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## Perceiving Particulars: A Buddhist Defense

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3. Are all predicative or concept-enriched awarenesses linguistic or are there pre-linguistic recognitional capacities? (the controversy regarding the meaning of “avyapadeśyam”).

I have tried to deal with each of these controversies in three different papers,<sup>1</sup> but the intricate argumentation between Siderits, Phillips, and Chadha has convinced me that I need now to deal with them all in one sustained investigation.

#### Note

1 – See “Against Immaculate Perception: Seven Reasons for Eliminating *Nirvikalpa* Perception from Nyāya,” *Philosophy East and West* 50 (1) (January 2000), for my discussion of the first debate. See “Perception, Apperception and Non-Conceptual Content,” in *Perspectives on Consciousness*, ed. Amita Chatterjee (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 2003), for my discussion of the second debate. And see “Experience, Concept-Possession and Knowledge of a Language,” in *The Philosophy of P. F. Strawson*, ed. L. E. Hahn, Library of Living Philosophers (Chicago: Open Court, 1998), for my discussion of the third debate.

## Perceiving Particulars: A Buddhist Defense

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In a recent article in this journal, Monima Chadha claimed that the position of certain Buddhist philosophers concerning the perception of particulars is incoherent.<sup>1</sup> Her defense of what she calls a “Nyāya-Kantian” position raises interesting questions concerning how we have knowledge of mind-independent reality. While the view that she subscribes to may well be right, I shall try to show that her arguments against the views of the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika Buddhists fail to undermine their position. But some of the issues involved here intersect with underlying themes in the recent debate between Arindam Chakrabarti and Stephen Phillips over the status of indeterminate perception in Nyāya,<sup>2</sup> so I shall have something to say about that as well.

The basic position I shall seek to defend has the form of a conditional: if we wish to maintain anything like the broadly metaphysical-realist stance that is fundamental to both Yogācāra-Sautrāntika and Nyāya (as well as to Kant), then we need to hold that in at least some cases of perception it is individuals as such that are the objects of our cognitive states. Chadha’s discussion leads her to the conclusion that we never perceive particulars as such. Instead, she says, what are cognized in perception are always universal features, so that what are ordinarily thought of as the par-

particulars that figure in perception are such only relative to a context. Now, I am sympathetic to such a view, since it may be compatible with the sort of antirealism advocated by the Madhyamaka school of Buddhism.<sup>3</sup> But this should tell us that something has gone awry here, since the “Nyāya-Kantian” and the Mādhyamika make for uneasy bedfellows. My diagnosis will be that Chadha has misconstrued those realist intuitions that stand behind the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika position. A proper appreciation of these will also turn out to play a role in the defense of indeterminate perception in classical Nyāya.

1

Let me begin by attending to some terminological matters. In the preceding paragraph I applied the label “metaphysical realist” to the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika school of Buddhism, to Nyāya, and to Kant. Few will question my calling Nyāya realist in any sense of that term, but eyebrows may well go up over my calling Yogācāra-Sautrāntika (or at least the Yogācāra wing of this syncretic school) by the same name in the same breath. Yogācāra is, after all, aptly called a species of subjective idealism, for it denies the existence of physical objects. Metaphysical realism is usually understood as the view that truth is determined by the nature of mind-independent reality (by “what is there *anyway*”), and do not subjective idealists deny the existence of all mind-independent entities? But “mind independence” here does not mean being independent of cognition, but rather being independent of the concepts that we happen to employ. The metaphysical realist is thus one who holds that there is a quite determinate way that things ultimately are apart from any and all schemes of conceptualization. Understood in this way, metaphysical realism is something that is subscribed to by such subjective idealists as the Yogācārins and Berkeley.<sup>4</sup> While they maintain that nothing exists apart from mind or the mental,<sup>5</sup> they also hold that this fact is quite independent of the ways in which we or any other cognizers conceptualize reality. Subjective idealism is but one of a large number of ontological views that might properly be called realist in the present sense.

But, then, what of Kant? Surely Kant is rightly thought of as maintaining that all of the phenomenal world is in some sense the result of processes of conceptual construction, so how can he be called a metaphysical realist? It is true that much of what is currently called antirealism has a distinctively Kantian pedigree. But to read Kant himself in this way, one must either disregard or else reinterpret much of what he has to say concerning the thing-in-itself. On the most straightforward reading of Kant, how the noumena are is genuinely independent of all concepts, *a priori* as well as *a posteriori*, and it is how the noumena are that ultimately determines which of our judgments are true. There may in the end be something incoherent in this view. There is, for instance, the problem of working out what “determine” could mean here, given that it cannot mean “cause” (which for Kant has application only in the phenomenal realm). But it is not my job to try to settle such questions here. It is Chadha who has brought Kant in on the side of Nyāya, and if I have read her correctly it is Kant the metaphysical realist that she has in mind. My present concern is

just to clarify the sense in which I think both the Naiyāyikas and Kant can be thought of as realists.

There are further terminological matters that must be attended to. Chadha says that the “Buddhist” (actually the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika) defines perception as conception-free awareness of a particular.<sup>6</sup> While this is faithful enough to the official views of Diñnāga and Dharmakīrti, it misses a very important distinction that takes on great relevance in a discussion of this nature. This is the distinction between what are strictly called perceptions and what may be called perceptual judgments. This distinction in many ways parallels that made in Nyāya between indeterminate perception (*nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa*) and determinate perception (*savikalpaka pratyakṣa*). Like Nyāya’s indeterminate perception, what the Yogācāra-Sautrāntikas call perceptual cognitions (*pratyakṣa*) involve awareness just of particulars (namely, the *svalakṣaṇa*) and not of particulars as standing in relation to other particulars. This is taken to mean that such cognitions do not allow of verbal expression or any other mental operation requiring symbolic representation. Their role in our cognitive processes is thus limited to their causal contribution to cognition and to action. By contrast, a perceptual judgment allows of verbal expression in such reports as “This is a cow,” and “Devadatta is in the house.” While these are technically considered by Yogācāra-Sautrāntika to be inferences, they lack the explicit mention of a reason (“There is fire on the hill *because there is smoke*”) typical of inferences.<sup>7</sup> And they are more directly tied to immediately preceding perceptions than is usual with most inferences. Indeed, their classification as inferences is heavily dependent on the technical details of the *apoha* theory of nominalist semantics that originates with Diñnāga and is peculiar to the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika school.<sup>8</sup> In the present context, involving as it does comparison of Yogācāra-Sautrāntika with Nyāya and Kant, it might be better to speak instead of indeterminate and determinate perception.

Chadha also attributes to Yogācāra-Sautrāntika the claim that “the content of perceptual experience must . . . be restricted to particulars” (p. 198). But this involves collapsing two distinct claims into one. For here “particular” may mean that which is not a universal (something that may be equally present in discrete locations), or it may mean that which is not the result of mental synthesis or combination. According to Nyāya, a universal is a particular in the second sense, although obviously not in the first. For this reason it would be better to reserve the term “particular” for the first sense, and use “individual” for the second sense.<sup>9</sup> We may then say that Nyāya agrees with Yogācāra-Sautrāntika that only individuals may serve as contents of indeterminate perception. Where the two schools disagree is over whether only particulars, and not also universals, can be the objects of indeterminate perception. Since the Yogācāra-Sautrāntikas claim that only particulars and not universals are ultimately real, and since they see perception as our link with mind-independent reality, they deny that universals can figure in indeterminate perception. But it is important to note that one might disagree with the Yogācāra-Sautrāntikas over their nominalist metaphysics and yet agree that only in determinate perception can there be cognition of individuals as figuring in relational complexes.

To summarize, then, the terminology we shall employ: Both Yogācāra-Sautrāntika

and Nyāya hold that in indeterminate perception we cognize individuals as such. For Yogācāra-Sautrāntika, only particulars, in the form of the unique and ephemeral *svalakṣaṇa*, count as individuals, whereas Nyāya treats substances, universals, quality-particulars and the relations of inherence and contact all as individuals that can be cognized in indeterminate perception. Yogācāra-Sautrāntika and Nyāya also agree that an indeterminate perception usually leads to a determinate perception in which the same individuals figure (either directly or indirectly; see note 10 below). The most important difference between the two forms of perception is that in the latter, individuals are cognized as falling into relational complexes. In the Nyāya scheme, for instance, the indeterminate perception of pot, potness, and inherence as discrete individuals is followed by the determinate perception of potness inhering in pot, which is expressed as “This is a pot.” (The Yogācāra-Sautrāntika version is much more complex, thanks to the semantics of *apoha*.) In indeterminate perception individuals are cognized in unrelated form; in determinate perception the same individuals are put into relation.<sup>10</sup>

This last point is significant because it brings out an important difference between Indian and Kantian treatments of cognition that Chadha’s treatment tends to obscure. One key strand in her positive thesis is that “perceptual cognition must be restricted to universal features” (“Perceptual Cognition,” p. 205). But Nyāya’s universals are not the same thing as Kantian concepts. For Kant a concept is a rule for synthesizing intuitions. When Kantians claim that all perceptual experience involves application of concepts, they mean that the immediately given intuitions must be synthesized according to a rule that is potentially applicable to other cases (so that the result of synthesis is such as to allow for the possibility of *recognition*). Nyāya’s universals are not like this. They are mind-independent individuals and not forms or patterns arrived at through a process like abstraction. They are not the sorts of things to which the type/token distinction could meaningfully be applied (as it could to Kant’s concepts). When the Naiyāyika claims that in (determinate) perception the particular is always cognized as qualified by a universal, what is meant is that two individuals, for example a blue-color particular and the universal blueness, are cognized as related to one another through a third individual, the relation of inherence. If there is anything in the Nyāya account that is properly analogous to Kantian concepts, it is the relational structure (*prakāra*) whereby the individuals that were initially cognized in indeterminate perception come to be seen as forming a relational complex.

For the Kantian, synthesis is an act performed by the mind, and the rules whereby it is performed (whether *a priori* or *a posteriori*) are in some sense mentally constructed. The Nyāya attitude toward the relational structure of determinate perceptions is somewhat ambivalent (more on this below), but the nominalist Yogācāra-Sautrāntika holds that since all aggregation involves mental construction, the cognitive grasp of the relational complex involves elements contributed by the imagination. Now it so happens that the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika aversion to universals stems from their conviction that universals are likewise the product of the mind’s tendency to hypostatize aggregates in the interests of cognitive economy (the same

tendency whereby we speak of a “heap” of bricks instead of referring to each brick separately). Still, one might, like the classical Naiyāyika, hold that universals are mind-independent individuals that can be grasped in perception, yet also hold, like the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika, that any cognition that involves both a particular and a universal in relation has in some important respect gone beyond what is given in experience. Chadha wants to know whether particulars can be perceived in any way other than as having repeatable features. If this is not to be confused with a version of the realist/nominalist dispute (as she insists it should not), then perhaps the focus here should be on the question of whether individuals can be cognitively grasped apart from the grasp of any relational complex in which they happen to participate.

Finally, a word needs to be added concerning the grounds on which Yogācāra-Sautrāntikas hold that determinate perception always involves a degree of falsification (and is thus for them not properly classed as perception). Chadha characterizes their position on this point as follows:

[T]he Buddhist does not want to allow minimal—most others would say *inevitable*—intervention from the mind because once concepts and words are allowed, there is a tendency for the obsessive proliferation of unnecessary concepts. The point is that as soon as we allow the mind to intervene, it has the tendency to take over to the extent of completely ignoring the input from the senses, and then we are forced into a position where we can perceive anything and everything of which the mind can conceive. (“Perceptual Cognition,” p. 203)

To see the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika position in this way is to miss utterly their point about the relation between indeterminate and determinate perception. In their view, in the former we directly grasp particulars, while in the latter we directly grasp mentally constructed universals but thereby indirectly grasp particulars. When we determinately perceive a set of particulars as a mango, this enables us to act in relation to these (and their successor) particulars in such a way as to satisfy our hunger for mango. And this despite the fact that the object of the determinate perception is not particulars but the mentally constructed universals that enter into the cognition “This is a mango.” The Yogācāra-Sautrāntika does hold that conceptualization and verbalization do falsify the world in important ways: they make it appear as if there are enduring substances that come sorted into determinate kinds, when in fact there are only unique, ephemeral pure particulars. Nonetheless, they hold that determinate perception is sufficiently constrained by the nature of reality—by how it is that the particulars “are there *anyway*”—to enable us to achieve our goals, something that pure imagination could never do on its own.

2

What, then, is the difficulty with supposing that we can perceive particulars as such? Chadha gives the following argument for the claim that the notion of a conception-free cognition of a particular is incoherent. To characterize a state of a subject as cognitive is to attribute intentionality to that state: not only must the state be said to

involve consciousness, but it must also be object-directed, or “about” some object; its conscious character must be “of” something. In the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika conception, since (indeterminate) perceptual cognition is said to grasp the particular as such without the use of concepts, the cognizer must lack not only the ability to classify the particular as belonging to some kind or other but even the ability to grasp the particular as an individual, that is, as distinct from other particulars. For such grasping requires the ability to think of the particular as *this* individual as distinct from *those* individuals. And, as the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika recognizes, to grasp the particular as a *this* is to employ a concept, and thus to transgress the restriction of (indeterminate) perception to what is devoid of conceptualization. The result is that “[t]he *given* in perceptual awareness is reduced to an indistinguishable heap or mass of reality whose constituents cannot be distinguished” (“Perceptual Cognition,” p. 207). There is thus no sense in which such a state could be said to be intentional.

Chadha recognizes that provision must be made in any account of perceptual cognition for causal interaction between the senses and the individuals that make up the external world. And she seems ready to grant that such interaction cannot itself explain our awareness of the patterns involved in conceptualization; for that, she thinks the constructive powers of the mind must be invoked. Thus, she concludes that causal interaction between the senses and individuals results in “a sensory impression that is no more than a mere physiological change” (“Perceptual Cognition,” p. 200). All conscious states involve intentionality, and, by the argument of the preceding paragraph, the state resulting from contact between functioning sense and object cannot be said to be intentional. Hence, while such a state may be called an “impression,” it would be a mistake to consider it a conscious state. At best it may be thought of as something that somehow contributes content to determinate perception, where the mind’s power of synthesis is allowed free reign.

Much of this is clearly inspired by Kant’s dictum that intuitions without concepts are blind. For Kant, wholly unconceptualized intuitions could be “nothing to us.” But it is not clear that a Kantian should want to call intuitions “mere physiological states.” For there is more than a hint of dualism implicit in that “mere.” And if the synthesis of intuitions through the application of concepts is something that is performed by the transcendental ego, then to the extent that the mind/matter distinction is something that has application only in the phenomenal realm, unsynthesized intuitions could not be called physical. Of course, this argument cuts the other way as well: unsynthesized intuitions cannot strictly be said to be mental, either. But the point here is not simply that nothing whatever can be said about the noumenal. According to the usual understanding of Kant’s transcendental psychology, intuitions are the result of the transcendental ego’s being affected by noumena. Phenomenal experience results when these are synthesized in accordance with *a priori* concepts in an act of pure spontaneity on the part of the transcendental ego. The result is the appearances that we think of as the given in experience, which are then subjected to further synthesis in accordance with empirical concepts. This strongly suggests that for the Kantian, intuitions are cognitive contents of some sort for the transcendental ego. For otherwise it would be quite a mystery how they could end up helping

constitute the contents of (synthesized) experience. How could the transcendental ego be said to synthesize something of which it was utterly unaware? Perhaps the notion of an “impression” that is a “mere physiological state” might be a part of a Nyāya account of how determinate perception comes to have content shaped by particulars (although more on this below). But it is not clear how such “impressions” could be the preconceptual intuitions of Kantian psychology.<sup>11</sup>

More importantly, though, there is a difficulty with Chadha’s argument itself. This turns on the claim that in order for a state to count as cognitive, it must be possible for the subject to think of the state as being “of” some determinate object. This claim appears to presuppose internalism about conscious content, the thesis that whatever content a state has must be accessible, in some strong sense, to subjects themselves. And this thesis is controversial. Twin Earth counterexamples seem to show that I may not always be in the best position to say what it is that my conscious states are about. Of course, the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika claim about indeterminate perception would represent an extreme form of externalism about content: I am never able to say anything concerning what it is that I am conscious of in such episodes; instead the content is to be determined “externally,” by looking to see what it is that caused the state. Still it is not as if, according to the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika view, subjects cannot manifest their cognitive grasp of that particular that is claimed to be the object of the cognition. This manifestation comes in the form of behavior toward the object (strictly speaking, toward other particulars that are its effects). Such behavior is always mediated by determinate perception, which Yogācāra-Sautrāntika holds to have not particulars but conceptually constructed universals as its object. Indeterminate visual perception of the pure particular is followed by a determinate perceptual cognition expressible as “This is a mango,” and that in turn leads to behavior that satisfies my desire for mango. Determinate perception alone cannot explain this behavior. For the object of the determinate perception is the conceptual construction of a “this” as qualified by “mango.” And conceptually constructed universals, being causally inefficacious, cannot explain such effects as the satisfaction of desire. Since it is obviously a real particular that is involved in the satisfaction of desire, the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika takes it that we are justified in attributing intentionality to the initial state of indeterminate perception.

Śāntarakṣita puts all this quite well in his response to objections attributed to Sumati (a Jain) and Kumāriḷa.<sup>12</sup> Both opponents raise questions concerning the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika doctrine of conception-free perception, with Sumati in particular holding—like Chadha—that the particular can only be cognized as qualified by some qualifier. Śāntarakṣita responds with a number of metaphysical arguments the details of which need not detain us. But there is one exchange that is instructive. The question is raised by the opponent why the cognition of an object that is presumably absolutely distinct from all other entities is not determinate. The reply is that to call something a presentative conscious state (*anubhava*) is not necessarily to say that it is determinate (*TSP* 1306). And the reason is that determinacy depends in part on a variety of context-sensitive factors, such as the subject’s interests and the degree of perceptual clarity. According to the semantics of *apoha*, to bring an entity under the

concept of a kind *K* is just to exclude it from the class of non-*K*s. It is, in other words, to reject a possible mis-characterization of the entity.

And there are, of course, many possible such mis-characterizations. Śāntara-kṣita's point is that it is context-sensitive factors that determine which possible mis-characterizations it will be salient to exclude on a given occasion. The example is given of seeing a man approaching who is both one's father and one's teacher. This would most commonly be expressed as "My father is coming" and not as "My teacher is coming." This is because, given various social factors, it is more likely to be important to exclude the characterization "non-father" than that of "non-teacher." And since it is factors distinct from the object itself that determine which possible characterizations might occur to one in a given context, a determinate cognition—that is, one that excludes certain characterizations—can never arise just from the object itself. Determinacy in a cognition always results from the intrusion of elements extraneous to the particular itself.<sup>13</sup> This is why for the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika the object of determinate perception cannot be the particular. But, they claim, it is real particulars that explain the satisfaction obtained when we act on our determinate perceptions. Hence, it must be supposed that the particular is the object of indeterminate perception.

If we accept the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika metaphysical scheme, it is hard to see how this conclusion is to be avoided. It is a piece of internalist question-begging to insist that the criterion of intentionality must be expressibility. This means that we must let in indirect arguments for the possibility of non-conceptual cognition of particulars. If only particulars are real, then only they can explain the success of actions that follow on determinate perceptual cognitions. But according to the radical nominalist approach being taken here, determinate cognitions are manifestly not about particulars. Thus, it seems that the only way to avoid the conclusion that we regularly achieve success in our behavior with respect to particulars without ever being conscious of them is to suppose that we are aware of them in indeterminate perception.<sup>14</sup> Of course it is still open to Chadha to question the details of Yogācāra-Sautrāntika metaphysics. But she claims that the alleged incoherence is independent of all such considerations. It is not clear to me what other reasons there might be for dismissing their claim.

### 3

It is common for Naiyāyikas to characterize the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika Buddhist as a "subjectivist," "illusionist," "idealist," or "antirealist." As should by now be clear, I believe there is an important sense in which these are all mistaken attributions. It is true that Yogācārin deny the existence of physical objects. Sautrāntikas, however, do not. Moreover, the fact that the school of Dīnnāga is known as "Yogācāra-Sautrāntika" should tell us that for these Buddhist epistemologists the affinities between the two schools were more important than the metaphysical differences. Fundamental to the stock of shared intuitions behind the formation of this syncretic school, I would suggest, is the thought that reality consists of particulars whose

natures are independent of all conceptual construction, and the conviction that the knowledge of reality can only consist of cognition that apprehends these natures. One can honor these intuitions and still maintain (as the Yogācārin does) that all that exists is mental in nature. What Yogācāra and Sautrāntika disagree about is just whether some of the ultimately real particulars are physical in nature. They agree that the possibility of veridical cognition depends on the possibility that ultimately real particulars are directly cognized.

The Naiyāyika disagrees with the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika over whether the apprehension of what is ultimately real is possible in determinate perception. But this disagreement stems from their metaphysical differences over the status of universals and the existence of enduring particulars. Beneath this disagreement is a shared commitment to metaphysical realism, the view that the world is some determinate way that is independent of our conceptual activity. For the Yogācāra-Sautrāntikas, given their ontology, this commitment gets expressed in the claim that in indeterminate perception we cognize bare particulars as such. What I shall now claim is that the Nyāya doctrine of indeterminate perception plays an analogous role in expressing Nyāya's realist commitments, given their ontology. In doing so I shall be siding with Phillips against Chakrabarti, who has argued that the Nyāya doctrine of indeterminate perception is an unnecessary and irrational excrescence.

Like Chadha, Chakrabarti wants to claim that perceptual cognition is always of a relational complex, that when particulars are perceived it is always as qualified in some way. He, too, wants to deny that an indeterminate perception of an individual as such could qualify as a cognitive state, given the problem of making out how it can be said to be intentional. But he also thinks the posit of indeterminate perception is unnecessary, for the problem it is brought forward to solve—squaring the structured nature of determinate perception with Nyāya's epistemological realism—was never a real problem to begin with. J. N. Mohanty has argued that because the object of determinate perception is a relational complex (e.g., the-blue-as-inhered-in-by-blueness), and the structure whereby a relational complex is tied together appears to be contributed by the cognizing subject, it is important to be able to claim that the relata are given to the subject in an immediately preceding cognition, if the realist character of perception is to be maintained.<sup>15</sup> Chakrabarti responds that things in the world really are qualified, so that there is no danger of lapsing into subjectivism if we maintain that they are only perceived as qualified ("Against Immaculate Perception," p. 4). But I think this misses the mark. To see why, it might be useful to compare how these two distinct forms of realism, Yogācāra-Sautrāntika and Nyāya, approach the issue of cognizing relational complexes.

The Yogācāra-Sautrāntika view on this matter reflects the fundamental Buddhist intuition that all combination represents mental construction. It is easy to see how this will go, given the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika ontology, which consists of nothing but genuine particulars, entities with independently determinate natures. If the world truly is made up of nothing but such things, then the paradigm case of a combination should be the heap, something that is transparently a concatenation of particulars each of which has a determinate nature independent of its role in the heap. Now the

identity conditions for heaps are notoriously fuzzy, and this gives rise to the suspicion that the heap is not itself a real entity. For it seems plausible to suppose that the heap represents no more than an attempt at achieving cognitive economy by bundling many particulars together under one label. And as realists, the Yogācāra-Sautrāntikas will insist that considerations of cognitive economy are not reliable guides to the nature of the world. That it is easier for us to think of all those grains of sand as a heap is no reason to think that the world contains, in addition to the individual grains of sand, a separately existing heap; indeed, it is a reason to be suspicious of such a claim. It is this line of thought that leads to their nominalism. But it also leads to the idea that anything cognized as qualified must itself be a mental construction—that the object of determinate perception can only be a universal, not a particular.<sup>16</sup>

Nyāya has a far richer ontology than Yogācāra-Sautrāntika, and so here there are far more kinds of things with which the senses might be thought to interact. This richer ontology may make it seem less likely that combination necessarily involves the mind imposing its needs on the world. As Chakrabarti puts the Nyāya view, “[T]he world is known to be a multiplicity of things that fit into each other like the links of a chain” (“Against Immaculate Perception,” p. 4). If the individuals with which my senses interact include not just a particular color patch but also the universal blueness and the relation of inherence, then the object of the determinate perceptual cognition expressed as “This is blue” is less likely to seem like a mere heap, and more likely to seem like a structured whole: the state of affairs “blue-inherited-in-by-blueness.” For the color particular, the universal, and the relation of inherence seem to be made for each other; they seem to fit so naturally together that we find it difficult to imagine how they could exist on their own. With a world consisting not just of the grains of sand of the sandbox but of the nuts, bolts, and girders of the Erector set, it is easier to believe that the cognition of relational complexes in determinate perception reflects more than just an attempt at cognitive economy, that it reflects structures that actually exist in the world.

Still, there remains the realist intuition that what are real are individuals, that the structural relatedness that figures in a relational complex is not an additional entity in the world over and above the individuals that are combined. And only reals can enter into causal relations and hence determine the content of sensory states. At the commonsense level this is reflected in the fact that we say we see the desk, we see the blackboard, but we see *that* the desk is in front of the blackboard. Here the “that” tips us off that the object of the third cognitive state is (as we would say nowadays) a proposition, not an object in the empirical world.<sup>17</sup> If we add that the “being in front” is also a real feature of the world, the sort of thing that, like the desk and the blackboard, we could notice through our senses alone, then we must add that what we could be said to “see” (as opposed to “see that”) is the “being-in-front” itself, and not the being-in-front as it connects the ordered pair *desk, blackboard*. To revert to the analogy of the Erector set, it is a nut that we see, the sort of thing that we might say naturally connects bolts to girders. And the nut that we see may well be connecting this particular bolt to this particular girder. Still, for it to be the sort of

thing that can cause us to see, it must be the nut itself, not the nut-as-holding-the-bolt-to-the-girder, that figures in the perception.

It will be objected that this is just intuition-mongering, and of the worst sort, insofar as it fails to take into account what a philosophically sophisticated analysis of causality might tell us about how perceptual cognitions come about. Perhaps the intuition is widely shared that only individuals are real, so that in the end only individuals can figure in causal explanations. The Yogācāra-Sautrāntika will be happy to exploit this. In their view, even if they could countenance the idea that universals and relations are real individuals, the being related of the color patch, the blueness, and the inherence can never itself count as an individual. So our cognition of their being so related cannot be solely due to causal interaction between the senses and extra-mental reals. But perhaps we are wrong to think that only individuals can figure in causal explanations. Perhaps forms or structures (the sorts of things to which the type-token distinction is applicable) may also be thought of as having causal powers. Our intuitions do, after all, sometimes mislead us. In that case it might turn out that not only the color patch and the blueness and the inherence but also their being put together in a certain way could be said to play a causal role in the cognition that the patch is blue.

There is, however, another consideration that bears on this dispute. The theory of error tells us something about the status of structure in cognition. Naiyāyikas claim that in erroneous cognitions we are never aware of individuals that are utterly unreal. While the mind is somehow implicated in error, it is incapable of creating cognitive content out of whole cloth. (Properly understood, this claim would be accepted by the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika as well, but I shall not go into that here.) What the mind can do is place individuals in relational complexes that do not happen to obtain. In the erroneous cognition "This is a snake," the mind assembles the particular "this," the inherence, and snakesness, to form the relational complex this-inherited-in-by-snakesness that constitutes the cognitive content. Now in this case the snakesness is supplied from elsewhere than where the "this" is. (We are to imagine that the "this" is actually characterized by garden-hoseness). But the relational structure involved here is the same as the structure that is involved in the veridical cognition of this-inherited-in-by-garden-hoseness. It is the form, *particular-inherited-in-by-universal*. If both veridical and erroneous cognitions can share the same form (can both involve tokens of the same type), then it seems that the form itself must be a mental construction. If the fitting together that we take to obtain among these individuals were contributed by the world just as the individuals are, then we should be unable to apprehend the same fitting together in cases of erroneous cognition.

The argument here is not the infinite regress argument against real relations of Śaṅkara and Bradley. They would argue that in order for the particular, the universal, and inherence to form a relational complex, there must be some distinct relational tie that holds them together, and that the consequent regress (due to the need for yet another relational tie to connect this to the original individuals, etc.) can only be stopped by supposing that their being related is somehow contributed by the mind. To this the Naiyāyika can justifiably respond by saying that the argument rests

on a misunderstanding of the nature of a relation like inherence. Specifically it rests on seeing inherence as like a grain of sand, and not like a nut, something whose nature it is to connect one thing to another. I take this to be what Naiyāyikas are getting at when they claim the status of a self-linking connector for inherence. And this is, I think, an adequate response to that argument. But that dispute concerns what must be the case in order for the relational complex to obtain.

The present question concerns instead the very different matter of how it is possible for a cognizer to represent the obtaining of the relational complex. One can agree that the relational complex can obtain just by virtue of the occurrence of the three individuals, that no fourth entity is necessary for them to constitute a relational complex, and yet still see the representation of this state of affairs as requiring some act of mental construction. This is because we know it is also possible for these three individuals to be represented as constituting such a relational complex when this does not in fact obtain. What this should tell us is that even when we correctly represent how the individuals stand to one another, their being so represented involves a mental act of putting together, of conceiving. And conception, too, is not immaculate. In this respect we can appreciate Kant's insight, even while holding back from embracing the full apparatus of his transcendental psychology. The experience of a particular as of a certain kind always involves the mind's actively juxtaposing two or more discrete elements. Absent this activity, the cognitive grasp of individuals could never give rise to cognition of the states of affairs in which these individuals participate.

For the realist, the achievement of apprehension of a structured complex must be seen as the result of a putting together, in a certain way, of antecedently given individuals. Whether the resulting cognition is veridical or non-veridical depends on how these individuals were given. In the paradigm case of perceiving something for the first time, the individuals were all given in an indeterminate perception that immediately preceded the determinate perception wherein they are cognized as making up a relational complex. In an erroneous cognition of the same form, one of the individuals figuring in the relational complex was not given to the senses in an immediately preceding cognition. This is why Nyāya needs indeterminate perception: so that it can give a coherent realist account of the difference between veridical perception and erroneous sensory cognition.<sup>18</sup>

To repeat an initial concession, I agree that there is something odd about the notion of perceiving a pure particular as such. There may well be good reasons for dismissing this as just one more version of "the myth of the given." And the same or similar reasons may undermine the Nyāya version of the notion of indeterminate perception. At the same time, I think there is much to be said in favor of the realist spirit that animates both the Nyāya and Yogācāra-Sautrāntika accounts of perception. Each tries (in its own distinctive way) to show how it is possible for cognitions to apprehend how the world is without superimposing elements contributed by the mind. What I have tried to show is that it will be difficult to honor that realist spirit if we give up the very idea of indeterminate perception. Chadha and Chakrabarti may well be right in their claim that we only perceive particulars as qualified in some

way or other. And Chadha may well be right when she says that the particulars that we take ourselves to perceive are such only relative to a context. What is unclear to me is how these claims might be reconciled with realism. For where they seem to me to lead is just to the antirealist truism: the mind and the world together are the mind and the world. What then turns out to be incoherent is not the idea that particulars are given in preconceptual cognition, but rather the idea that there is some way that the world is independent of all conceptual activity. This is a conclusion that the Mādhyamika Buddhist would be happy to embrace. But not, I think, the Naiyāyika, nor the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika, either.

#### Notes

- 1 – Monima Chadha, “Perceptual Cognition: A Nyāya-Kantian Approach,” *Philosophy East and West* 51 (2) (April 2001): 197–209.
- 2 – See Arindam Chakrabarti, “Against Immaculate Perception: Seven Reasons for Eliminating *Nirvikalpaka* Perception from Nyāya,” *Philosophy East and West* 50 (1) (January 2000): 1–8. See also, in *Philosophy East and West* 51 (1) (January 2001), Stephen H. Phillips, “There’s Nothing Wrong with Raw Perception: A Response to Chakrabarti’s Attack on Nyāya’s *Nirvikalpaka Pratyakṣa*” (pp. 104–113), and Arindam Chakrabarti, “Reply to Stephen Phillips” (pp. 114–115).
- 3 – Indeed, in chapter 5 of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārika*, Nāgārjuna seems to be arguing for, among other things, the view that the notion of a pure particular is incoherent. But this is not to say that Madhyamaka holds something like the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā view that the object of perception is the universal. I take the upshot of the argument of chapter 5 instead to be that while an adequate account of perception requires that the object be understood as a particular that is characterized by some universal feature, still, neither particulars nor universals are ultimately real (since they are empty). Hence the contextualist conclusion that what in one context is treated as a particular may in some other context be treated as a universal feature. This is what I take antirealism about the objects of perception to mean, and I understand Madhyamaka to be a form of global antirealism. I defend this view in *Personal Identity and Buddhist Philosophy: Empty Persons* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2003).
- 4 – Michael Dummett likewise calls Berkeley a realist in the sense that is at issue in the realism/antirealism dispute. See “Realism and Anti-Realism,” in *The Seas of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 464.
- 5 – Yogācāra actually holds that what is ultimately real is not properly described as mental, either, but is instead ineffable. Nonetheless, what is ultimately real is, according to Yogācāra, more adequately described as mental (*caitta*) than physical (*rūpa*).

- 6 – It is perhaps understandable that those whose primary allegiance is to Nyāya should commonly refer to the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika school (the school of Dīn-nāga) as “the Buddhists.” It was, after all, this school of Buddhist philosophy that filled the role of principal Buddhist interlocutors of the Naiyāyikas in the long-running controversy over the number and nature of the *pramāṇas*. It is, nonetheless, no less inaccurate than it would be to identify the Advaita Vedāntins as “the Hindus.” Yogācāra-Sautrāntika is but one of many schools making up the Indian Buddhist philosophical tradition.
- 7 – The perceptual judgment expressible as “This is a cow” is said by the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika to be more fully represented by the form “This is a cow *because it is not non-cow*.” But the presence of a reason in this representation is not meant to suggest that the perceiver performs an act of inferring like that involved in judging that there is fire on the hill from the perception of smoke. The form is instead taken to represent the purely causal processes that give rise to the judgment. For details see my “Was Śāntarakṣita a ‘Positivist’?” *Buddhist Logic and Epistemology*, ed. B. K. Matilal (Reidel, 1985), pp. 184–197.
- 8 – For an attempt at explaining *apoha* semantics see my “*Apohavāda*, Nominalism and Resemblance Theories,” *Proceedings of the Third International Dharmakīrti Conference*, ed. Shoryu Katsura (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1999): 341–348.
- 9 – Chakrabarti uses “individual” in a somewhat similar way in his “Non-particular Individuals,” in *The Philosophy of P. F. Strawson*, ed. P. K. Sen and R. R. Verma (New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1995) pp. 124–144. Note that like him I shall depart from the standard Nyāya practice and classify some relations as non-particular individuals. Specifically, I think that Nyāya’s reason for refusing to so classify inherence—concern about a resulting infinite regress—is adequately dealt with by treating inherence as a self-linking connector.
- 10 – According to Yogācāra-Sautrāntika it is not the same thing that serves as object both of indeterminate perception and of determinate perception. The object of the latter is a universal (*sāmānya-lakṣaṇa*) that has been conceptually constructed on the basis of the causal power of the particular that was cognized in the immediately preceding indeterminate perception. But given this linkage between the universal and the particular, one may say that the particular is the indirect object of the determinate perception.
- 11 – Once again, there may be something incoherent about “Kantian psychology” understood in this way. So there may well be reasons to read in some other way those passages in which Kant seems to presuppose just such a psychology. Or perhaps we should follow Strawson and simply set them all aside as confused attempts to construct a psychological model that expresses what are actually quite separate and quite genuine philosophical insights. But this need not be settled here. My job is just to explore the synthesis of Kant and Nyāya

that Chadha has in mind. And that synthesis appears to require that we take seriously the idea of a Kantian psychology.

- 12 – *Tattvasaṅgraha of Śāntarakṣita with the Commentary of Kamalaśīla*, ed. Embar Krishnamacharya (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1984), verses 1265–1306. It is Kamalaśīla who identifies the opponents as Sumati and Kumārila.
- 13 – Here Śāntarakṣita follows Dharmakīrti. See verse 58 of the *Svārthānumāna* chapter of the *Pramānavārttika*, and the *Svavṛtti* thereon.
- 14 – Thomas Nagel gives a similar argument in “Brain Bisection and the Unity of Consciousness,” *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 156. He is discussing how we should interpret the behavior of commisurotomy patients, in whom the nonverbal right hemisphere of the brain appears to give rise to actions at odds with the express beliefs and desires emanating from the (dominant) left hemisphere. Against the interpretation that such right-hemisphere processes should not be taken as conscious states, he says:

If . . . we consider the manifestations of the right hemisphere itself, there seems no reason in principle to regard verbalizability as a *necessary* condition of consciousness. There may be other grounds for the ascription of conscious mental states that are sufficient even without verbalization. And in fact, what the right hemisphere can do on its own is too elaborate, too intentionally directed and too psychologically intelligible to be regarded merely as a collection of unconscious automatic responses.

Of course it might be argued that the concept of consciousness is insufficiently well formed to have clear application in cases like commisurotomy and indeterminate perception. But this would prove unacceptable to dualists like the Naiyāyikas, the Sautrāntikas, and Kant. For if there were no clear line to be drawn between physical and mental processes, it would prove difficult to avoid reduction of the mental to the physical.
- 15 – J. N. Mohanty, *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press 1992), p. 174.
- 16 – This development has its parallel in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*, with its doctrine that an elementary proposition is a concatenation of names (4.22). It follows from this that every proposition that consists of just a name and a monadic predicate (i.e., that is of the form *Fa*) is logically complex; the “name” that occurs in it allows of further analysis.
- 17 – I hasten to add that neither Nyāya nor Yogācāra-Sautrāntika holds that the object of determinate perception is a proposition. What they are trying to do is account for empirical awareness of states of affairs without invoking any such “third-realm” entities.
- 18 – Phillips, in his response to Chakrabarti, already indicated the importance of error to the defense of indeterminate perception in Nyāya (“There’s Nothing

Wrong with Raw Perception,” pp. 109–110). But my present point is slightly different from the one that he raised. His point concerned the source of our awareness of the qualifier in determinate cognition. My point concerns the source of our awareness of the qualifier-qualified relational complex in determinate cognition.

## Perceiving Particulars-as-such Is Incoherent—A Reply to Mark Siderits

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I am honored by Mark Siderits’ response to my article<sup>1</sup> and thankful to him for the opportunity it affords me to clarify the arguments and develop the theses presented therein further. My discussion focuses primarily on a pair of epistemological theses drawing attention to what we can and cannot perceive.<sup>2</sup> The negative thesis is that we cannot perceive particulars, and, indeed, the very idea of “perceiving a particular-as-such” (which represents the position of some Buddhist philosophers, specifically Yogācāra-Sautrāntikas) is incoherent. The positive thesis, which draws its inspiration from the Navya-Naiyāyikas, is that we can perceive *only* universal features. Siderits focuses his response on the negative thesis. He does not explicitly complain about the positive thesis, although, being an enthusiast for the Buddhist approach, he cannot help but be suspicious about it. He complains that the argument for the negative thesis is wanting, for I seem to have “misconstrued those realist intuitions that stand behind the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika.” Not only that, in section 2 of his response, he claims that my argument rests on a controversial thesis that presupposes a mistaken internalism about *conscious content*. I will argue that the difficulties Siderits raises for my argument are based on a misinterpretation of the central claim that underlies the argument for the negative thesis. This, in turn, will help to develop further the argument for my positive thesis.

Before we turn to the arguments, I will attend to some terminological matters that Siderits draws attention to in the first section of his response. He complains that some distinctions, which are important in the context of this discussion, are conflated in my article. One of his suggestions—the distinction between particulars and individuals—is very helpful. The notion of “non-particular individuals” can be wheeled in here to clarify my theses and arguments.<sup>3</sup> Henceforth, I will use “non-particular individuals” to refer to universal features.

Siderits also underscores the differences between Nyāya universals and Kantian concepts by emphasizing the distinct metaphysical positions held by these philosophers. I am not convinced that he has shown that Nyāya universals are essentially incompatible with Kantian concepts. But, in any event, highlighting the differences