singular.

[Reply:]: How then?

[Opponent:] By a single [thing] characterized as a relation.

[Reply:] This is not correct. **For a relation means something situated in two places; other than this** i.e., other than a thing had by two relata, **there is no possible definition** by means of which a distinction such as number, etc., could be determined.

[Opponent:] Some x exists when y is present, and x does not exist when y is absent. The distinctive feature of the two—presence and absence when there is the presence and absence of those two—is that relation which is a conjunction. **If the state of cause and effect is the conjunction of the qualities of presence and absence**, that is not *every* relation.¹¹

III. Epistemological Account of the Causal Relation (12-18)

12. Cause and Effect Consists of the Qualities of Presence and Absence

...then why aren't just those two qualities of union the state of cause and effect? If it is due to a difference [between them], then this expression surely depends on the speaker.

Then **isn't it the case that being cause and effect is just these two**—i.e., presence and absence, which are the two **qualities of the union**—such that there is construction of an unreal relation that has no consequence? **If it is [said] because there is a difference** [between *anvayavyatireka* and the cause-and-effect relation], then that would mean “ x exists when y is present and x does not exist when y is absent”—[in which case,] there are many terms expressed by a statement that designates a single term, i.e., the “[relation] of cause and effect.” And thus, it is improper for those [many things] to be the object of that [single referent]. Therefore, presence and absence are not considered the state of cause and effect. **In that case, this expression surely depends upon the user**, i.e., a person. Since this expression depends upon the user, just as a word is employed, so too is the way it is expressed. Consequently, there is no objection to a single word for many [objects].¹²

¹¹ *dviṣṭho hi kaścit sambandho nāto 'nyat tasya lakṣaṇam / bhāvābhāvopādhir yogaḥ kāryakāraṇatā yadi.* na yena kenacid ekena sambandhāt sambandhaḥ, kin tarhi sambandha-lakṣaṇenaikeneti cet, tan na. **dviṣṭho hi kaścit** padārthaḥ **sambandhaḥ**. nāto 'rthadvābhīśambandhino 'rthād **anyat tasya** sambandhasya **lakṣaṇam** upapadyate, yena saṅkhyādes tasya viśeṣo vya-vasthāpyeta. kasyacid bhāve bhāvo 'bhāve 'bhāvaḥ, tayor bhavator abhavatoś ca yau bhāvau 'bhāvau tāv upādhir viśeṣaṇam yasya yogasya sambandhasyāsau **bhāvābhāvopādhir yogaḥ kāryakāraṇatā yadi**, na sarvaḥ sambandhaḥ.

¹² *yogopādhī na tāv eva kāryakāraṇatātra kim / bhedāc cen nanv ayaṃ śabdo niyoktāraṃ samāśritaḥ.* tadā yau tau **yogopādhī** bhāvābhāvau **tāv eva kāryakāraṇatātra na kim**, yenāsato 'phalasya sambandhasya kalpanā. **bhedāc cet**, syād etat – bhāve bhāvo 'bhāve 'bhāva iti bahavo 'bhidheyāḥ, kāryakāraṇateti caikārthābhīdhāyīnā śabdena vācyās tadviśayā ayuktā iti

13. The Relation Between a Cause and Effect is Inferential

Upon observing one [thing]—i.e., when something [that was previously] unseen is [now] seen, and is not seen when that [other] is not seen—a person infers ‘effect’ even without teachers.

Therefore, it makes sense that only those two, i.e., presence and absence, are the state of cause and effect. Since, **observing one** (i.e., known as ‘cause’), **something [that was] unseen is seen** (i.e., known as ‘effect’ [and] characterized by perceptibility)—seeing which, in that case, one has seen [the effect]. [And] **when that [cause] is not seen, then not seeing** the so-called ‘effect’, **one infers an effect**, i.e. “this comes from that,” **even without a teacher**, (viz., even without another person instructing “this arises because of that”). That one understands due to convention is also worthless. For even granting convention, nothing other than presence or absence is understood. Thus, the meaning of that [cognition] is the understanding of *x* when there is the understanding of *y*. So, for example, there is [universal] whiteness (*śauklyam*), based on the understanding of white, when there is the understanding of a white cloth. And insofar as one understands presence and absence, one understands the fact of being effect and cause. Therefore, the referent is based [only] on the idea of being effect and cause, nothing else. [One might alternatively say that] presence and absence is the premise (*sādhanam*), while the cause and effect to be proved (*sadhyam*) is something else.

[Reply:] If it (i.e., the *sadhyam*) is different, why is its form not indicated?

[Opponent:] In this case, the form is the relation of producer and produced.

[Reply:] Then is there a distinction of referents, due to another name, in virtue of which this can be asserted? For the relation of the producer and the produced, the relation of generator and generated, and the relation of cause and effect, etc... are all synonyms.¹³

14. Talk of Cause and Effect is Used for the Sake of Simplicity

Because awareness of an effect is impossible without reference to seeing and not seeing, in this case even words such as ‘effect’ etc., are used for the sake of simplicity.

bhāvābhāvau na kāryakāraṇateṣyate. **nanv ayaṃ śabdo niyoktāraṃ** puruṣaṃ **samāśrita** iti niyokṭṛsamāśrayād yaṃ śabdāṃ asau yathā prayuñkte sa tathā prāhety anekatrāpy ekā śrutir ity aparihāra eva.

¹³ *paśyann ekam adṛṣṭasya darśane tadadarśane / apaśyan kāryam anveti vināpy ākhyāṭṛbhir janaḥ.* tasmāt tāv eva bhāvābhāvau kāryakāraṇatā yuktā. yasmāt **paśyann ekam** kāraṇābhimatam upalabdhilakṣaṇaprāptasyā**adrṣṭasya** kāryākhyasya **darśane** sati yat paśyan drṣṭavāṃs **tadadarśane** saty **apaśyan** kāryābhimatam **kāryam anvetīdam** ato bhavatīti pratipadyate **vināpy ākhyāṭṛbhir janaḥ**, ata idam bhavatīty ākhyātāram antareṇa janaḥ. saṅketād anvetīty api vārttaḥ. tathā hi na bhāvābhāvābhyām anyat saṅkete ‘pi pratipadyate. tasmād yatpratipattau yatpratipattih, sa tasyārthaḥ. tad yathā śuklapaṭapratipattau śuklapratipatteḥ śauklyam. bhāvābhāvau ca pratipadyamānaḥ kāryakāraṇatām pratipadyata iti bhāvābhāvau kārya- kāraṇatāpratipatter arthaḥ, nānyaḥ. syād etat—bhāvābhāvau sādhanam anyā kāryakāraṇatā sādhyā. anyā cet, kin na tasyā rūpaṃ nirdiśyate. utpādyotpādakabhāvas tarhi rūpam. tat kin nāmāntarād arthabhedo yenaivam ucyate. tathā hy utpādyotpādakabhāvo janyajanakabhāvāḥ kāryakāraṇabhāva ity evamādayaḥ paryāyāḥ.

Therefore, **because the awareness of an effect is impossible without reference to seeing and not seeing**, i.e., presence and absence due to the indication of the object by the subject, **in this case even words such as “effect,” etc..., are employed for the sake of simplicity** in conventional life, i.e., in reference to presence and absence, lest people express (*abhidadhyaṭ*) such a string of words on each individual occasion.¹⁴

15. ‘Effect’ is a Conventional Designation

Whatever understanding of ‘effect’ is described due to the presence of that existent, that is designated an object of convention. This is just like the understanding of a ‘cow’ based on a dewlap, etc.

[Opponent:] If it is said that cause and effect are nothing other than positive and negative concomitance, then how are they proven based on presence and absence?

[Reply:] **The understanding of effect due to presence of that existent**—i.e., due to an inference (*liṅgāt*) that understands the effect of that given the presence of that existent—[that is,] **whatever is described** as “this is the effect of this cause,” **that is designated an object of convention**. That which exists when that is present is just what is communicated by the conventional object of cause and effect—[it is] not a distinct meaning. What is this like? **Just as in the understanding of a cow from the dewlap, etc.,** i.e., just as when the object of the expression “cow” is indicated by such expressions as “because of possessing a dewlap and the like, this is a cow.”¹⁵

16. Causal Relata are Established Solely Through Perception and Non-Perception

Through perception and non-perception, the presence of that [cause] when that existent [i.e., effect] comes into being, and the coming into being [of the effect] only when that [cause] is present, determine ‘reason’ and ‘result.’

[Opponent:] It could be said that if absence and presence are [the qualities of] cause and effect, [then] ‘cause-ness’ and ‘effect-ness’ refer to a presence and absence situated in both of them. Otherwise, how could mere *presence* be a cause or effect? [The qualities of] cause or effect are not situated in both the presence of an existent and absence of a non-existent, but would have to be the state of [relation of] cause and effect.

¹⁴ *darśanādarśane muktvā kāryabuddher asambhavāt / kāryādiśrutir apy atra lāghavārthaṃ niveśitā. tasmād darśanādarśane viṣayiṇā viṣayapradarśanād bhāvābhā-vau muktvā kāryabuddher asambhavāt kāraṇāt kāryādiśrutir apy atra bhāvābhāvayor mā lokāḥ pratipadam iyantīm śabdamaḷām abhidhād iti vyavahāralāghavārthaṃ niveśiteti.*

¹⁵ *tadbhāvabhāvāt tatkāryagatir yāpy anuvarṇyate / saṅketaviṣayākhyā sā sāsñāder gogatir yathā. nānyā ‘nvayavyatirekābhyāṃ kāryakāraṇatā. nānyā cet, katham bhāvābhāvābhyāṃ sā prasādhyate. tadbhāve bhāvāl liṅgāt tatkāryagatiḥ, yasya bhāve bhāvas tasya kāryasya gatiḥ, yāpy anuvarṇyate asyedam kāryam kāraṇaṇ ceti, saṅketaviṣayākhyā sā. yad etad anuvarṇanam tadbhāvabhāvitvena kāryakāraṇasaṅketaviṣayākhyānam etad, nārthabhedāḥ. kim iva. sāsñāder gogatir yathā. yathā gaur ayam sāsñādimattvād ity.*

[Reply:] That is not correct. Even if situated in both, the earlier presence and absence, which is a particular presence and absence of a successor, is the ‘cause,’ [and] the subsequent presence and absence, which is a particular presence and absence of the earlier, that is the ‘effect.’ For **when that existent comes into being**, i.e., when that being possesses the character of existence, **there is the presence of that**, i.e., the existence of the supposed ‘cause.’ The condition that **‘only when that existent is present’** obtains in this case as well. Thereby the distinction [between the two] is indicated. **And the coming into being** of the supposed ‘effect’ **when there is** the supposed ‘cause’ is the [quality of] ‘effect-ness’; thus, **‘reason’ and ‘result’ are determined through perception and non-perception**. For this very reason, presence and absence are [the qualities of] cause and effect, nothing else.¹⁶

17. Conceptual Construction Causes Objects to Appear Connected

Conceptual construction, whose real referent is merely of this sort, possessing the scope of cause and effect, makes existents appear as if connected with unreal referents.

Therefore, [conceptual constructions of the kāryakāraṇabhāva] **have as their real referent only this**, i.e., only this presence and absence. [The conception] of that object whose actual existence is just these two [states]—that is real only to this extent. Those conceptions whose objects are such have a real referent only to this [conceptual] extent.

[Opponent:] Why?

[Reply:] **The scope of cause and effect** have as their basis merely this—these [conceptions] **make existents appear as if connected**, i.e., things that are not related as if they are related. And on account of this manner of connection **the referent is unreal**.¹⁷

18. Conclusion: Causal Relations are Incoherent in All Cases

¹⁶ *bhāve bhāvini tadbhāvo bhāva eva ca bhāvitā / prasiddhe hetuphalate pratyakṣānupalambhataḥ. syād etat—bhāvābhāvayoḥ kāryakāraṇatve kāraṇatvaṃ kevalaṃ kāryatvañ cobhayagatabhāvābhāvāpekṣam. anyathā kathaṃ bhāvamātraṃ kāraṇaṃ kāryaṃ vā. na ca bhavator abhavatoś ca bhāvābhāvāv ubhayagatau kāryatvaṃ kāraṇatvaṃ vā. kāryakāraṇatā tu syād iti. tan na. ubhayagatatve ’py uttarabhāvābhāvaviśeṣaṇau pūrvasya bhāvābhāvau kāraṇatvaṃ. pūrvasya bhāvābhāvaviśeṣaṇāv uttarasya bhāvābhāvau kāryatvaṃ. tathā hi **bhāve bhāvini** bhavanadharmini bhāve **tadbhāvaḥ** kāraṇābhimatasya bhāvaḥ. **bhāva evetihāpy** avadhāraṇam. anena vyatireka ākṣiptaḥ. kāraṇābhimatasya **bhāva eva ca bhāvitā** kāryābhimatasya kāryatvaṃ iti **prasiddhe pratyakṣānupalambhato hetuphalate**. yata evaṃ bhāvābhāvāv eva kāryakāraṇatā, nānyā.*

¹⁷ *etāvanmātratattvārthāḥ kāryakāraṇagocarāḥ / vikalpā darśayanty arthān mithyārthā ghaṭitān iva. tenaitāvanmātratattvārthāḥ. etāvanmātraṃ bhāvābhāvau. tāv eva tattvaṃ bhūtaṃ yasyārthasyāsāv etāvanmātratattvaḥ. so ’rtho yeṣāṃ vikalpānāṃ ta etāvanmātratattvārthāḥ. kim. etāvanmātrabījāḥ **kāryakāraṇagocarāḥ**. te **darśayanti ghaṭitān iva** sambaddhān ivāsambaddhān **arthān**. evaṃ ghaṭanāc ca **mithyārthāḥ**.*

If they are separate, what is the connection? And if they are not separate, how is there cause and effect? For even if some other [term] were present, how could those two disjuncts become joined?

[Opponent:] Is it the case that an unreal relation is shown by those [conceptions] which [show] false objects?

[Reply:] That is indeed so. Since here there are two conceptualizations: [that is,] things being connected as a cause and effect would either be distinct or not distinct. If distinct, **what connection can exist if they are distinct?** There is none, because each abides in its own nature. On the other hand, if they are not distinct, how could there even be a **cause and effect [relation] when [things] are not distinct?** Due to the absence of something incomplete, i.e., something to be done, it is distinct from the cause. So how again is there a connection between those two?

[Opponent:] It could be that there is no relationship between what is either only distinct or only not distinct.

[Reply:] How then?

[Opponent:] On account of a relationship with a single (entity) called “a relation.”

[Reply:] Even in this case, **given the real existence of another** called ‘a relation’, **how would these two disjuncts**, supposedly cause and effect, **become joint?** It could not be. That very thing called a relation would be something different. Again, given the existence of some other [term], there can be no union of natures; thus, in what fashion could there be a real relation?¹⁸

III. Refutation of Grammatical Relations (19-24)

19. Conjunction and Inherence Cannot Obtain Without Mutual Assistance

Something that is in conjunction, inherent, etc..., are all considered in this way, since there is neither mutual assistance nor any such relatum.

‘**Something inherent, in contact, etc...**’—by the mention of ‘etc’ here, the possessor-possessed relation, e.g., is included. **All [relations] are considered in this way** (i.e., by what was just expressed in the passage of the general rejection of relations): there is no real relation that consists in contact, etc. First of all, inherent things are not in a state of relation, like the white quality that is inherent in a cloth, **since there is neither mutual assistance** on the part of those two; [and] because there is no producer-produced relation that consists of something inherent, **nor is there any such relatum**, viz., as there is no assister, nor anything assisted. That which requires something depends on that which assists it, and the relation of that [term] is with

¹⁸ *bhinne kā ghaṭanā ’bhinne kāryakāraṇatāpi kā /bhāve hy anyasya viśliṣṭau śliṣṭau syātām katham ca tau. kim abhūtaḥ sambandhaḥ pradarśyate tair yena mithyārthāḥ. evam etat. tathā hy atra dvayī kalpanā. sambadhyamānaḥ kāryakāraṇabhūto ’rtho bhinno ’bhinno vā syāt. yadi bhinnah, bhinne kā ghaṭanā. naiva, svasvabhāvavyavasthiteḥ. athābhinnas, abhinne kāryakāraṇatāpi kā. nai- va, aniṣpannasya kartavyasya kāraṇād vyatiriktasyābhāvāt. kutaḥ punar dvayor ghaṭanā. syād etat – na bhinnasyābhinnasya vā kevalasya sambandhaḥ, kin tarhi, sambandhākhyenaikena sambandhād iti. atrāpi bhāve sattāyām anyasya sambandhākhyasya viśliṣṭau kāryakāraṇābhimatau śliṣṭau syā-tām katham. naiva. sa eva sambandhākhyo ’paraḥ syāt. na punas tadbhāve ’nyasya kasyacit svabhāvasamsarga iti kuto bhāvataḥ sambandhaḥ.*

what it requires. And the white and the cloth are not like this, because they are established in themselves.

Even the relation of the locus and located is not anything other than cause and effect, and when there is a 'relation' of cause and effect, there is an error in this case. Because there is a locus and located when there is a cause and effect, even the conceptualization of relation in regard to a white cloth is improper. That is to say, in regard to those two, there is no ordinary [relation] consisting of locus-located. And, if the locus-located relation were characterized by producer and produced, it would not be a relation characterized by inherence that obtains between a universal and itself, which are not in a mutual assister-assisted relation.¹⁹

20. *There is No Inherence Even When an Effect is Produced by a Partite Whole*

For even when there is the production of an effect by some partite whole (samavāyin), there is not something inherent at that time, and it is not so thereupon, due to the error of over-extension.

[Opponent:] It could be said that there does exist some sort of partite whole which produces the form of a whole known as 'an effect.' Accordingly, since it is not an assistant [i.e., since it produces an independent whole], it is not the case that it is unrelated.

[Reply:] Even in this case—viz., **given that there is the production of an effect by some partite whole—there is not something inherent at that time**, because there is no inherence of two things due to the incompleteness of what is to be produced at the time of the production; and even when the effect is fully realized, there is the disappearance of a cause; and, if the cause has not disappeared, it is due to the impossibility of an assister-assisted relation between two simultaneous [terms]. Or [even] if there is some compounded whole—**it is not**, however, **thereupon** due to the production [of a so-called 'effect'].

[Opponent:] Why?

[Reply:] **Because of the fallacy of over-extension**; in this case, it is entailed that potters and such [causes] are also possessed of real relation due to the production of the pot [i.e., an effect]!

¹⁹ *saṃyogisamavāyyādi sarvam etena cintitam / anyonyānupakārāc ca na sambandhī ca tādr̥śaḥ // saṃyogisamavāyyādi. ādigrahaṇena svasvāmyādi. sarvam etenānantaroktena sāmānyena sambandhapraṭiṣedhakena granthena cintitam na saṃyogādīlakṣaṇo vastutaḥ sambandho 'stīti. samavāyinas tāvan na sambandhitā, yathā śauklyam guṇaḥ paṭe samavetam. anayor anyonyam parasparam anupakārād ajanyajanakabhāvāt kāraṇāt samavāyīlakṣaṇo na sambandhī ca tādr̥śo 'nupakāryānupakārakabhūtaḥ. tathā hi yo yena upakāryaḥ sa tam apekṣate, yañ cāpekṣate tena tasya sambandhaḥ. na caivam śuklapaṭayoh, svarūpasiddheḥ. ādhārādheyabhāvo 'pi nākāryakāraṇabhūtayoh, kāryakāraṇabhāve ca tadbhāvī doṣaḥ. kāryakāraṇabhāve saty ādhārādheyabhāvāt śuklapaṭayoh sambandhakalpanāpy asādhvī. tathā hi na tayor laukika ādhārādheya bhāvo 'sti. janyajanakalakṣaṇe cādhārādheyabhāve sāmānyatadvatoḥ parasparam anupakāryopakārakayoh samavāyīlakṣaṇaḥ sambandho na syāt.*

²⁰ *janane 'pi hi kāryasya kenacit samavāyinā / samavāyī tadā nāsau na tato 'tiprasaṅgataḥ // syād etad – asti kaścit samavāyī yo 'vayavirūpaṃ kāryākhyam janayati. tena nānupakārād asambandhiteti. evaṃ janane 'pi hi kāryasya kenacit samavāyinābhyupagamyamāne nāsau*

21. Everything would be Mutually Inherent Otherwise

If there were a relation even when inherence does not provide assistance with respect to those two or [any] other, then everything would be mutually inherent.

[Opponent:] Well then, may this error not arise, i.e., **if there is still ‘relation’** acknowledged, **even when these two wholes do not mutually act upon each other**; and **if inherence** is not assisted by those two relata due to its permanence; and if the inherence of those two does not assist **either with respect to some other**.

[Reply:] Then [in that case], **everything that exists**, viz., the entire universe that is mutually disconnected, **would be mutually inherent**. But this is not so. Therefore, in this way, there is no inherence given either the position of assistance or non-assistance. And there is no other possible mode [of inherence]. This also addresses the [relation of] conjuncts.²¹

22. There are No Such Things as ‘Conjuncts’ Even When there is Conjunction

Even if conjunction is produced, those two are not subsequently accepted as conjuncts, due to the error of being a conjunct with regard to things like motion, etc.—and situatedness (sthiti) has been refuted elsewhere.

Moreover, if the two of these are both conjuncts due to the production of that [effect]—because conjunction is an effect of those two—then, in this case, **even if conjunction is produced**, i.e., due to the production of conjunction—**those two are not subsequently accepted conjuncts**.

[Opponent:] Why?

[Reply:] **Because of the error of being a conjunct in regard to things like motion**. If there is also a conjunct due to production of conjunction, motion would also be a state of conjunction. For in that case, conjunction is considered to be produced from the motion of both [or] produced by the motion of either one. By the mention of “**etc.**,” the state of conjunction would also obtain in regard to conjunction [itself] since this is also acknowledged as produced by conjunction.

[Opponent:] **There is no** state of being a conjunct that results from the production of conjunction. Rather, one might say it is “due to being situated.”

samavāyī tadā, jananakāle janyasyāniṣpatter, dvayor asamavāyāt, niṣpanne ’pi kārye kāraṇasya tirodhānāt, atirobhāve ca samavahitayor upakāryopakārahāvābhāvāt. bhavatu vā kaścit samavāyī, **na** tu **tato** jananāt kāraṇāt. kiṃ kāraṇam. **atiprasaṅgataḥ**, kumbhakārāder api ghaṭasya jananāt sambandhitāpatteḥ.

²¹ *tayor anupakāre ’pi samavāye paratra vā / sambandho yadi viśvaṃ syāt samavāyī parasparam. atha mā bhūd eṣa doṣa iti tayor samavāyinoḥ parasparam anupa-kāre ’pi, tābhyāṃ sambandhibhyāṃ anupakāre ca samavāye, nityatvāt tasya, tābhyāṃ samavāye ca paratra vā kvacid anupakāre ’pi, sambandho yadiśyate, tadā viśvaṃ sarvaṃ jagat parasparāsambaddhaṃ samavāyī parasparam syāt. na caivam. tasmād evam upakārānupakārapakṣe na sa- mavāyo ’sti. na cānyaḥ prakāraḥ sambhavati. anena saṃyogināv api pratyuktau.*

[Reply:] This is not correct. **For situatedness has been refuted elsewhere.** [Namely,] this has been confuted in the *Pramāṇavārttika*, which states that there is no additional ‘situatedness’ because the relationship of producer-produced obtains with respect to situator-situated.²²

23. Refutation of Suitability as a Relation

Further, if something unsuitable becomes suitable as a locus for such things as conjunction, etc., there is a contradiction of insufficiency with respect to something whose intrinsic nature is always suitable for connection.

[Opponent:] If there is a cognition of such things as conjunction, etc., without a connection and so on, then the form of two disjuncts is also that of two conjuncts. In the same manner, the form of the conjuncts is also the form of the disjuncts—likewise with respect to things that endure and do not endure. Why, then, isn’t there the cognition of conjunction, etc.? But this is not the case. Therefore, motions of separation and connection are the cause of the cognition of conjunction, etc.

[Reply:] This is not correct, because the same refutation obtains [in your theory]. [That is,] even for you, isn’t there inherence of things like conjunction, etc., in each of the disjuncts, etc., that possess the same form? If it is said:

[Opponent:] “There are no disjuncts and conjuncts because there is no motion that produces that [inherence].”

[Reply:] Well, in that case, is there also no action and no causes of that [conjunction]? This is a moot point. Therefore, you yourself would have to say precisely: **That** (in the form of being divided, etc.) **which was unsuitable** previously, i.e., earlier in time, **becomes suitable as a locus of conjunction etc.** Why? Since **there is a contradiction**—i.e. it contradicts the insufficiency of connections such as conjunction, etc.—**with respect to an insufficiency on the part of something whose intrinsic nature is always suitable for connection**, i.e., connections such as conjunction, etc.. And so, in the same way, one should also state that conjunction, etc., are abandoned.²³

²² *saṃyogajanane ’pīṣṭau tataḥ saṃyogināu na tau / karmādiyogitāpatteḥ sthitiś ca prativarṇitā* // *api ca saṃyogasya kāryatvāt tābhyāṃ tajjananāt saṃyogitā yadi tayoh, tadaivam saṃyogajanane ’pīṣṭau tataḥ saṃyogajanānāt kāraṇān na tau saṃyogināu. kiṃ kāraṇam. karmādiyogitāpatteḥ. yadi saṃyoga- jananāt saṃyogī karmaṇo ’pi saṃyogitā syāt. tathā hy ’anyatarakarmaja ubhayakarmajaḥ saṃyoga iṣyate. ādigrahaṇena saṃyogasyāpi saṃyogitā syāt, yataḥ saṃyogajo ’pīṣyate ’sāv iti. na saṃyogajanānāt saṃyogitā, kin tarhi, sthāpanād iti cet. tan na. sthitiś ca prativarṇitā, sthāpyasthāpakayor janyajanakabhāvān nānyā sthitiḥ iti pramāṇavārttike pratikṣiptā.*

²³ *saṃyogādyaśraye yogyam ayogyam tac ca jāyate / nityayogyasvabhāvasya tadvaikalyavirodhataḥ* // *yadi saṃyogādim antareṇa saṃyogādibuddhiḥ, vibhaktayor yad rūpaṃ tat samprayuktayor api. evaṃ samprayuktayor yad rūpaṃ tad vibhaktayor api sthitāsthitayoś ceti kin na saṃyogādibuddhiḥ. na caivam. tasmāt saṃyogavibhāgakarmāṇi saṃyogādibuddher nimittam iti cet. na, tulyaparyanuyogataḥ. tavāpi tulyarūpasya vibhaktādeḥ kin na saṃyogādisamavāyāḥ. tajjananakarmābhāvān na saṃyogavibhāgāv iti cet. tad evaṃ sati kinna karmāpi tatkāraṇāni ceti duruttaram etat. tasmāt tvayaitad eva vaktavyam. tad vibhaktādirūpaṃ ayogyam prāk paścāt saṃyogādyaśraye yogyañ jāyate. kiṃ kāraṇam. yato*

24. Suitability Can be Fully Explained in Terms of Separation and Association

Thus, the nature of that which is denoted by 'its suitability' should be explained by means of words such as "motion, connection, separation" Of what use are other ways of proceeding, etc.?

Therefore, **the nature** of the object **designated** by words **such as 'suitability' should be denoted by means of "connection and separation"** i.e. by the words of "movement, disjunction and conjunction." So, **what use are other** pointless **ways of proceeding, etc.,** that are [mere] conceptual constructions. None at all. By the other mention of "etc," [relations] such as non-difference, difference, separation, conjunction, etc., are included.²⁴

IV. Conclusion

25. Momentary Entities with Distinct Natures Cannot Instantiate Any Relations

Even when those are [conceived as] existent, a relation in the form 'of this' is not established. Therefore, this distinction of intrinsic natures obtains with respect to [things] whose production is momentary.

[Opponent:] Why [are all these other relations useless]?

[Reply:] Because **even when those**, i.e., ways of proceeding, etc., **are conceived as existent, a relation in the form 'of this' is not established.** Since relations **such as "dependence, etc.,"** have just been refuted in every way, a relationship of the form "movement or conjunction or disjunction of this" is not established. How, then, is your statement based on anything? Just as there is no other relatum with respect to motion, etc., because there is no relation, it is also the same with those supposed [ways of proceeding]. Since for this reason there are no ways of proceeding, etc., based on the relation of motion, etc., therefore, **with respect to [things] whose production is momentary**—that is, owing to various causal conditions whose basis is the constant production, etc., of existents—**this distinction of natures**, such as saying "this is connected, separated, moves" in this way, etc., **obtains:** For relations such as connection, etc., are not established with respect to natures that are unitary and stable. Therefore, there is no such entity as 'relation' defined as conjunction, etc. Consequently, the intrinsic nature of all existents is unrelated. *Peace.*

Here ends the *Sambandhaparīkṣāvṛttiḥ* written by the teacher Devendrabuddhi.²⁵

nityasaṃyogādiyogayogyasvabhāvasya tadvaikalyavirodhataḥ, saṃyogādiyogavaikalyam virudhyate. mayāpi caitad eva vaktavyaṃ saṃyogādivarjitam.

²⁴ *iti tadyogyatāvācyāḥ svabhāvo 'sya nirucyatām / vibhāgayogagatibhiḥ kim anyair gamanādibhiḥ // tasmād yogyatāśabdavācyāḥ svabhāvo 'syārthasya nirucyatām vibhāgayogagatibhiḥ* saṃyogavibhāgakarmaśabdaiḥ. tadā **kim** aphalair **anyair gamanādibhiḥ** kalpitaiḥ. naiva kiñcit. **ādigrhaṇāntare** saṃyogavibhāgaparatvāparatvādibhiḥ.

²⁵ *teṣu satsv api tasyeti sambandhasyāprasiddhitaḥ / yuktaḥ svabhāvabhedo 'yaṃ tat pratikṣaṇajanmanām // kutaḥ. yatas teṣu gamanādiṣu satsv api kalpitesv tasyeti samban-dhasyāprasiddhitaḥ. 'pāratantryam ityādinā* sarvathā sambandhasya niṣiddhatvāt, asya karma saṃyogo vibhāgo veti sambandhāsiddheḥ, kutas tannimitto vyapadeśaḥ.

yathānyagataiḥ karmātibhir anyasambandhī na bhavaty asambandhāt, tadvad abhimatair api. yata evaṃ na karmādisambandhād gamanādayaḥ, tasmāt **pratikṣaṇajanmanām** bhāvānām nirantarotpattyādyāśrayair aparāparaiḥ pratyayaiḥ **svabhāvabhedo 'yaṃ** saṃyukto viyukto gacchatīty evamādir **yuktaḥ**, sasthiraikasvabhāvānām yogādisambandhāsiddher iti na kaścid bhāvataḥ sambandhaḥ saṃyogādilakṣaṇaḥ. ity asambandhāḥ sarvabhāvasvabhāvāḥ. *śāntiḥ*. sambandhaparīkṣāvṛttiḥ samāptā. kṛtir ācāryadevendrabuddheḥ. krauddha anvitasya pustakam.

APPENDIX 2

THE SAMBANDHASIDDHI OF UTPALADEVA

I. *Opening Maṅgala Verses*

1. We praise Śiva, whose performance as the conventional world is accomplished in all respects according to His will, in virtue of the relation that consists of Nondivision-in-Division.
2. Shining forth in a form that consists of relations beginning with the differentiation of being, the Supreme Lord—manifesting as the Self of All while One—triumphs.¹

II. *Introduction to the Debate*

a. *What is 'Relation'?*

Here the *relationship* of beings is discussed (*vicāryate*). First of all (*tāvat*), what is the meaning of the word “relation” (*sambandha*)? Even if one says “mixture” (*saṃsarga*), “contact” (*saṃparka*), [or] “fusion” (*saṃśleṣa*) is ‘relation’ (*sambandha*), then the full meaning of ‘relation’ is not understood (*pratīyate*): Is ‘fusion’ continuity (*nairantarya*) or something else? If it is continuity, then there would be no [relation] between a son and father, insofar as they are far apart (*dūrastha*), and there would be [relation] between iron and a bar (*ayaḥśalāka*), even though these are pervasive substances that share a single locus.²

Perhaps, then, ‘relation’ is something situated in two loci (*dviṣṭha*). In this case, too, if being a relationship is just being situated in two loci, then, e.g., that [property] would even belong to the distinctness of the two terms in a duality (*dvipṛthaktva*). And this meaning [of relation as *dviṣṭha*] does not correspond to the meaning of the lexical parts of the word “*sambandha*”; rather, it is just idiomatic, like the word “*tailapāyikā*.”³

On the other hand, maybe ‘being situated in two’ is not the only meaning of the word *sambandha*; rather, if it is called ‘situated in two’ only as one of several [characterizations] that

¹ *bhedābhedātma-sambandha-saha-sarvārtha-sādhitā /
lokayātrā kṛtir yasya svecchayā taṃ stumaḥ śivam. // 1 //*
*bhāvabhedādi-sambandha-mayena vapuṣonmiṣan /
jayatyeko’pi viśvātmā prakāśaḥ parameśvaraḥ. // 2 //*

² *iha bhāvānāṃ sambandho vicāryate: kastāvat-sambandha-śabdārthaḥ saṃsargaḥ saṃparkaḥ saṃśleṣaḥ sambandha ityapyukte na vivṛtaḥ sambandhārthaḥ pratīyate | kiṃ nairantaryaṃ saṃśleṣaḥ utānyat kiṃcit? nairantaryaṃ cet dūrasthayoḥ pitāputrayoḥ sa na syāt, ayaḥśalākayoḥ saṃnikṛṣṭayor vibhudravyayor api ca syāt.*

³ *atha dviṣṭhaḥ padārthaḥ kaścit sambandhaḥ. tatrāpi dviṣṭhataiva sambandhatā cet tad dvidvipṛthaktvāder api sā syāt. na cāyam arthaḥ sambandha-śabdasya avayavārthānuurodhād uttiṣṭhati api tu tailapāyikā-śabdasyeva saṃketamātrāt.*

are possible for just two relata, then it should be clearly (*spaṣṭam*) explained that sambandha, as it is in itself, is the basic meaning of these ‘synonyms’ (*pariyāya*) like saṁśleṣa, etc.⁴

And no other meaning of ‘relation’—not even[, e.g.,] reference or dependence—could be the intended meaning, according to the same reasoning with respect to ‘being situated in two.’ Moreover, (*cāpi*) this [i.e., ‘dependence’] is not the intended meaning of that [sambandha], since neither the sense of ‘reference,’ nor the sense of ‘dependence,’ is suitable for two inanimate relata. Thus (*athāpi*) a sprout that ‘refers to’ a seed, or is ‘dependent’ (*paratantra*) upon a seed because its origination is, e.g., really dependent on that—even that is not accurate (*etad api na samyak*); for this [description] would be figurative (*upācāra*), i.e., it would be as though (*iva*) ‘referring’ or ‘dependent.’⁵

However, the inanimate does not possess literal (*mukhya*) ‘reference,’ which is an expectation, supplication, or specific desire; nor [does it possess] dependence, which is an inclination towards another, [or] a desire to use what belongs to another. [In all these cases], there is only a specific intention that is realized insofar as it is characterized by the cessation of the activity of one’s own desire. And things like ‘reference’ are invoked for the sake of achieving completion (*ātmalābhārtham*) of what is not yet completed—and, because there are not two loci at that time, the sense of ‘relation’ does not stand to reason.⁶

b. Relation Requires Both Unity and Diversity

Therefore, ‘relation’ (*sambandha*) should be emphatically designated as primary (*mukhya*). In this regard, it is said that these—relation, combination, [and] fusion—are in the first place ‘synonyms’ (*pariyāyas*). And that meaning of ‘fusion’ is regarded as the unity of what is multiple (*aneka*). However, there is neither being only multiple, nor being only unitary; rather this referent, i.e., *sambandha*, requires both conditions.⁷

For this very reason, there is not one relation of many [terms]; for if relation were just multiplicity, or just unity, many terms would bear [a relation] whether they enter a state of unity or do not enter a state of unity—and so would just a single term. However, given that relation—which is a unity of many—requires reference (*apekṣayā*) to both, in that case, a mere unity

⁴ atha sambandha-śabdārtha eva na dviṣṭhatā api tu so 'nya eva kevalam sambaddhaya eva sambhavatīti dviṣṭha ucyate, sa tarhi svarūpeṇaiva spaṣṭam ucyatām sambandhaḥ saṁśleṣa ityādi paryāyānām ayam artha iti.

⁵ apekṣāpāratantryādir api na cānyaḥ sambandhārtho dviṣṭhatvanyāyenaiva so 'rthākṣiptaḥ syāt. na cāpy arthākṣiptatāsyā, na hi jaḍayoḥ sambandhinor apekṣārtho ghatate pāratantryārtho vā | athāpy ankura eva bījam-apekṣate bīje vā paratantra bhavati, tadāyat-tatvādes tadātmalābhasvety etad api na samyak—upācāro hy ayam apekṣata iva paratantra iveti syāt.

⁶ na tu jaḍasya mukhyaivākāṅkṣā prārthanā cecchaiva viśiṣṭā apekṣā; pāratantryam vā parapravaṇatā parakīya-viniyogākāṅkṣā svechhācaraṇa-nirodha-lakṣaṇaḥ saṁkalpa-viśeṣa eva saṁgacchate. alabdātmanaś cātmalābhārtham apekṣādi kathiyate—na ca tadānim adviṣṭhatvāt sambandhārthopattiḥ.

⁷ tasmān muktakaṅṭham eva mukhyaḥ sambandho 'bhidhātavya iti | tatrocyate sambandhaḥ saṁparkaḥ saṁśleṣa ity ete paryāyās tāvad bhavanti. sa ca saṁśleṣārtho 'nekasyaikatā kathiyate, na tv anekataiva nāpi ekataiva api tu ubhayāvasthāpekṣo 'yam arthaḥ sambandhaḥ.

cannot bear a relation, because it requires many; and, because it requires unity, there can be no [relation] of what is strictly multiple, insofar as that is separately located (*prthaksthita*).⁸

c. *There is No Single Relation for Three or More Things*

Nor is there one relation of three or more things (*tryādīnām*). For since there is a difference amongst each one of the three from its basis, which [for each one] is an aggregation of [the other] two, it is made a term (*avadhi*) in a different division. And because there is reference to their abiding in the nature of relation, that [unity]—i.e., the unity that one has with a second—is not with a third, because of the difference between the second and the third and the reference [to both]. For these reasons, a single relationship will be proclaimed (*udghoṣyate*) for each pair (*pratiyugala*) of many elements (*saṃkhyānām*), even if they number in the 100's.⁹

Thus, the sense of the word *sambandha*, used (*vyavasthita*) precisely according to the lexical components [of the word], is itself the unity of two terms (*dvayor ekātāmā*). This is clearly expressed by the lexeme *saṃ-* (which functions having the sense of 'with,' or with the sense of equivalence), and by 'having a connection' (*bandhin*) (which means having one place or condition that depends on excluding another place)—for that is just the state of unity of the multiple.¹⁰

d. *Is this 'Unity of Diversity' Real or a Mere Conception?*

It is [now] only considered whether or not there can be unity of what is diverse. In that case, this relation is understood (*pratīyate*) in various forms (*anekadhā*): e.g., "a father's son," "a king's servant," "the tree's branch," "the *khadira* and the *dhava* tree," "a blue lotus," "Devadatta cooks rice in a cauldron with firewood," "the absence of a pot," "this is different from me." Conversely, in the same way, "the son's father" and "the servant's king."¹¹

⁸ ata eva na bahūnām ekaḥ saṃbandhaḥ | yadi hi anekatva-mātram ekatva-mātram vā saṃbandhaḥ syāt, tadbahūnām api ekatāpattau ekatānāpattāv api vā syāt, ekamātrasyāpi ca syāt | yadā punar anekasyaikatā saṃbandha ubhayāpekṣayā tadānekāpekṣaṇād ekamātrasyaiva na saṃbandhaḥ, ekāpekṣaṇāc ca nānekasyaiva prthaksthitasya.

⁹ na cāpi tryādīnāmekāḥ saṃbandhaḥ. trayānām hi bhinna-bhedāvadhikṛta-dvairāśy āśrayāt parasparam bhedāt; teṣāṃ ca saṃbandha svarūpa-sthitāvapekṣaṇāt, ekasya dvitīyena saha yaikatā na sā tritīyena saha, tayor dvitīyatritīyayor bhedād apekṣaṇāc ca. tato bahūnām śatādisaṃkhyānām api pratiyugalam evaikaḥ saṃbandha udghoṣyate.

¹⁰ ity evaṃ dvayor ekātmeti saṃbandha-śabdārtho 'vyavānusāreṇaiva vyavasthitaḥ | saṃśabdena saḥārthavṛttinā samānārthavṛttinā vā bandhinā ca deśāntara-parihāra-pūrvakaika-deśāvasthānārthena viśpaṣṭam uktaiva—sa hy anekasyaikatā.

¹¹ kevalam anekasya ekatā saṃbhavennaveti paryālocyate. tatrāyaṃ saṃbandho 'nekadhā pratīyate: pituḥ putraḥ, rājñāḥ puruṣaḥ, vṛkṣasya śākhā, dhavaśca khadiraśca, nīlamutpalam, devadattaḥ kāṣṭhaiḥ sthālyāmodanaṃ pacati, ghaṭasyābhāvaḥ, asmād idam anyata,—ity evam ādinā rūpeṇa | tathā viparyayeṇāpi putrasya pitā, puruṣasya rājeti.

In this regard, is this [relation]—ascertained as existing in just such a fashion—a mere *conception*, or is it a *real thing*? If it is merely conceptual, in that case, then the nature of the thing itself must [still] be explained.¹²

III. *The Buddhist Pūrvapakṣa*

a. Relation is a Conceptual Construction

[Buddhist:] Here it is declared: A real thing (e.g., like a pot), complete just in itself, is excluded (*vyāvṛtta*) from what is different; for only in this way is that construct apprehended (*pratīyate*) through direct perception which only has itself as content—that [cognition] is just constructed. For as [Dharmakīrti] says, “beings are themselves unrelated, and conceptual construction relates them” (SP 5cd). Likewise, the words ‘lotus’ and ‘blue’ are, owing to conceptual construction, otherwise (*param*) understood as the identity of blue and lotus; it is not, however, [so understood] by a perceptual *pramāṇa* whose percept (*ālambana*)—i.e., a distinct particular that is a non-composite blue lotus—is the appearance of a real thing. And thus they say: “The ultimately real objects themselves (*svatas*) are neither united nor divided: the unified and the disunified form of those [objects] are an imposition (*upaplava*) of cognition” (PV 1.87) thus and so forth (*ityādi*).¹³

b. A Causal Particular Cannot Be Both Unified and Diverse

Furthermore, a unity of many that is coextensive with multiplicity does not make sense, because [it is] incompatible with the nature of existence and non-existence. There would arise (*udbhavet*) either unity from a manifold material cause (*anekasmād upādānād ekam*), or a manifold from a unity—insofar as they are only mutually unrelated, they would resolve simply in themselves.¹⁴

Accordingly (*yathā*), there is a distinction (*vyavasthā*) of some things (*keṣāṃcit*) in the continuum of awareness. For here the unified sensory cognition is a conceptualization (*vikalpa*) resulting from immediately antecedent conditions (*samanantara-pratyaya*) characterized by awareness of such [sense-fields] as sound and touch; or, sound and all five sense-fields are produced from a single preceding cognition. However, a state of unity and state of multiplicity which share the same locus (*āśraya*), or the non-existence of what is existent, is contradicted by *pramāṇas*. It’s just that objects—though mutually distinguished by such a conceptualization to accomplish conventional life in *saṃsāra*—are bestowed with a form of cause and effect that is

¹² tatra kim idaṃ pratītimātram uta vastv eva evaṃ-bhūtaṃ pratīyate | tatra yadi pratītimātram etat vastu-svarūpaṃ tarhi vaktavyam.

¹³ tatrācakṣate: vastu ghaṭādi svātma-mātra-parisamāptam anyonya-vyāvṛttam, ittham eva hi svātmāvabhāsinā pratyakṣeṇa pratīyate kalpanā kalpitaiva sā | te hi “amiśrāḥ svayaṃ bhāvastānyo jayati kalpanā” ity āhuḥ, tathā nīlam utpalam iti śābdyā kalpanayā paraṃ nīlotpalayor ekātmatā pratīyate | na tu vastvavabhāsinā niraṃśotpala-svalakṣaṇa-viśeṣālambanena pratyakṣeṇa pramāṇena | tathā cāhuḥ, “saṃyujyante na bhidyante svato’rthāḥ pāramārthikāḥ rūpam ekam anekam ca teṣu buddher uplavaḥ” // ityādi.

¹⁴ na ca anekasyānekatā-sahabhāvinī ekatā yujyate bhāvābhāva-rūpatvena viruddhatvāt | anekasmād upādānād ekam ekasmād vā anekam anyonyāsaṃsrṣṭam evātmamātra-paryavasitam udbhavet.

entirely unreal. Thus, an action with a specific nature is indicated with respect to the both the king and servant, and likewise “in a cauldron with firewood,” etc...¹⁵

c. Conclusion: Relation Only Occurs in the Moment of Conceptual Construction

Hence, only at the time of conception (*pratītikāla*) do we accept a relationship as though universal. And since that conception is contrary to the nature of the real object (*vastusvarūpa*), in just the same manner, its referent is only an error; it’s simply that [this conception] does not cease (*anivṛtti*), just like the error (*bhrama*) of a partite whole (*avayavin*), because it is closely attached (*samlagna*) to the appearance of the specific forms of assistant (*upakāraka*) and assisted (*upakārya*), even given the presence of an overriding [cognition] (*bādha*) (e.g., as in the illusion of the snake). In this way, though only an error, it is designated by conventional signification.¹⁶

IV. The Śaivite Siddhānta

a. Relation Cannot be a Conceptual Error

[Śaivite:] In response to all of that, it is said: First of all, this clear apprehension (*pratīti*) is acknowledged even by you [Buddhists] for the sake of designating a relation that pertains to the form of a unity of many, such that it is said: “Thus entities themselves are disjunct; conceptual construction conjoins them” (SP 5cd). That its form is a conceptual construction, though (*ca*), is not a problem. Even the distinction (*vikalpa*) “this is a pot,” “this is a cloth” is just a conceptual construction (*kalpana*).¹⁷

[Buddhist:] But, in this case, there is also a perceptual appearance such that (*tathā*) there is precisely the form of [determinate, individual] things like pots and cloths, etc.; hence it [i.e., the appearance] is not a conceptual construct.¹⁸

[Śaivite:] However, here as well—i.e., in cases like ‘the king’s servant,’ and ‘rice in a pot,’ etc.—there is also a perceptual appearance; why are [these] not understood accordingly [i.e., as perceptual]? Moreover (*ca*) these perceptual appearances should also necessarily be acknowledged in just this way; or rather (*vā*), it *is* accepted by you, such that you yourself have

¹⁵ yathā vijñāna-santatau vyavasthā keśamcit; tatra hi śabda-sparśādi-jñāna-lakṣaṇebhyaḥ samanantara-pratyayebhya ekam aindriyakam vikalpajñānam | ekasmād vā samanantara-pratyayāt pañcāpi śabdādi-viśayāṇi jāyante | yā punar-ekatā anekatā ca samānāśrayā sā pramāṇabādhitā, bhāvasya vābhāvatā. kevalam-ittham rūpayaiḥ anayā kalpanāpratītyā sāmsārika-vyavahāra-nirvartanārtham arthāḥ paraspara-vyāvṛttā api kāryakāraṇarūpatvena avāstavenaiva pratipādyante | rāja-puruṣayor anyonyam svarūpa-viśeṣa-kriyāiva evam nirūpyate sthālyam kāṣṭhair ityādau ca.

¹⁶ ata eva pratītikāla eva sāmānyasyeva sambandhasyābhyupagamaḥ. vastusvarūpa-viparītatvena ca pratītis tadvad eva bhrānti-viśayaiva, kevalam bādha-pravṛttāv api upakāryopakāraka-svarūpa-viśeṣāvabhāsa-samlagnatvād asya bhramasyāvayavi-bhramasyevānivṛttiḥ sarpa-bhramavat | tata eva bhrānter apy asyāḥ samvṛti-samjñayā vyapadeśa iti.

¹⁷ tatrocyaḥ pratītis tāvad-anekaika-rūpatāyām sambandhābhīdhanāya bhavadbhir apy abhyupagantaiva yenoktam “ity amīśrāḥ svayaṁ bhāvastān yojayati kalpanā” (SP v 5) iti | kalpanā-rūpatvaṁ ca nāsyā doṣaḥ | ghaṭo 'yam paṭo 'yam ity api vikalpaḥ kalpanaiva.

¹⁸ athātra pratyakṣāvabhāso 'pi tathā ghaṭapaṭādirūpa eveti na kalpanātvam.

said, “insofar as it is closely connected with the appearance of aspects of objects, this confusion is difficult even for a defeater (*bādhaka*) to uproot [viz., to the extent that the cognition is perceptual].” For it is not because of its being closely connected with the appearance of an object that it is [difficult to be uprooted] by a defeater; rather, it is just because of the real existence of *similarity* among appearances of objects.¹⁹

Even in the case of the illusion of silver, there actually is the real presence of similarity with mother-of-pearl: For all misapprehensions (*bhrānti*) have *similarity* as their content—and some of those (*cānyā*), by excluding similarity, make sense only as being closely connected to the appearance of an object. Owing to the conceptual distinction (*vikalpena*) [between these,] it makes sense (*upapanna*) for those engaged in discourse (*vyavahārayitum*) to take the physical basis (*śarīra*) of that object-appearance, for the sake of discourse, as being precisely that which has just such a form. Otherwise, if the appearance of an object is just unreal (*abhūtikṛta*)—i.e., it is reduced to (*āpādita*) referring (*niṣṭha*) to the condition of an object that is ultimately (*paryavasita*) just its own self, not participating (*an-anupraviṣṭha*) in the nature of anything else—then this other conceptualization (*vikalpa*) of relation, just like the one of sameness etc., would cease—there is no other possibility (*nānyathā*). And according to the critiques of *nirvikalpatva* in the *Īśvarapratyabhijñākārika*, this conceptualization (*vikalpa*) is not different from the appearance of an object. Likewise, in expressions like ‘the king’s man,’ it is only an appearance that must be understood as a manifestation (*prathā*) consisting of the unity of a manifold, just as in the appearance of an extensive object.²⁰

b. Relations are Conventionally Real

Whether or not this makes sense, however, should be discussed. In this case, the ultimately real thing, insofar as it consists of pure consciousness, is the universal Self (*viśvātmatā*). That all things are distinguished from one another (*viśvasya...anyonyavibhaktatā*) (in terms of the diverse natures (*ātmavaicitrya*) of such things as *tattvas*, creatures (*bhūta*), and humans (*bhuvana*)) is owing to the occurrence (*utthāpana*) of the non-awareness of non-difference, which results from just this very consciousness’s subjection to the power of *māyā*. This is elaborated (*pratipāditam*) in detail in the ĪPK. Thus, one should consult that text—it will not be further explained here. And when this point is established (*siddhe*), only *sāmsāra*, which consists of a unity of the diverse, is

¹⁹ ihāpi rājñāḥ puruṣaḥ sthālyāmodana ity ādāv api pratyakṣāvabhāso; na tatheti kuto 'vagatam? I avaśyam eva ca pratyakṣāvabhāso 'py atra tathāivābhyupagantavyaḥ. abhyupagata eva vā bhavadbhiḥ yenoktam “arthākārapratibhāsa-saṃlagnatvābādhakenāpi duruddharo 'yaṃ bhramah” iti I na hi artha-pratibhāsa-saṃlagnatvād bādhakena api tv artha-pratibhāsa-sādṛśya-sadbhāva-mātrāt.

²⁰ rajata-bhrame 'pi śuktikā-sādṛśya-sadbhāvo 'py asty eva, sādṛśya-viṣayā eva hi sarvā bhrāntayaḥ sādṛśya-vyatirekeṇa cānyā artha-pratibhāsa-saṃlagnatayaiva yuktāḥ. yad-artha-pratibhāsa-śarīram evaṃ-bhūtam eva evaṃ rūpeṇaiva vyavahārayitrā vikalpena vyavahārayitum upapannam. anyathābhūtikṛte eva arthābhāse paraspara-svarūpānanupraviṣṭa-svātma-mātra-paryavasitārtha-niṣṭhatām āpādite yadi param ayaṃ saṃbandha-vikalpaḥ sāmānyādi-vikalpavan nivarteta nānyathā I na ca vikalpo 'rtha-pratibhāsād bhinnāḥ, nirvikalpatva-dṛṣṇād īśvara-pratyabhijñāyām I evaṃ 'rājñāḥ puruṣa' ityādāv avabhāsa evānekasyaikātmatā-prathārūpo 'bhyupagantavyaḥ sthūla-pratibhāsavat.

engaged with (*anupraviṣṭa*) the meaning of the word ‘relation.’ Hence, in this case, there is not any fault (*dīnatā*).²¹

c. *Relation is a Formal Unity Only to the Degree of its Multiplicity*

Only the following should be considered: [One might say that] merely in virtue of that one consciousness, there would only be one relation with respect to different existents. Hence that [relation] which obtains for “the king’s servant” is the very same as “father and son,” as well as [“Devadatta cooks] in the cauldron,” etc., and these are acknowledged as multiple. Here as well, however, it is said that there is simply one [relation] with respect to everything.²²

[In response, it is said that] this would be the case if a relation were to consist *exclusively* of unity; [but] a relation is a unity *with parts* to the extent (*yāvata*) that the parts are distinct. And therefore, the unity ‘tinged’ (*uparakta*) by “the king’s servant” is a *different* relation from the one implied (*upalakṣaṇa*) in the ‘color’ (*uparāga*) of “father and son.” For just this reason (*atas eva*), the real existence of the category “relation” obtains solely with respect to *māyā*, which predominantly consists in the division of ignorance (*akhyāti*). On the other hand, there is only pure Absolute Unity with respect to the Universal Self, but not any sense of relation.²³

d. *Sequential Categories Appear Simultaneous Through the Power of Judgement*

Furthermore, in these terms, sometimes the referent of relation could possess a secondary sense (*gaṇavṛtti*) because it refers to an inferior aspect (*aparabhāga*) of the inferior-superior state (*parāpara*). And (*ca*) this [relation] of two terms is distinguished simply as assister and assisted, and this must necessarily occur (*pratipādanīya*); if this [relation] does not occur, then a determination (*pratīti*) of these two sequential [relata] (i.e., assister and assisted) *as simultaneous* for the sake of acquisition and relinquishment could not otherwise be effective (*ghaṭeta*)—and therefore there would be a disruption (*lopa*) of conventional life.²⁴

And there is not any meaning of assisting action (*upakāra*) independent of [the relationship of] assister and assisted (this is only fully explained (*vistārita*) in the ĪPK). And because of that, it is

²¹ sa tūpapadyate na vety etāvad vicāryate: tatra cin-mātra-rūpasyaiva pāramāthikasya vastuno viśvātmatā | tasyaiva cinmātrasya māyā-śakti-prabhāvād abhedākhyāty-utthāpanena viśvasya, tattva-bhūta-bhuvanādy-ātma-vaicitryeṇānyonya-vibhaktatā; itīśvara-pratyabhijñāyām vistareṇa pratipāditam, iti tata eva parīkṣyam nehopyanyasyate | asmimścārthe siddhe naikaikatārūpaḥ saṃsāra eva saṃbandha-śabdārthānupraviṣṭaḥ; iti nāsty evātra dīnatā.

²² kevalam iyad vimṛśyate: yad eka-cin-mātra-rūpatvenānekātmano vastu-bhedasyaika eva saṃbandhaḥ syāt. ya eva rajapurusaḥ sa eva pitāputrayoḥ sthālyādīnām ceti—anekaśceṣyate | tadatrāpy ucyate syād eka eva sarveṣām iti.

²³ yadi ekatāmātram eva saṃbandhaḥ syāt, yāvatānekātāmśād aṃśenaikatā saṃbandhaḥ | tataśca rāja-puruṣoparaktaikatānyāḥ saṃbandhaḥ pitā-putroparāgopalakṣaṇa-vilakṣaṇa eva; ata eva māyā-daśāyām evākhyātibheda-pradhānāyām saṃbandha-padārtha-sadbhāvaḥ, viśvātmatāyām punaḥ pūrṇaikatāiva na tu saṃbandhārthaḥ kaścit.

²⁴ tatrāpi kadācit parāparadaśāyām aparabhāgāpekṣaṇād gaṇavṛtṭyā saṃbandhārthaḥ saṃbhavet, upakāryopakārayor eva ca viśiṣṭayoḥ saṃbandhaḥ viśiṣṭarūpaḥ, sa ca pratipādanīyo 'vaśyam eva; tad apratipādane tayor upakāryopakārayoḥ kramikayor yaugapadyena pratītir hānopādānārtham anyathā na ghaṭeta, tataś ca vyavahāra-lopaḥ syāt.

only in virtue of that Will of the Lord, consisting of consciousness, owing to which these two categories (assister and assisted) come to be. Hence, only following that [Will], the illumination of just these two other forms (*anyarūpayoh*) as simultaneous is created only by that Will for the sake of fulfilling conventional life, [which is] due to a single judgment of both of these two [moments], even though they are sequential, as having come to reside in a single cognition. Therefore, there can be no refutation [of our position] (*khaṇḍana*).²⁵

e. *Grammatical Relations are Always Essentially Dyadic*

And relation is only of two, not of many. For is [a relation] of many [a relation] of each one with the many others simultaneously; or is [a relation] of many [a relation] of one with each of the others in the middle? If relation of many is with respect to each one with the many, then, insofar as those are many, are they within the scope of a *single* judgment, or, instead, are they the objects of numerous judgments—e.g., “the king’s servant” [and] “the king’s foot soldiers, chariots, horses and elephants”? Even in the case of the *dvandva*, (i.e., although there is a multiplicity of such things as elephants, etc.,) there is only a word—known as a “*dvandva*”—due to the unity of judgment. The words such as “elephant” etc., are like letters [of the compound]. For, insofar as it is situated in a single judgement, a word is [itself] singular. Then, due to the application (*adhyāsa*) of the single word, the referent is also just singular.²⁶

That is why ‘these’ [i.e., the demonstrative feminine pronoun ‘*etā*’] are ‘ideas that consist in words for things’ (*vastu-śabda-buddhayaḥ* [i.e., a feminine *dvandva*]). That is, since the single sense of the *dvanda* is feminine [i.e., *buddhi*], the particularity of those [others] is simply not considered (*upātta*). The word ‘*etat*’ is strictly feminine, but [the feminine plural] ‘*etā*’ does not indicate [the rule of] ‘the remaining one’ (*ekaśeṣanirdeśa*), according to which the ‘remaining one’ would be neuter. And here, in the same manner, reference to components like “wives” is plural—thus, in this case, the relation is simply of two.²⁷

Yet, in this [prior] case, there are the king’s elephants, *and* horses, *and* foot soldiers, *and* chariot. Hence, even given that the objects of judgment are diverse, however many judgements of elephants etc., there may be, just that many are “the king’s.” Therefore, the words “and” simply have as their meaning this conjunction (*samuccaya*). Otherwise, in the absence of the word

²⁵ na copakāryopakārakayor api svādhīnaḥ kaścīd upakārārthaḥ—ity apīśvara-pratyabhijñāyām eva vistāritam | tataś ca cin-mayeśvarecchaiva sā tādrśī yayā padārthau tau tathopakāryopakārakau bhavata iti tal lagnayor eva tayor dvayayor dvayor arthayoḥ kramikayor api eka-buddhy-upārūḍhayor eka-parāmarśāt tayor evānya-rūpayor yaugapadyena prakāśanam vyavahāra-siddhaye tad-icchayaiva vidhīyate,—iti na kācīd khaṇḍanā.

²⁶ sa ca saṁbandho dvayor eva bhavati na bahūnām. bahūnām hi kim ekaikasyānyair aneka-saṁkhyair yugapad eva kiṁ vā bahūnām madhye ekasya ekaikena | tatra yady ekaikasyāneka-saṁkhyais tat kiṁ te 'neka-saṁkhyā eva eka-parāmarśa-gocarāḥ athāneka-parāmarśa-viśayā rājñāḥ puruṣaḥ rājño hasty-aśva-ratha-padātaya iti | dvandve 'pi hasty-ādy-anekatve'pi parāmarśasyaikyāt dvandvākhyāḥ śabda eva, hastyādi-śabdā varṇa-tulyāḥ | eka-parāmarśa-sthito hi śabda eko bhavati | tad-eka-śabdādhyāsād artho'py eka eva.

²⁷ ata eva vastu-śabda-buddhaya etā,—iti dvandvārthasyaikasya strīlingatvāt tadviśeṣo nopātta eva | etacchabdāḥ strīliṅga eva bhavati, na tu 'etā' ity ekaśeṣa-nirdeśo 'yaṁ yena napuṁsakaikaśeṣaḥ syāt | bahu-vacanam cātra dārā itivad avayavādy-apekṣayā, - ity eva matra dvayor eva saṁbandhaḥ.

“and,” without syntactic relation (*anukarṣaṇa*) to the expression “of the king,” if there is no further judgment being made regarding dependence upon the king (i.e., as subsumed in *parāmarśa* along with these elephants, etc.)—[then] what would the relation of having horses, etc. be with? And therefore, the shared locus of the “elephants, etc.,” is figuratively understood (*pratīyate*). Alternatively, if there is—based on the sameness of sense (*samārthyāt*)—a conception of conjunction even without the word ‘and,’ just this relation of each individual elephant (etc.) to one another (as opposed to the action of [merely] existing) is clarified by the word ‘and’ as the relation of being gathered together.²⁸

f. All Appearances Depend Upon the Relational Unity of Judgement

And even the appearance of an object unrecognized (*aparāmrṣṭa*) [in the sense of] “this is like this, that is otherwise” cannot be established, precisely because it is impossible for an appearance to be independent of judgment. For even with respect to one moving along a path (*mārgagati*), appearances such as those consisting of the sensations of things—e.g., like the grass (*ṭṛṇa*) situated (*vartin*) on the side (*pārśva*) [of the path]—are not admitted as existents (*sattvena*) apart from judgment, due to not being remembered (*smaryamāṇa*) [later]. Neither, in that case (*tadā*), does it make sense to establish the existence of those entities (*sattā*) by inference (from the presence of the collection of sense organs such as sight), because of the absence of the attention of mind. When that is present [i.e., attention], there will necessarily be a judgment at that time (*tadānīm*) of such things as “grass” etc., and that is now a memory. And this is determined in the ĪPK. In this way, the appearance of the object makes sense as just consisting of judgment.²⁹

And according to the judgment “when there is smoke there is fire”, the one with perfect understanding (*samskr̥tasya*) also [knows that] the fire is the cause of the smoke [and] the smoke is the effect of this [fire] (*asya*). Thus, in this way, the function of cognitions with respect to objects’ manifestation ultimately culminates in (*āpatti*) a state of unity—a state of mutual disconnection, however, is never achieved based merely on illumination.³⁰

²⁸ iha tu rājño hastī cāśvaśca rathāśca padātīśca, ity aneka-parāmarśa-viṣayatve 'pi yāvanto hasty-ādīnām parāmarśās tāvanta eva rājñah, iti tat-samuccayārthā eva ca śabdāḥ | anyathā ca śabdasyābhāve rājña ity anukarṣaṇam vinā hastīty anena sahaika-parāmarśa-nimañjanaikībhūte rājñi paratantre punar-viveka-manāpādyamāne kena sahāśvādīnām sambandhaḥ syāt tataścopacāreṇa hasty-ādīnām sāmānādhikaraṇyam pratīyate | athavā samārthyāc ca śabdābhāve'pi samuccaya-pratītau ekaikam sa eva sambandho hasty-ādīnām-anyonyam api ca sattā-kriyām prati-samuccīyamānatā-sambandhaś ca śabdenāvadyotyate.

²⁹ artha-pratībhāso 'pi cāyam ittham sthito 'yamanyatheti nāparāmrṣṭo vyavasthāpayituṃ śakyate parāmarśa-virahitasya pratībhāsasyāsambhavād eva | na hi mārgagatīpravṛttasyāpi pārśvavartitṛṇādi-vastu-sparśa-rūpādi-pratībhāsāḥ parāmarśarahitāḥ sattvenābhyupagantum pāryante smaryamānatvābhāvāt | nāpi teṣāṃ tadā cakṣurādi-kāraṇa-sāmagrī-sadbhāvenānumāna-siddhā sattā yujyate manovadhānābhāvāt | tadbhāve 'vaśyāmbhāvī tadānīm ṭṛṇādi-parāmarśa idānīm ca smaraṇam | etac ca pratyabhijñāyam nirṇītam | evam ca vimarśamaya evārthapratībhāsa upaṇnaḥ.

³⁰ vimarśaś ca yathāgnir dhūme iti bhavati, tathā saṃskṛtasya pramātur asya dhūmasyāgniḥ kāraṇam asya dhūmaḥ kāryam ity api bhavati - ity evam ekātm atāpatti-paryanto 'vabhāsana-vyāpāro 'rtheṣu jñānānām, na tu parasparāsamāgnatā prakāśa-mātrāt parisamāpyate.

A judgment of relation in the form of the unity of what is manifold is precisely the judgment of the existence of the mutual relation between characteristic and characterized. A knower based in *māyā* in regard to the activities of conventional existence, just insofar as he is intent on the operation of a single judgment, cannot at that very time also (*arhati*) contact (*sparśa*) another judgment; since *māyic* knowers [themselves] consist of judgment that is a conceptualization of a relation of distinction (*bheda*) that results from the non-cognition of the unity of consciousness. This too is elaborated in the ĪPK.³¹

g. The Conventional Determination of Relational Appearances

In conventional life, either the king or the servant could be investigated as primary and intended to be explained (*pratipipādayiṣitaḥ*). Thus, only that [primary element] is said to be the qualified, and the other is the qualifier [i.e., the subordinate attribute]. Hence here, in this case too, there is not any fault. Even given the unity of the two, the qualifier, insofar as its nature is taken as something to be qualified, is clearly evident (*cakāsti*) as consisting in something to be qualified, and even appears by itself, i.e., in “*rājñāḥ puruṣa*.” But [in the compound] “*rājapuruṣa*”, “the king”—insofar as that is made a qualifier—appears (*prathate*) as having completely (*ekāntena*) assumed (*āpanna*) the identity of the qualified, its own form being altogether relinquished. Thus, in this case, there is no sense in expressing a relation.³²

In the case of “blue lotus” as well, the blue is subsumed within (*praviṣṭa*) the lotus, and thus the blossom *that possesses blueness* is the principal member (*pradhāna*). Here also with respect to “in the pot with firewood”, things such as pots, insofar as they are absorbed into (*upalīnāḥ*) an action, appear as dependent upon the agent. In the case of “the absence of a pot” as well, an absence, in which a pot is included within the conceptualization, appears as primary. “This is other than this”—in this case, without at all (*eva*) relinquishing the sense of otherness, the meaning of ‘other’ is ‘something (*artha*) different from another that includes [the former],’ [which is the thing] to be characterized. This should be acknowledged in all cases.³³

When there is a relationship of action and the instruments of action (*kāraka*), there is at that same time the appearance of a relation which is composed of the presence of assisted and assister (*tātkalika*). But when there is a relation that remains (*śeṣa*), [the appearance] consists of an [act of] assisting, that is, being remembered; and even in the state (*avasthā*) of memory, it is said that it is only the appearance of an object seen previously in virtue of the unity of judgment. And the

³¹ paraspara-viśeṣaṇa-viśeṣyabhāva-parāmarśa evān ekaikatārūpa-sambandha-parāmarśaḥ | eka-parāmarśa-vyāpārāviṣṭa eva sāmśārika-vyavahāreṣu māyīyaḥ pramātā na tadānīm eva parāmarśāntara-sparśam-apy arhati cid-aikyākhyātibheda-nibandhana-vikalpana-parāmarśātmakatvāt māyā-pramātṛñām iti etad api īśvara-pratyabhijñāyām eva prapañcitam.

³² vyavahāre rājā puruṣo vā prādhānyena jijñāsitaḥ pratipipādayiṣitaś ca bhaved iti sa eva viśeṣya ucyate paraśca viśeṣaṇam ity atrāpi na kācit kṣatiḥ | dvayoś caikye 'pi viśeṣaṇam viśeṣyikṛta-svarūpaṃ viśeṣyātmanā cakāsti svarūpenāpi cāvabhāti “rājñāḥ puruṣa” iti | “rājapuruṣa” iti tu viśeṣaṇa-bhūto rājā sarvathā parihārīta-svarūpo viśeṣyātmatām evaikāntenāpannaḥ prathate. iti na tatra sambandhavāco yuktiḥ.

³³ nīlam-utpalam ity atrāpi utpalāntaḥ praviṣṭam nīlam iti nīlavat utpalam pradhānam | sthālyām kāṣṭhair ity atrāpi kartrāsritam kriyām upalīnāḥ sthālyādayaḥ prakāśante | ‘ghaṭasyābhāva’ ity atrāpi abhāvo vikalpabuddhāv antarnīta-ghaṭaḥ prādhānyenāvabhāti | ‘ayamaśmādanya’ ity anyārtho 'nyatvāparityāgena ivāntarnītaparāny-ārtho viśeṣya iti | evaṃ sarvatṛānumantavyam.

activity of manifesting objects does not solely culminate in (*paryavasāyin*) the knower of *māyā* that is delimited through contact (*sparśin*) with the unity that consists of relation, insofar as the act of knowing an object at every moment (*pratikṣaṇam*) depends on (*viśrānta*) the illumination of Śivahood which consists of limitless consciousness. Yet (*ca*), it is said that there is no sequence of understanding [i.e., with respect to the disclosure of Śiva]; just the single manifestation of an object at just one moment—precisely *this* discloses (*āviṣkaroti*) the nature (*svarūpam*) that consists only in the fact that Śiva is relation (*saṃbandhaśivatā*).³⁴

Accordingly, the teacher Dharmakīrti says: “And this awareness which possesses the appearance (*pratibhāsa*) of the object appears (*bhāti*) as though facing outward, but (*ca*) the cognition that apprehends cognition is always facing inward at itself” (PV 2.428). “Facing inward” and “at itself”—by these it is said that self-consciousness is empty of the appearance of the object and does not occur separately [from the *arthaparakāśanā*]. It is likewise said in the ĪPK, “And this knower, who is defiled by various categories of limitless appearing, that is Maheśvara, who consists of consciousness without sequence and limit” (ĪPK I.7.1)—this is shown (*pradarśitam*) at length (*vitatya*) only in that [text].³⁵

h. Samavāya Does not Manifest as an Additional Thing

[With respect to] what was also said: i.e., “there is an admission of relations, like universals, exclusively at the time of determinate cognition”—then that [statement] is not only of that [universal or relation], as much as it is (*yāvat*) simply of *everything*, because nothing whatsoever exists outside of awareness. And a single universal—even externally consisting of multiplicity—is completely distinct from determinate characteristics insofar as they consist of a multitude of universals. And this [one universal] is made known by just a single word as being the locus of unrestricted (*aniyata*) characteristics; and this [universal], which bears a conceptually constructed (*kalpita*) relation to particular characteristics, is just indicated by a single word (e.g., “cow”). For this very reason, relation is said to designate “inherence” (*samavāya*). Even when there is apposition of the two, they possess a single referent. And, in that case, this one thing is indicated by the copulative expression ‘blue lotus.’ The relation of these two, however, is their unity in terms of what is characterized (*viśeṣya*), but it does not manifest in this way as an additional entity—hence, this is a *viśeṣa* [i.e., an occurrence of a word that defines or limits another word]. Alternatively, even when they are in apposition, the very fact that ‘blue lotus’

³⁴ kriyākāraka-saṃbandhe tāt-kālikopakāryopakārahāva-maya-saṃbandhābhāsaḥ. śeṣasaṃbandhe tu smaryamāṇopakāramayaḥ smaraṇāvasthāyām api ca pūrva-dṛṣṭārthābhāsa eva parāmarśaikyād ity uktam | na kevalam ca saṃbandha-mayaikatāsparśi-parimitamāyāmāṭṭi-paryavasāyī vastu-prakāśana-vyāpāro, yāvad-ananta-cin-mayaśivatāvabhāsa-viśrāntaiva pratikṣaṇam vastu-saṃvitkriyā | na ca saṃvidah kramo 'sti ekaivaikatraiva kṣaṇe 'rtha-prakāśanā, saiva saṃbandha-śivatā-mayam eva svarūpam āviṣkaroti, ity ucyate.

³⁵ tathā cācāryadharmakīrtiḥ: “bahir-mukham ca taj jñānam bhāty artha-pratibhāsavat / buddheś ca grāhikā buddhir nityam antar-mukhātmani” iti | antar-mukheti, ātmanīti ca svasaṃvedanam arthābhāsa-śūnyam aprthag bhūtaṃ cuktam | tathā pratyabhijñāyām ukta—‘yā caiśā pratibhānanta-padārtha-krama-rūṣitā | akramānanta-cid-rūpaḥ pramātā sa maheśvaraḥ’ ity etat tatraiva vitatya pradarśitam.

refers (*niṣṭhatā*) to a [single] lotus, which is the thing to be characterized (*viśeṣya*), just *is* the fact of their relation.³⁶

i. The Entire Universe is a Just a Symbol for the Non-Division of Consciousness

[With respect to] what was also said—i.e., “a relation is that whose object is an error (*bhrānti*) due to generalization”—that also says exceedingly little (*ati-ālpam*). For even this (*viśvam*) whole universe is just a sign of the misapprehension (*bhrānti*) that consists of the non-cognition of the non-division of consciousness (*cid-abhedākhyāti*). And even though it is ‘error,’ it’s being erroneous is not, however, like the [illusion of] two moons [or] the state of dreaming, etc., (due to consensus [in those cases])—all of this is resolved in the *Ṭīkā* [i.e., Utpala’s *Vivṛti* on the *ĪPK*]. Therefore, for this reason, those who deny the meaning of relation—being incapable (*akṣamā*) of the consideration (*paryālocana*) of the nature of pure consciousness, with an intent (*abhiniveśa*) merely to that extent (*tāvan mātra*)—babble nonsensically (*asambaddhābhidhāyin*). [Thus it is said:]³⁷

V. Closing Maṅgala Verses

3. Reliance and dependence of two inert things is not relation, because there is no occurrence [of a relation] even when [either one] is present—[it is thus] a figurative expression, not elliptical.
4. Moreover, due to calling non-existing things present, being situated in two is in this way abandoned; and therefore, it is established that the meaning of relation is just this union of form.
5. [Relation] is not an absence of an interval, because there is no relation of the iron and the bar which are in such a situation. Therefore, the joining of form that is diverse, that is just unity.
6. There is no contradiction of many even given [their] unity as one, just as others have said (*āhuḥ pare*) “existents by themselves are disjunct; conceptual construction joins them.”

³⁶ yad apy uktam—“pratīti-kāla eva sāmānyasyeva sambandhasyābhyupagama” iti—tan na kevalam asya yāvat sarvasyaivārthasya bodha-bahir-bhūtasya kasyacid abhāvāt | sāmānyam caikam anekam ayam bahir api pṛthag eva sāmānyā-nikuramba-rūpebhyaḥ svalakṣaṇebhyaḥ | tac caikenaiva śabdenāniyata-svalakṣaṇāśrayatvena pratipādyate, tac ca kalpita-svalakṣaṇa-sambandham eka-śabda-pratipādyam eva gauriti | ata eva samavāyākyah sambandha ucyaṭe | sāmānādhikaraṇye 'pi dvayor ekaniṣṭhatāl tatra caikam tad-vastu asti-vākya-pratipādyam nīlam-utpalam iti | sambandhaḥ punar dvayor viśeṣyaikyatā na tvevam vastvantaram prakāṣate—ity ayam viśeṣaḥ | sāmānādhikaraṇye 'pi vā nīlam-utpalam iti viśeṣyotpala—niṣṭhataiveti sambandhataiva.

³⁷ sāmānyād bhrānti-viṣayaḥ sambandhaḥ,—ity api yad uktam tad apy aty-ālpam uktam | viśvam apīdam cid-abhedākhyātimaya-bhrānti-padam eva | bhrāntāv api cāsyām punaḥ svapna-dvi-candrādivad bhrāntatā nāsti samvādād iti—sarvam etan nirṇītam ṭīkāyām | tad evam pūrṇa-cit-svarūpa-paryālocanākṣamās tāvan-mātrābhiniveśena sambandha-padārtha-pratyākhyānakāriṇo 'sambaddhābhidhāyina iti | [tadāha]

7. Accordingly, it is not in the first place merely conceptual construction, because there is overturning of that [conceptual construction], like the illusion of a serpent; [In contrast,] the resistance to that [overturning] from the closely connected [character of an] appearance,
8. ...is because being closely attached to an appearance is not [the same as] something being similar to an appearance; rather, being in conformity with an appearance is just a mistaken appearance.
9. In just such an appearance, there is the perception of unity in diversity; this conclusion (*upapatti*) is also said to be expressed clearly (*sphuṭam*) in the ĪPK.³⁸
10. And in being so (*evaṃ ca sati*), the unity of things, which exist in the form merely of consciousness, is not hard to comprehend (*adurghaṭam*), even though they have divisions created by *māyā*.
11. This [unity] also [pertains] to the object of judgment of a worldly knower, whose essence is a distinction of nature in the manifestation (*prathā*) of undivided consciousness.
12. That activity [of the knower] disrupted by this [object of judgment] could not contact another conceptual construction, because, when there is contact with another conceptual construction, it entails a distinct cognizer.
13. Even a manifold object could attain (*vrajat*) unity due to the superimposition of a single expression (*śabda*) that performs one judgment (*āmarśa-vartin*) with respect to that (as, e.g., ‘a pot, a cloth’).
14. And so now, there is another [relation of] characteristic and characterized, and that [relation] can be understood to have the sense of assisting action.³⁹

³⁸ *apekṣā pāratantryaṃ ca na saṃbandho jaḍātmanoḥ
 asaṃbhavād ātmalābhe 'py upacāro na lakṣaṇā // 3 //
 asatām ātmalābhokter dviṣṭhataivaṃ ca hīyate /
 rūpa-saṃśleṣa evaivaṃ saṃbandhārthaḥ sthitaḥ sa ca // 4 //
 nānantaryam-asambandhāt tathātve 'yaḥśalākayoḥ /
 tenānekasya rūpasya śleṣa aikātmyam eva saḥ // 5 //
 naikasyaikye 'py anekasya bādha āhur yathā pare /
 ity amiśrāḥ svayaṃ bhāvastān yojayati kalpanā // 6 //
 yato na kalpanā-mātraṃ tāvad etad avāraṇāt /
 sarpa-bhrānter ivābhāsa-lagnatvāt tan-nivāraṇam // 7 //
 yasmād ābhāsa-lagnatvaṃ nābhāsa sadrśārthatā /
 kiṃ tv ābhāsanusāritvaṃ bhrānta ābhāsa eva tat // 8 //
 ittham ābhāsa evāsminn anekasyaikatādṛśi /
 vācyopapattiḥ sāpy uktā pratyabhijñānaye sphuṭam // 9 //*

³⁹ *evaṃ ca sati vastūnām cin-mātra-vapuṣām satām /
 māyā-nirmita-bhedānām apy ekatvam adurghaṭam // 10 //
 tatrāpi yaḥ parāmarśa-viśayo laukikasya saḥ /
 cid-abheda-prathā-rūpa-bheda-sārasya vedituḥ // 11 //
 vyāpāro 'nena ruddho 'sau na vikalpāntaram sprśet /*

15. Even when there is multiplicity, characteristic and characterized would be two; just as the case of the soldiers, chariots and horses of the king subsist in a twofold judgment.
16. The judgment “of the king” is one [of the two]; the other [term of the relation] refers to (*unmukha*) its own universal. Thus this “servant” [is ‘of the king’ insofar as he] bears a general relation to a master (*svāmin*).
17. Afterwards, he is to be construed as [within the] scope (*gocara*) of the relation “the king’s servant”; or rather (*atha vā*) the two [terms] as previously constructed by you are altogether threefold [i.e., the two terms and the relation between them].
18. The relations expressed in cases such as the [genitive] sixth pertain to the qualifier. And, when it enters into unity with the qualified, it doesn’t relinquish (*an-ujjhati*) its own form.
19. Upon relinquishment (*hāni*) of one [term], there would be a state of suitability with respect to one or the other with the primary sense of the primary term (*śuddha*), [which would be] of a quality, e.g., like “the king’s servant [or] a Brahmin.”
20. In the same way, the unity which applies to one or the other [of these] as the primary term should be called a relation of quality, e.g., whether “a king [or] servant [or] horse.”⁴⁰
21. Thus thoughts (*dhiyaḥ*), explained as methods of relating that discern diverse objects [and] are suited to knowers proceeding from *māyā*, generate conventional reality.
22. To that extent (*tathā*), these are not chiefly (*param*) mistakes, because every single one of them at every moment is produced by judgment, which results from boundless consciousness under the description of reflexive awareness.
23. This implied relation, however—which is unobstructed (*nirbādha*) and efficacious (*upayogavān*)—is fully explained in the ĪPK as established by self-consciousness.⁴¹

vikalpāntara-saṃsparśe mātr-bheda-prasaṅgataḥ // 12//
tad ekāmarśavarty-ekaśabdādhyāsavaśād vrajet /
aneko 'py ekatārtho yathā ghaṭa-paṭāv iti // 13//
ity asti tāvad anyaś ca viśeṣaṇa-viśeṣyayoḥ /
saṃbandha upakārārthaḥ sa jñātum upayujyate // 14 //
⁴⁰ *bahutve 'pi bhaved dvitvaṃ viśeṣaṇa-viśeṣyayoḥ /*
dvi-vimarśa-bhuvo yadvad rājño 'śva-ratha-pattayaḥ // 15 //
vimarśo rājña ity ekaḥ svasāmānyonmukhaḥ paraḥ /
svāmi-sāmānya-saṃbandha-sahaḥ puruṣa ity ayam // 16 //
rājñaḥ puruṣa ity eṣa paścāt saṃbandha-gocaraḥ /
kalpyo 'nenātha vā kalpyau pūrvau te sarvathā trayāḥ // 17//
śaṣṭyādi-vācyāḥ saṃbandho viniviṣṭo viśeṣaṇe /
viśeṣyaikatvamāpanne svaṃ ca rūpam anujjhati // 18//
eka-hānyā pradhānena śuddhenānyānyayogitā /
syād guṇasya yathā rājñaḥ puruṣo brāhmaṇasya ca // 19 //
tathānyena pradhānena yaikatānyāpareṇa vā /
saṃbandhākhyā guṇasya syād rājño 'śvaḥ puruṣo yathā // 20 //

[Thus concludes the work *The Sambandhasiddhi* by the Blessed Teacher Utpaladeva, the Son of Udayākara.]⁴²

⁴¹ *iti sambandha-gaty uktā māyīya-jñātr-niṣṭhitāḥ /
dhiyo vibhinnārtha-dṛśo vyavahāra-pravartikāḥ // 21 //
na paraṃ tāstathā bhrāntāḥ sarvā api pratikṣaṇāt /
svasaṃvit-saṃjñakānanta-cid-vimarśa-pratiṣṭhitāḥ // 22 //
uktaḥ svasaṃvit-siddho'yaṃ nirbādha upayogavān /
sambandhaḥ pratyabhijñāyāṃ pūrṇaḥ parikaraḥ punaḥ // 23 //*

⁴² *iti śrīmad-udayākaraputrotpaladevācārya-viracitā sambandhasiddhiḥ samāptā.*

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