

‘Learned Perception’ as a Form of ‘Religious Experience’: Jīva Gosvāmin’s Vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa

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Abstract: This article interprets the religious epistemology of the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava theologian Jīva Gosvāmin, specifically his division of perception in ‘learned’ and ‘ignorant’, to argue that ‘learned’ perception is supersensible cognitive experience shaped by learning and language. The article goes on to show that the contemporary scholarship on religious experience can learn an important lesson from Jīva’s epistemology, namely that the social construction of categories that shape religious experience need not involve ontological agnosticism with respect to the existence of objects presented in it.

This article looks at the religious epistemology of the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava theologian Jīva Gosvāmin (1517–1608), specifically at his dividing of perception in two kinds, ‘learned’ and ‘ignorant’, *vaiduṣa* and *avaiduṣa pratyakṣa* [lit. ‘perception of the learned’ and ‘perception of the unlearned’].¹ This division is at first suggestive of the well-known distinction between common and ‘yogic’ perception, and likewise tracks cognising the sensible and the supersensible, respectively, but Jīva seems to have been the only Hindu theologian to formally talk about perception as ‘learned’.

Here I attempt to understand, first, what it means in Jīva’s system for perception to be ‘learned’, and second, what kind of an intervention this innovation was supposed to make. Put differently, I ask *what* learned perception is, and *why* such perception is learned rather than yogic. My argument is that learned perception is scripturally informed perception, in two senses: signifying varieties of paradigmatic religious experiences in scripture on the one hand, and functioning as the blueprint for historical religious experiences that involve scriptural learning on the other. I also argue that Jīva was likely prompted to talk about learned rather than yogic or any other kind of supersensible perception for which he had precedent in the wider currents of Indian philosophy because he wanted to relate supersensible perceptions to varieties of religious experience that he thought were delineated in

the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. In that sense, Jīva's learned perception may be seen as a part of his broader hermeneutics both derived from and applied to the *Bhāgavata*. Finally, I use this main argument as a prop to reflect briefly on the contemporary scholarship on religious experience and the recent debates between the so-called constructivists and perennialists, to suggest that the following important lesson can be learned from Jīva's epistemology: arguments that scriptural learning, religious training, and the social, cultural, and linguistic construction of categories that shape religious experience do not inevitably lead to ontological agnosticism or to bracketing the existence of such objects as are allegedly presented in religious experience.

Before I develop the argument, it is apposite to briefly introduce Jīva and his main theological work that I focus on. Jīva Gosvāmin was a Vaiṣṇava in the tradition of the Bengali saint Caitanya (1486–1533), who was revered by his followers as an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa come to earth with a dual purpose: to relish personally erotic love for himself, experienced by the milkmaids of Vṛndāvana when Kṛṣṇa was last present on earth (and perpetually in his eternal domain); and to introduce the religious process for the degraded Kali age, singing the names of Kṛṣṇa, by means of which humanity can attain the highest good.² A nephew of Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmins, who were likely taught by Caitanya himself, Jīva was educated in Benares at the height of classical Sanskrit learning and came to be widely recognised as the premier theological authority among Caitanya's followers in Vṛndāvana.³

It was through Jīva's writings that Caitanya's religious movement positioned itself in the fold of theistic Vedānta (Gupta 2007). Jīva's theological output, however, was not set in the common boundaries of literary production on the Vedānta canon: the Upaniṣads, *Brahma-sūtra*, and the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Caitanya's followers instead promoted the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* as the highest scriptural authority and as a work of Vedānta (Broo 2006, pp.19–21; Gupta 2007, pp.25–31). Jīva's *magnum opus*, then, was a work called *Ṣaṭ-sandarbha* or 'Six Compositions' (also known as *Bhāgavata-sandarbha* or 'Compositions on the *Bhāgavata*'), an arrangement of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* into systematic theology and likely modelled in the image of the *Brahma-sūtra*.⁴ To the first four of the six *Sandarbhās*, Jīva appended an auto-commentary titled *Sarva-saṁvādinī*, which is more a collection of appendices on issues introduced and already discussed in the main text, and is best read as its extension. This article coordinates the opening portion of the second or *Bhagavat-sandarbha* (BhS), where Jīva states the principles of his ontology, with a section of the *Sarva-saṁvādinī* on the first or *Tattva-sandarbha* (TSSS), where epistemological issues are discussed, and draws occasionally from other parts of the *Ṣaṭ-sandarbha*.

Jīva Gosvāmin's epistemology: perception and language

Jīva's account of perception in the *Sarva-saṁvādinī* is brief and integral to the broader Vaiṣṇava epistemology and its significance for the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* that he is systematising. While the definition of perception and the other reliable epistemic warrants (*pramāṇas*) is predicated on their being causal processes, i.e., on perception arising

- 3.5 from a contact of a sense faculty with an external or an internal object, Jīva treats them primarily as the cognitive outcome, i.e., as a form of awareness or a cognitive episode (*jñāna*) in which an object is represented to a subject through the functioning of a specific cause.⁵ Jīva's choice of definition may reflect an apprehension that knowledge from language or linguistic utterances (*śabda*) could be made derivative of aural perception, and by that much dependent, if a *pramāṇa* is essentially defined through how veridical knowledge arises rather than *what* it is.⁶ 3.45
- 3.10 Perceptual awareness is of six kinds insofar as it arises from the five senses and the mind, and each of these six can be conceptualised or non-conceptualised for a total of twelve. Perception can further be learned and ignorant.⁷ Jīva's wording (... *dvādaśa-vidhaṃ bhavati, tad eva ca punar vaiduṣaṃ avaiduṣaṃ ca*, TSSS 9, p.11) suggests that all twelve forms of perceptual awareness can have learned and ignorant iterations, and by that much, that learned perception is also of the conceptualised and non-conceptualised kind. We will have ample opportunity to see what perception being conceptualised and non-conceptualised means, but for now we simply note that learned perception also involves this distinction. 3.50
- 3.15 Jīva does not say much more about learned perception, except that unlike its *avaiduṣa* counterpart it is not erroneous, the reasons for which are two: it is not liable to faults that compromise epistemic validity, and it is grounded in language or knowledge from linguistic utterances, *śabda*: 3.60
- 3.20 In learned perception, there is no erroneous cognition, because there are no human faults such as confusion, and because language is its foundation.⁸ 3.65
- 3.25 I note here that the second part of Jīva's definition—*śabdasyāpi tan-mūlatvāt*—is ambiguous, as it depends on whether *tan-mūla* is read as a *tatpuruṣa* or a *bahuvrīhi* compound. If it is the second reading, Jīva is rather saying that learned perception is the basis or origin of language, that is, scripture. Both meanings are possible—indeed, *correct*—depending on what the force of *mūla* is taken to be: a *source*, 3.70
- 3.30 denoting the supersensible cognitive act in which scriptures are revealed; or *epistemic foundation*, in virtue of which such supersensible cognitive experiences are veridical and of which they are the culmination. Appended at the end of this article is a thorough philological discussion, doubling as literature review, and here I go with the first reading in view of the following point. The entire drift of Jīva's epistemological account in the *Sarva-saṃvādinī* is not at all about defining epistemic warrants, but about defending a somewhat extraordinary yet absolutely crucial thesis, namely that only language is properly foundational among the commonly 3.75
- 3.35 discussed *pramāṇas*: 3.80
- 3.40 Although there are ten epistemic warrants—perception, inference, language, sage-talk, comparison, postulation, absence, inclusion, traditional accounts, and gesture—only that speech which is free from the faults of confusion, inattention, deception, and impairment of the faculties is the foundational.⁹ 3.85

That language is the foundational epistemic warrant indeed means that linguistic cognitions are justified as being veridical directly rather than through something more primitive, but not quite as in Kumāriḷa's sense where every cognition is prima facie justified unless and until proved wrong.¹⁰ In fact, something of the opposite is the case with Jīva: no cognition other than those originating in language is securely justified unless and until it has received firm foundation from language. In other words, Kumāriḷa's notion of intrinsic validity (*svataḥ-prāmāṇya*) is applicable only to forms of language that are definitionally inerrant.¹¹

To demonstrate this, Jīva argues that perceptual and inferential forms of awareness—the other seven epistemic instruments—are commonly erroneous yet incapable of overturning what is known from language. Perception is intrinsically invalid¹² because agents are inherently liable to four faults—confusion, inattention, deception, and impairment of the faculties—such that any perceptual awareness can be doubted in principle. Inference is liable to being invalid because of the classical problem of induction, that is, owing to the difficulties in establishing truly universal and exclusive relations between phenomena—i.e., smoke and fire—such that from an inferential mark (smoke) it would be possible to know the demonstrable (fire) with full justification. Additionally, invalidity perpetually threatens inferential cognitions because of their being derivative of perception, such that it is always possible to doubt the validity of the perceptual awareness of the inferential mark.¹³

That language unlike perception and inference is not erroneous follows, on the most fundamental level, simply from its being language. From Jīva's illustrations, it is clear that what he has in mind under 'language' is perception-like paradigmatic facts and inference-required causal relations, neither of which are empirically derived nor associated with personal agents, yet also neither of which one could possibly doubt if one understands language. The first he illustrates with 'there is snow on the Himāyala, there are jewels in the jewel mine', which should intimate the point that linguistic awareness of this kind cannot possibly be wrong just because *himālaya* means 'repository of snow' and, as a linguistic fact, cannot be without snow.¹⁴ The second is illustrated with 'fire arises from contact with sunstone'.¹⁵ The sunstone is a fabulous crystal that allegedly gives out heat when exposed to the sun, but Jīva's point seems to be that one cannot conceivably doubt the relation, as one of language, if one comprehends the meaning of 'sun' and 'fire'. Thus, one could say that Jīva thinks of linguistic truths as if they were *a priori* analytic truths: that is the sense in which language is foundational.¹⁶

Language is also foundational, however, insofar as it has the power to provide 'firm foundation'—epistemic validity—to perception and inference. This is illustrated with stock examples of perceptual doubt, derived from the discourse of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, that cannot be resolved in the circumstances in which they originate except with the testimony of someone trustworthy. Imagine that you see someone with a shaved head that looks like the head of Devadatta, yet it is dimly lit, and you have been wrong about shaved heads before. Insofar as the perceptual awareness is

accompanied by doubt, it cannot be a reliable warrant, yet the pronouncement of an ‘elder’ (*vṛddha*) ‘It is Devadatta’s head’ supplies the requisite validity, for which reason language is ‘foundational’ as in ‘providing foundation’.¹⁷ 5.45

5.5 For the purposes of my argument, there is no need to discuss the related details about the independence of language, its alleged power to override perception and inference, etc., or to evaluate the internal consistency and overall merit of Jīva’s claims. What is important to appreciate is the following: perceptual and inferential cognitions are liable to error, and by that much unreliable; there is ‘language’ as indubitable perception-like facts and inference-required causal relations (one may call them ‘linguistic perception’ and ‘linguistic inference’); language has the power to provide ‘firm foundation’ to perception and inference, i.e., to make them properly valid. In that sense, too, one may talk about perception and inference that are set right by language.¹⁸ 5.50 5.55

5.15 It is through the intersection of these two—language as the foundational reliable warrant (*śabda eva mūlaṃ pramāṇam*) that has the form of perception-like facts, and perception as having acquired firm foundation in language (*śabdena eva baddha-mūlam*)—that we will seek out the meaning and significance of learned perception. A few additional observations are in order before we move on. 5.60

5.20 First, there is another very important sense in which language or speech is foundational among the epistemic warrants and intertwined with all forms of perceptual and inferential cognitions. It is only language that is properly human, such that without exposure to language one does not learn how to participate in human dealings: 5.65

5.25 Moreover, since knowledge from perception etc. is not distinct from that of animals, it does not bring about absolute validity, insofar as animals too evidently act or refrain from action based on sight or smell of desired and undesired things, yet do not achieve the highest good. And, small children evidently acquire knowledge from the authoritative words of their mothers, fathers etc. Without it, dependents remain dumb through being isolated, and no human dealings become possible.¹⁹ 5.70 5.30

Obviously if there is anything characteristically human about seeing things and inferring relations, it cannot be that to which animals are privy as well. Being human and knowing things in a human way just means being shaped by language and culture, by participating in ‘the world of elders’. Language is foundational because it is the specific difference that sets humans as cognitive agents apart from other sentient forms of life.²⁰ 5.75 5.80

5.40 Jīva, next, is not concerned with language in general, beyond what is required to illustrate its being foundational to perception and inference. For him as a theologian, language properly refers to the Vedas, i.e., to scriptural language and learning. It is not necessary for the argument to go into the details of what the Vedas are for Jīva.²¹ He shares the Mīmāṃsā-Vedānta theory of scripture as *apauruṣeya-śruti*, texts that were not composed by a human or divine agent—i.e., are non-personal form 5.85

of speech—and precisely because of that are not liable to the four kinds of errors in perception. Specifically, Jīva follows the Vedāntic iteration of *apauruṣeya-śruti* in which the eternal Vedas emanate from God as his breath and are intuited by the Vedic sages in the beginning of every creation cycle. He extends their scope in two ways: first, by including the epics, the *Purāṇas*, and the wider Hindu canon under the label 'veda', thereby allowing for the possibility of intuiting such speech beyond the time of creation²²; and second, by extending the idea of *apauruṣeyatva* to include the speech of agents devoid of the said four faults that impair cognition, who may all be grouped under the category of *vidvān*, 'the learned'.

What is important for the argument, however, is *how* Jīva defines the Vedas as an inerrant form of language:

Therefore, only that speech is accepted here which is a collection of great statements and is the root of all traditional *learning*, which is imitated by everyone for the sake of their own *learning*, by the understanding of which everyone is *fully learned*, which produces the *highest learning* by which perception and the other epistemic warrants are made pure, and which is self-established and without beginning. Only that is scripture, only that is Veda.²³

Elsewhere Jīva says that it is 'learning' by means of which one comes to 'personally experience' *Ḳṛṣṇa*.²⁴

I draw attention to the word that I translate here as 'learning', *vidvattā*. It is an abstract noun formed from a variety of the same stem as *viduṣa* from which we derived learned perception.²⁵ This, I believe, is the significance of Jīva's idea: while *any* perceptual and inferential awareness is facilitated by language, when Jīva talks about learned perception, it is that perception which is informed by scriptural language—the Vedas as he understands them—and has 'scriptural things' as its scope. We will return to this point, but note now that the perception here is not of pots and cloth; it is rather of scriptural items.

Finally, there is something to be said in favour of an ontological basis that undergirds language's being the foundational epistemic warrant and its being intertwined with perception. In Jīva's system, this has hallowed origins in the *Brahma-sūtra* itself.²⁶ For him as a Vedāntin, things are in the ultimate analysis objectification or fleshing out of the eternal words of the Vedas and the forms or universals which they denote. The *locus classicus* on this is *Brahma-sūtra* 1.3.28-30, which Jīva cites and interprets by drawing explicitly from the three major commentaries—of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva—thereby participating in a view that is remarkably uniform across the otherwise divergent flavours of Vedānta. The three *sūtras* present the following doctrine.²⁷ World creation in every cycle is contingent on the words of the Vedas and the forms or universals which they naturally denote (*nāma-rūpe*, 'name and form'). Or, as Jīva puts it, 'The practice of respective names in every creation cycle is in conformity with the eternal Veda'.²⁸ What he means is that when Brahman or the supreme Lord creates all beings in the beginning of creation, he

does so against their Vedic blueprints or linguistic seeds, such that the Vedic words and forms are something like a creative principle similar to the platonic forms that the demiurge intuites in the *Timæus* in order to make all things in their image. In that sense, things are not distinct from their Vedic names.²⁹ 7.45

7.5 The epistemological consequence of this is massive: to have a fully accurate perception of things *just means* to cognise perfectly the word-forms of which they are instantiations. 7.50

7.10 In the *Paramātma-sandarbha*, Jīva puts this in even more striking terms when he interprets *Brahma-sūtra* 1.1.5 and its topical passage the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.2.3, to the effect that creation itself, expressed in the Upaniṣad by Being's thinking 'How about I become many, procreate myself' (*tad aikṣata bahu syām prajāyeya*), is verbal and conceptual in nature, *just because* it is accompanied by the words 'how about I become many': 7.55

7.15 The topical Brahman is not beyond words. How so? Because the verb *vikṣ* is used, that is, because in 'It reflected, "how about I become many, procreate myself",' the verb *vikṣ* 'to see' expresses verbal reflection through 'how about I become many'. For this reason, [*Bhāgavata* 1.1.1] says [that the supreme Brahman] is a conscious principle (*abhijñā*). He is skilled in *linguistic reflection* as involved in 'how about I become many', and this collection of linguistic capacities do not belong to prime matter [of Sāṅkhya] ... but are innate to him.³⁰ 7.60

7.25 Crucial here is the use of the root *vikṣ*, which means 'to see' but is employed in the sense of thinking, comparable to our 'Do you see what I am saying'. When Being or *sat* creates the world, this happens by way of visual reflection, but Jīva's crucial intervention is that such reflection is linguistic and conceptual in kind, being accompanied by the pronouncement 'how about I become many'. There is no overstating the significance of this: at their deepest ontological core, things *are* words; words are natural to the make-up of the supreme Lord; and seeing things necessarily involves linguistic reflection on them. This reflection is most accurate when it takes its foundation in the Vedic word: it is, after all, the Vedic word that the creative Lord himself reflects on to bring forth the world. By that much, learned perception must involve seeing things as they are seen in scripture, which is equivalent to how the Lord sees. 7.65

7.30 **The legacy of yogic perception** 7.70

7.35 Haridāsa Śāstrī the editor of Jīva's *Ṣaṭ-sandarbha* notes that *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa* is that sort of perception privy to which are God, his eternal associates, those who have achieved *samādhi*, and the perfected practitioners.³¹ Whatever the specific difference between the last two categories—or perhaps they are a single group, perfected practitioners who have attained *samādhi*—the set of agents sharing in learned perception constituted by the comment does seem right. As we have seen in the previous section, God's vision is conceptualised and linguistic, and we will see aplenty in 7.75

the next section that such is also the vision of those who partake of the perceptual experience of ontological primitives or first principles, i.e., God, in *samādhi*. They all have access to the supersensible. The other part of the definition of learned perception was that it is not disadvantaged by the faults of ordinary agents, including impairment of the faculties. By that much, learned perception must be supersensible perception. 8.45

In fact, Haridāsa Śāstrī's comment is suggestive of classifications of perception in the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, also adopted by Madhva, traces of which are discernible in Jīva's system. One such division, going back probably to Rāmānuja's student Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, classes perception into *arvācīna* and *anarvācīna*, which translates to perception of cognitive agents 'from the here' on one hand and 'from the beyond' on the other. Included in the second are yogis, liberated souls, and God.³² The key term here is *arvāc*, a directional adverb and adjectival base that means 'hitherward' or 'toward *this* place'. Its natural opposite in Sanskrit is *paras*, 'beyond', and the two together imply a demarcation point of separate domains.³³ In Madhva's theory of perception, *arvāc* is the cut-off point below the perception of divine agents (Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī) and the yogic cognition (*yogi-jñānam*) of 'proper yogis' that culminates in liberation. It pertains, in other words, to all forms of perceptual awareness that are truly supersensible and immutable, of the kind that not even the gods experience. Following Jaina epistemology, Madhva calls it *kevala-jñāna*, pure cognition, i.e., awareness that is not mediated by the cognitive faculties of mundane agents.³⁴ 8.55

In fact, already Buddhist philosophers have operated with the idea of *arvāg-darśin*, 'a person of limited vision' as Sara McClintock puts it, to denote ordinary cognitive agents who do not have access to the supersensible, or properly the 'radically inaccessible', *atyanta-parokṣa* (McClintock 2010, pp.174–175). They have, in other words, talked about the same *arvāc-paras* divide. 8.65

Jīva is clearly intimate with this vocabulary and its conceptual environment, and terms such as *arvācīna*, *arvāg-jana*, and *arvāg-dṛṣṭi* occur in the *Sandarbhās* and the *Sarva-saṁvādīni* precisely in the context of cognition, associated with the 'unlearned', and contraposed to the 'learned'. *Arvācīnas* include competing religionists who have 'spoiled the Vedas' and their social world with false doctrines and practices (TSSS 11), but also those who are in the Vedic fold yet cannot understand the meaning of the *Purāṇas* because their intellects are petty (TSSS 17). Even the Vedic sages may be said to be *arvāg-jana*: in them the eternal Vedic word enters in the beginning of creation such that the Vedas are properly intuited rather than composed by them.³⁵ 8.70

The most important passage among these is the end of the *Bhagavat-sandarbhā* (BhS), where Jīva gives a long concluding definition of Bhagavān the Lord as the central element of his theology (more on which later) and goes on to say that this has been 'depicted in words whose meaning has been seen by the learned'.³⁶ Then to the 'learned' he contrasts the 'unlearned' who do not trust such depictions because they have not seen anything with comparable characteristics and cannot conceive how a thing like it could exist. These 'unlearned' are *arvācīnas*, 'on this side' of creation. They are products of the mind, body, and faculties of Brahmā the creator, 8.85

and include not only Brahmā, but also the divinities that govern the faculties on macrocosmic and microcosmic level. *Arvācīna*, put simply, are those whose cognitive faculties are on this side of creation. They cannot cognise the transcendent Lord, presumably insofar as they do so with their *arvācīna* faculties.³⁷ Likewise, ‘those whose vision is on this side’ (*arvāg-dṛṣṭi*) do not have any experience with properties like those of the Lord, yet the properties of the Lord are established by the perception of the learned who are his devotees (*tad-vidvad-bhakta-pratyakṣa-siddham*). ‘This side’, then, is the sensible, the created, and by that much: the corruptible; and, it is the domain of all agents whose faculties are created. They are the direct opposite of the ‘learned’, and by that much, the ‘learned’ are those whose cognition does not depend on *arvācīna* faculties: they cognise the supersensible.

And so, the question presents itself, if the kind of perception at hand is of the supersensible, why does Jīva refer to it as *vaiduṣa*, learned, without a readily apparent precedent for doing so, rather than through some of its better-known appellations, such as *anarvācīna*; and more generally, why, if *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa* at least in part of its semantic range includes such perception as achieved in *samādhi*, a term more reflective of that fact is not used instead? Put differently, just what kind of supersensible perception is ‘learned perception?’ While various reasons may have factored into Jīva’s choice of terminology, here I will suggest that *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa*, although partially a form of yogic perception, was more a product of the epistemological legacy of yogic perception’s fiercest critic Kumāriḷa Bhaṭṭa (ca. 600–650 CE). This is most apparent in Jīva’s division of perception into conceptualised and non-conceptualised, but even more so in the *significance* and *precise function* of scriptural language and learning that are exactly in the opposite direction of how the advocates of yogic perception have presented them. Understanding Kumāriḷa’s ideas about perception and the background of *yogi-pratyakṣa* will directly help us understand what learned perception is, and so to these we now briefly turn.

In the chapter on perception of his *Śloka-vārttika*, Kumāriḷa argued for a theory of two-staged perception, non-conceptualised followed by conceptualised, against epistemologies that restricted the domain of the perceptual to the non-conceptual. Kumāriḷa’s primary target was the great Buddhist epistemologist Dignāga (ca. early sixth century), who famously accepted only two reliable warrants, i.e., perception and inference. The first grasps something like self-defining unique particulars (*svalakṣaṇa*) that are indefinable (*avyapadeśya*) through anything other than themselves—and are, by that much, non-conceptual—whereas the second involves everything that is known by way of common properties (*sāmānya-lakṣaṇa*), i.e., universals that are terms and concepts fashioned by the mind through abstraction and exclusion of whatever a thing is not (*apoha*).³⁸ In any perceptual judgement, the properly perceptual is ‘simply the *given*, uninterpreted sort of data’ (Arnold 2003, p.171), whereas anything propositional of the kind ‘this is a cow’ or ‘this is blue’ is inferential, i.e., conceptual.³⁹

Kumāriḷa argued instead that what makes a reliable warrant perception is not contingent upon the facility of concepts, but simply on whether a real present object

is grasped or not. There is, in fact, an initial non-conceptualised perception that is a 'cognition of mere seeing', in which the bare thing is seen without recognition of its properties. This non-conceptualised perception morphs into conceptualised, in which one becomes aware not only of the thing but also of its properties and relations to other objects (*Śloka-vārttika Pratyakṣa-pariccheda* [ŚVPP] 112–3, text and translation [Taber 2005](#), p.94, 156). This transition is common to all perceptual experience, but there are cases where one is distinctly aware of it. Think, for instance, of entering a dark room—or in Kumāriḷa's example, the *sanctum sanctorum* of a temple—from the brightness of day: the objects may initially be noticeable yet hardly discernible, but in due course one will see them distinctly (ŚVPP 126–7; [Taber 2005](#), p.100, 157).

It is important to note that what facilitates conceptualised perception in Kumāriḷa's account is the acquisition of language. Kumāriḷa famously associated non-conceptualised perception with children and the mute—those without the use of speech—and argued that to perceive objects distinctly it is required that one's mind be 'refined by the recollection of words' (*śabda-smṛti-saṃskṛtāḥ*) (ŚVPP 242–43ab; [Taber 2005](#), p.144, 162). Additionally, he argued that having distinct perceptual experience depended on training or habituation, *abhyāsa*, to illustrate which he used another example. Think of a song: to those who are untrained in music, a song is just a song, whereas the trained discern its notes distinctly (ŚVPP 239–40; [Taber 2005](#), p.143, 162). Likewise, to the untrained perceiver—and training *just is* the acquisition of language and concepts—the distinguishing characteristics of an object do not appear, and one sees but the mere thing.

The final point of note in Kumāriḷa's account is that conceptualised perception has grades of distinctness that are related to repetition: a fully conceptualised perceptual experience happens gradually, in a sort of process of discovery of the object (ŚVPP 125; [Taber 2005](#), p.99, 156). Insofar as that is the case, conceptualised perception, while facilitated by learning, is ultimately determined by how things are, not by how the mind fabricates them to be. This is eloquently put by [John Taber \(2005, p.23\)](#): 'The types and properties we identify things as being and having are real; our judgements to the effect that things are of such types and have such properties are dictated by the things themselves, not imagined or imposed by the mind'.

In the course of his argument, Kumāriḷa strongly rejected the possibility of yogic perception, for a variety of reasons, including that the set of supersensible objects (in the broader sense of 'knowables') that Mīmāṃsā recognises as real are *future states*, for instance heaven or good karma produced by a ritual, and *causal relations* of past and present things and events with such future states; in other words, objects that are *definitionally not present* for perception.⁴⁰ Although Kumāriḷa did not reject yogic perception for this reason, it is incredibly intriguing that his theory of perception reversed the cognitive sequence which is typical of yogic perception across soteriological systems that promote forms of direct meditative experience, and arrived at the exact opposite reason in virtue of which a perceptual experience may be said to be distinct or vivid. Before we see how Jīva applied Kumāriḷa's insights into

the common to the supersensible, it will be, therefore, useful to draw the contours of yogic perception. This will eventually help us appreciate Jīva's account through contrast, but also highlight further the significance of learning and the pramāṇic status of learned perception that we will discuss in the conclusion of the article. 11.45

11.5 In what follows I will draw primarily on Dignāga's follower Dharmakīrti, who is closest to a foundational figure for the epistemology of yogic perception, and on the Vedāntin Maṇḍana Miśra, to portray a wide-brush shared structure of soteriological progression that moves from the conceptual to the non-conceptual and culminates in alleged vivid and veridical direct experience. Others participated in the same shared soteriological structure, most notably the tradition of Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtra*, but here we are after broad contours and epistemological concerns, not historical depths.⁴¹ 11.50 11.55

11.15 It is formally non-controversial to define yogic perception after Dharmakīrti: 'And, the cognition of yogis that arises from the culmination of excellence of meditation on a real object [is also a form of perception]'.⁴² That yogic perception arises from 'excellence' or 'abundance' of meditation or cultivation (*bhāvanā-prakarṣa*, *bhāvanā-bāhulya*), that is, of constant repetition of the meditative practice, is commonly rehearsed even by the likes of Rāmānuja and Vedāntadeśika, and corresponds to how both Buddhists and Vedāntins have defined meditation.⁴³ The path to yogic perception for Buddhists involves three stages of 'wisdom' or 'gnosis' (*prajñā*). One first hears the Buddhist teaching from a Buddha or a bodhisattva and acquires 'wisdom of listening' (*śrutamayī prajñā*). What has been learned is then submitted to rational inquiry or deliberation (*yukti, parīkṣā*, etc.) that culminates in ascertainment (*niścaya, nirṇaya*) of the veracity of the learned scriptural truths—to be precise, the four noble truths—i.e., in finding them to be in conformance to reason and worthy of pursuit. This is the 'wisdom of reflection' (*cintāmayī prajñā*) (Eltschinger 2009, pp.175–180). 11.60 11.65 11.70

11.30 The gain obtained by the application of scripture and reasoning is that the object is ascertained as real by means of reliable epistemic warrants, *pramāṇas*, but the downside is that the two kinds of wisdom are linguistic and conceptualised, and by that much, they cannot present a 'vivid image' of the object, of the kind that only perception can. As we have seen, perception deals with particulars, and only particulars can be known vividly, without mediation by the discursive elements of perceptual judgements. It is the repeated practice of cultivation or meditation that brings about vividness and non-conceptuality to the experience (*Pramāṇa-vārttika* 3.283-4, p.76). What is meant by the two is that the perceptual experience obtained as the result of the third practice, at the 'wisdom of cultivation' (*bhāvanāmayī prajñā*) stage, ceases being clouded by concepts, i.e., it is no longer relationally determined insofar as concepts are formed by exclusion that requires contrast to what the thing is not. Put simply, the meditational object is now seen *in itself*. 11.75 11.80 11.85

11.40 The perceptual experience at the culmination of the meditative practice is just a mental image where no conceptual awareness obtains. Dharmakīrti, in fact, compares it to hallucinations of objects that are not present, i.e., are not real, yet are 11.85

vividly seen because of fear or some such intense emotion (*Pramāṇa-vārttika* 3.282, p.76). What distinguishes yogic perception from hallucinations and from vivid images produced by the repeated reflection on certain soteriologically wholesome yet absent object, for instance corpses that become skeletons in forms of mindfulness on the facticity of death, is that the object has been ascertained as real—one may say, as perpetually present and relevant as the four noble truths are—by the application of *pramāṇa*: scripture and reasoning.⁴⁴ Thus, whereas the four noble truths and whatever they involve as objects of yogic perception assume vividness and non-conceptuality by the power of meditation, their epistemic validity entirely depends on the first two legs of the cultivation process.

In Vedānta, particularly pre-Śaṅkara forms of Advaita, the soteriology of the so-called *prasaṅkhyāna* meditation had identical concerns over the conceptual and non-conceptual in the knowledge of Brahman (Uskokov 2018b, Chapter 5). Involving three steps that are exactly parallel to the Buddhist (and Yoga) sequence—*śravaṇa* (hearing from the Upaniṣads), *manana* (philosophical reflection), and *nididhyāsana* (repeated meditation) that are supposed to culminate in a direct vision of the Self (*darśana*) and go back to Yājñavalkya of Upaniṣadic fame (*Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 2.4.5 and 4.5.6)—the *prasaṅkhyāna* doctrine argued that scriptural learning about Brahman does not dispel ignorance, and by that much, does not lead to the said vision of Brahman. Rather, required was a 'special' non-propositional cognition that arises from meditation or 'accumulation of meditation' (*bhāvanā-jā*, *bhāvanopacaya*, effectively a synonym of *bhāvanā-bāhulya*, *bhavanā-prakarṣa*).⁴⁵ The reason for this was also shared with the Buddhists: knowledge derived from scripture and reasoning concerns universals (*sāmānya*), i.e., concepts, and must be superseded by direct experience, *anubhava*, that concerns the non-conceptual, the particular.

For Maṇḍana Mīśra, whose terminology and conceptual apparatus bring us very close to Jīva, this took the following shape (Uskokov 2018b, pp.264–272, with references to the relevant material in the *Brahma-siddhi*). All dualities (*bheda*) in the world are products or fabrications of ignorance: they are conceptual constructs, whereas Brahman is absolutely nondual and by that much, non-conceptual. Yet, Brahman is also in the domain of the Upaniṣads, *śruti*, which are the epistemic warrants for the supersensible. Naturally, the Upaniṣads, insofar as they use language, present Brahman through conceptual constructs. To be specific, the Upaniṣads present Brahman as Being (for Maṇḍana, a grand universal as well as the origin of the world), to which they attribute positive characteristics such as consciousness and bliss that are also universals in kind, as well as negative characteristics that are meant to distinguish Brahman from its products. This triple predication is like determinate descriptions of entities that we have never seen—Brahman is, after all, supersensible—yet can understand simply because we have the facility of concepts. Maṇḍana illustrates this with a bird whose feet are made of emerald, beaks of ruby, and wings of gold and silver, endemic to an island no one has ever visited. We have never seen such a bird, never been to the island, but are acquainted with the generality 'bird' and the generic characteristics attributed to the bird.

- Insofar as this cognition of Brahman depends on concepts, however, it is ignorance and does not stop ignorance, and so meditation on the determinate description of Brahman must follow. At the end of this soteriological process, both scriptural knowledge and the meditation deconstruct themselves while simultaneously revealing the object—like some prophylactic powder that eliminates dirt in the water, and in the interaction with the dirt eliminates itself—such that all duality of conceptual constructs is undone, the Self which is Brahman shines through ‘like a crystal of which adjacent colours are removed’, and liberation is finally attained. 13.45
- 13.5 We finish this section with the following note. Dharmakīrti added to his definition of yogic perception that it is *pramāṇa*, reliable epistemic warrant. Although his Brahmanical peers would generally reject this, the disagreement is largely immaterial for the form and structure of yogic perception and tells us more about the underlying uneasiness over what secures the veracity of supersensible experience than about the experience itself. Yogic perception is *pramāṇa* not because it arises from meditation, but because its object is determined as veridical by scripture and reasoning,⁴⁶ and it is *pramāṇa* because—for the likes of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti—*pramāṇa* is both (or either) the cognitive process and the cognitive outcome.⁴⁷ Insofar as the cognition in yogic perception is veridical, it is *pramāṇa* even if so in virtue of scripture and reasoning; it is not validity, but vividness and non-conceptuality that repeated meditation provides. 13.50
- 13.10 Vedāntins, on the other hand, insisted that only the Upaniṣads are the *pramāṇa* for knowing Brahman, but they didn’t necessarily mean that the cognition in yogic perception is not veridical. Perhaps clearest about this was Rāmānuja, whose entirely different approach to the conceptual and non-conceptual we may disregard in favour of epistemic form. Rāmānuja argued that yogic perception, *even when it culminates in a vivid cognition of Brahman*, is not a *pramāṇa* insofar as it is but a recollection of an object that was previously known, i.e., known from the Upaniṣads.⁴⁸ It is not *pramāṇa* not because it is not veridical, but because it fails the formal criterion of *pramāṇa* disclosing an object of its own unique domain without being recollective or ‘second-hand’ awareness.⁴⁹ And, it is not *pramāṇa* because the spectre of someone else’s scriptures, the words of the Buddha, perpetually haunts authority if yogic perception is accepted as independently valid.⁵⁰ In other words, regardless of yogic perception being or not being *pramāṇa*, it is veridical cognition if it has been successful and is grounded in the right doctrine. It is ultimately doctrine, tested on the field of reasoning, that secures epistemic validity. 13.65
- 13.15 To conclude briefly, then, there is something mysterious—some may even say paradoxical—about scripture being the *pramāṇa* for the supersensible in the accounts of yogic perception and meditative vision that we have presented: it is *both revealing and concealing* of its object, and therefore requires something it has fostered yet is radically different from itself to accomplish its purpose, i.e., disclose the object properly. Like with Kumārila, it is learning or ‘hearing’ (*śrutamayī prajñā, śravaṇa*) that facilitates perception, but the alleged perceptual experience goes in 13.70
- 13.20 13.75
- 13.25 13.80
- 13.30 13.85

the opposite direction, from conceptualised to non-conceptualised, and there is a radically divergent understanding of what an object's being vivid involves. 14.45

Ontology and religious epistemology

14.5 As we saw in the previous section, Kumārila developed his account of conceptualised and non-conceptualised perception while refuting yogic experience. Jīva, on the other hand, had little interest in ordinary perception, except insofar as it is required to illustrate how language informs cognitions of any kind and secures their validity. The significance of Kumārila's epistemology for Jīva was that if one does accept yogic perception, then there too the conceptualised vs. non-conceptualised distinction should obtain; and, crucially, it too should be informed by scripture, the Vedas, as the inerrant form of language and the *pramāṇa* on supersensible things. 14.50 14.55

14.10 To be sure, Jīva's theory of conceptualised and non-conceptualised perception does not correspond to that of Kumārila entirely. Along with the separate spheres of the ordinary and the supersensible, the major difference between the two is that in Jīva's system one is transitively conscious of the generic property in the first stage and the specific properties in the second, whereas for Kumārila, distinct awareness of both generic and specific properties obtains only in the conceptualised stage; one may say that Jīva's non-conceptualised is better described as under-conceptualised. Whether Jīva read Kumārila—there is some evidence that he is at least secondarily acquainted with him⁵¹—or took inspiration from Nyāya, Śrīvaiṣṇava, or Mādhva Vedānta versions of *savikalpaka/nirvikalpaka pratyakṣa*, is somewhat beside the point.⁵² The significance of the initial non-conceptualised perception through cognising the generic property first is entirely soteriological for Jīva, distinctive of his system, and would hardly be possible in that specific form as an account of ordinary perception. In any case, Jīva was a well-read but highly original thinker, and his theory, while informed by vast learning, is not derivative. 14.15 14.60 14.65 14.70

14.20 Rather, the significance of Kumārila's ideas about *pratyakṣa* is that they open up the possibility of conceiving perception as a two-staged process that is yet a multi-staged gradual discovery of the object in which the central role is played by learning and the 'recollection of words'. 14.25 14.75

14.30 Jīva, then, talks about conceptualised and non-conceptualised perception with respect to knowing the first principle of his ontological system, which is the central theological doctrine of the Gauḍīyas, and so we must very briefly introduce this. Before we do that, I should like to note that my main focus shifts to the preamble of the *Bhagavat-sandarbha*, and that some shared terminology links this textual locus with the *Sarva-saṁvādinī* epistemological account. Jīva talks about perception (*sākṣātkṛti*) that is either *nirvikalpā* or involving *vikalpas*, and the entire context is that of how the first principle is 'scripturally called' (*śabdyate*) and shows itself to the devotee contingent on their learning (*śruta*). In other words, the same close connection of the linguistic and scriptural, the reflective and conceptual, and the perceptual, is in play. 14.35 14.80 14.85

- 15.5 The first principle is a nondual substance, *advaya tattva*, with three aspects, to which correspond three names: Brahman, Paramātman, and Bhagavān.⁵³ Its being a substance is defined as being undivided or substantive bliss, *akhaṇḍānanda-svarūpa*, which reminds one of Brahman of the Advaita Vedānta. What the first principle being bliss as substance (*ānanda-mātra viśeṣya*) means is difficult to say—none the less so because for Jīva both consciousness and bliss are both substantive and attributive—but the definition is meant to bring home the absolute uniqueness of the first principle in that, unlike the individual soul, it is never liable to so much as a whiff of misery. This becomes clear in the *Paramātma-sandarbha*: 15.45
- 15.10 Because in Bhagavān, who is supreme bliss only, free of blemishes, there is absolutely neither the material misery that goes by the name of ‘happiness’ nor the plain, regular misery—just as in the sun there is neither darkness nor the kind of light that is specific to owl-vision—he does not experience either of the two.⁵⁴ 15.55
- 15.15 Material happiness that the individual soul may experience is compared here with the ability of owls to illuminate cognitive objects at night, to produce a miniscule ray that yet goes by the name of ‘light’ in what is otherwise pitch darkness. It is not the kind of bliss that Bhagavān is. Bliss is the inherent identity (*svarūpa*) of the first principle. While this is a negative determination that amounts to meaning that the first principle is not liable to transmigration, like bliss in Advaita Vedānta, for Jīva it is merely the baseline, and bliss is certainly a transitive phenomenon of great variety and intensity. Insofar as bliss is the inherent identity (*svarūpa*) of the first principle, in an important sense it is identical with its capacity of inherent identity (*svarūpa-śakti*), and Jīva is adamant that if bliss means merely the absence of suffering, the first principle would be an insentient thing or nothing at all. Again, substantive bliss is meant to *distinguish* the first principle from the soul and the kind of happiness that may be experienced in transmigration, not to *exhaust* the meaning and preclude *qualitative* bliss.⁵⁵ 15.60
- 15.20 While nondual, the first principle is also a complex entity, a substance qualified by general and specific or unique properties. Its general property is consciousness: the first principle is a conscious entity.⁵⁶ That consciousness is a *general* property means that it is not one of its *unique* properties: consciousness is shared with the individual souls. When the substance of undivided bliss is grasped as possessing only the general property of consciousness, it bears the name Brahman, the ground of Being: 15.65
- 15.30 The one and the same substance, which is undivided bliss in nature, is called Brahman when it is described generally, as it manifests to the mind of those *paramahansas* who have acquired disgust for all [material] bliss including that of Brahmā, [a mind] which has attained identity with it by the force of practice but is unable to grasp the diversity of powers even though they are innate to it [Brahman]. This Brahman either manifests [to them as such] or is presented without distinguishing between the powers and its possessor.⁵⁷ 15.70
- 15.35 15.75 15.80 15.85

When of this substance and its general property of consciousness the full range of unique properties is predicated, the first principle is known as Bhagavān, the Lord. This for the followers of Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa: 16.45

16.5 The same single substance is called Bhagavān when it bears some distinction by its own innate power, being the repository of all other powers as well, and either manifests [as such] to the inner and outer sense faculties—cultivated by *bhakti* which itself is a specific aspect of the power of innate bliss [of Bhagavān] and is the best and only cause of realization—of the *bhāgavata paramahamsas*, whose bliss of experiencing Bhagavān has internalized the bliss of Brahman, or is presented by maintaining the difference between the powers and their possessor.⁵⁸ 16.50

16.10 When, lastly, only some of its unique properties are on display, specifically those that are significant for the world creation and the governing of karma, the first principle is known as Paramātman, the Supreme Self: 16.55

16.15 As before, when the same principle that is fully manifest as the thus-described Bhagavān either appears or is presented as the regulator of the individual souls, it is called Paramātman. Although the three words are generally used interchangeably, this [distinction] has been stated by intending the predominant linguistic practice in each case.⁵⁹ 16.60

These three passages are of utmost importance for the account of learned perception that will emerge later, and so we will return to them posthaste. 16.65

16.25 It should be noted that this ontological structure of Jīva's is inspired by—even appropriated from—the Śrīvaiṣṇava *viśiṣṭādvaita*, where a complex yet organic unity is formed by Brahman the substance, *viśeṣya*, of which the insentient matter (*acid*) and the sentient soul (*cid*) are predicated as properties or distinguishing characteristics, *viśeṣaṇa*, to form a qualified unit, *viśiṣṭa*.⁶⁰ It bears some affinity with the Advaita Vedānta determinate description that we saw in Maṇḍana Miśra, although here the generality (*sāmānya*) is a property rather than substance. It is, however, applied more widely than the Śrīvaiṣṇava primarily cosmological or the Advaita theopistemological context, and this is achieved by subsuming the notion of distinguishing attribute under another category, that of *śakti*, i.e., power or capacity. 16.70

16.30 The first principle is said to have three such capacities that are labelled the 'external' (*bahirāṅga*), the 'in-between' (*taṭastha*), and the 'internal' (*antarāṅga*): between them, they encompass and give rise to whatever may be called a 'thing' in the most general sense and in any domain of existence.⁶¹ Like in Rāmānuja's system, the first two are the insentient matter and the sentient, individual souls. Both are ontological reals, *substances*, in their own right, but are treated as attributive to the first principle. We should not fail to note that the individual souls on this account are both attributive to the first principle *and* share consciousness as the common property with it: they are both substances and properties. This is less mysterious than it might seem at first blush if read in the light of Rāmānuja's classical illustration. 16.75

16.35 16.80 16.85

Although a stick is a thing in its own right, when carried by a man, it becomes attributive to the man, to form a complex entity ‘man-with-a-stick’ (*daṇḍin*).⁶² The two may, in addition, share properties, such as colour, such that the property may share properties with what it is a property of. This is crucially important for the experience of Brahman, as we shall see shortly. 17.45

This ontology of relations between the first principle and its capacities goes under the label of ‘inconceivable unity and difference’, *acintya-bhedābheda*. We do not need the details here, though, as the relation is defined in the sense of Rāmānuja’s notion of *aprthak-siddhi* or ontological dependence.⁶³ It is obviously very important for the powers to be distinct from the first principle (we will call it Brahman for the sake of simplicity). For, if they were identical with it, Brahman itself would undergo transformation and partake of the properties of prime matter, such as insentience that is contrary to Brahman’s property of consciousness, and be liable to transmigration, as the individual soul, contrary to its being undivided substantive bliss. That the two powers cannot have existence separately from Brahman, on the other hand, is a consequence of their being attributive in kind; for, like colour, they cannot exist without a substance. Thus, it is their being *simultaneously* a substance and an attribute or a property that is the distinctive feature of the ontology of *śakti*. It is also an important feature for Jīva’s learned perception, in that the capacities being inconceivable means, in part, that they are mutually conflicting—they have mutually irreconcilable characteristics—yet are perfectly compatible with the first principle, such that the first principle can be experienced in conflicting yet entirely accurate ways. 17.50 17.55 17.60 17.65

It is the third or ‘internal’ power (*antaraṅga-śakti*) that extends Jīva’s ontological scheme and is most significant for his religious epistemology. Jīva commonly calls it ‘pure being’ (*śuddha-sattva*, *viśuddha-sattva*) when it functions in the capacity of facilitating cognition, and although it involves a great internal ontological layering, at its barest it is a cognitive or self-luminous stuff that makes the supramundane body of God and his eternal domain of particularities and permanent identities, i.e., Vaikuṅṭha or Kṛṣṇa’s heaven. Think of it as the ‘material cause’ of which spiritual realities are constituted, except that it is not ‘material’ in the manner of insentient matter but is rather the stuff that cognitively reveals a spiritual plenum. This internal power, then, is both the ontological and epistemological ground in virtue of which something like a cognition of the ‘supersensible sensorium’ can take place: it is the reason both *why* there are things to see in supersensible perception, and *how* their seeing is possible. And, when Jīva talks about the first principle being qualified by properties, most of the properties he has in mind are varieties of this internal power. I will elaborate on its epistemological significance in a future publication, and here it is sufficient to merely appreciate that it is the condition of the possibility of supersensible perception.⁶⁴ 17.70 17.75 17.80

We finish this short account of Jīva’s ontology with the following note. With respect to religious epistemology, the three capacities and their proliferation formally have the same status as the linguistic and conceptual over the unique particular in Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, or the distinguishing characteristics that specify the 17.85

great generality in Maṇḍana Miśra: it is what makes for the *savikalpaka-nirvikalpaka* distinction, as we shall see shortly. But, like in Kumārila's system, they are not conceptual constructs but *real properties* of the first principle, and they are directly expressed in the words of the Vedas. Put simply, they are conceptual and linguistic, and they are absolutely real.

Conceptualised and non-conceptualised perception of the first principle

Jīva insists that the three aspects—Brahman, Paramātman, and Bhagavān—are not distinct ontological primitives but a single, nondual principle. While their differences are a complicated issue that can certainly be cast in ontological terms, as Jīva himself often does—they function differently, and they exhibit various degrees and particularities of *śakti*—in the preamble of *Bhagavat-sandarbhā* a case is rather made for epistemological pluralism over what is ultimately ontological nondualism. Three different names are required because one may experience the substance qualified either by the general property, or by the general and the unique properties in full, or by the general property and that set of attributes that are significant for the governing of karma. It is here that the distinctions between non-conceptualised and conceptualised perception become important. Brahman is just an experience of Bhagavān, a specific cognition that obtains by way of conceptual reduction. It is so because it is an *initial perception* of the first principle as non-conceptualised Being, one that may, at a later stage, be seen as an entity qualified by properties. Jīva, in fact, describes Brahman as the locus in which the conceptualised perception of Bhagavān takes place:

What they know to be Brahman, because of being the greatest of all, is surely just a state of the supreme person, Bhagavān, because it is the first, non-conceptualised perception of Bhagavān; because Brahman is Bhagavān's form of non-conceptualised Being; and because the perception of Bhagavān qualified by determinants (*vikalpa*) such as diverse forms etc. takes places subsequently to it. For these reasons, Brahman, being of the essence of Bhagavān, is the locus of perception of Bhagavān.⁶⁵

Here Jīva directly associates perception or seeing (*sākṣātkṛti*) with the first principle. Brahman is *just* a perception of the properly first principle Bhagavān, but one in which awareness of its *vikalpas*—which, as noted above, must be taken in the sense of real determinants or *viśeṣaṇas* rather than conceptual constructs or fabrications—does not obtain. Brahman is a first cognition of Bhagavān without appreciation of Bhagavān's unique properties, much like Kumārila's non-conceptualised perception that may be later followed by a conceptualised one.

Now, there is an important hermeneutic point to be made here, before we see why there should be such epistemological pluralism to begin with. Jīva develops the idea of three aspects of the first principle in the context of interpreting and systematising the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, specifically its verse 1.2.11:

Those who know the first principle (*tattva-vidah*) say that this principle, which is non-dual consciousness, is called in scripture (*śabdyate*) by the names Brahman, Paramātman, and Bhagavān.⁶⁶ 19.45

19.5 The three aspects of the first principle, then, are common ways of talking about it in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* and in scripture more generally; as we have seen, the three names involve three distinct language practices with respect to what is ultimately the nondual first principle. It is important now to revisit the definitions of the three aspects that we saw in the previous heading. Brahman, Paramātman, and Bhagavān were all said to either *appear* or *manifest* (*sphurad vā*) to the cognitive faculties of various *upāsakas*, meditators—which Jīva calls *paramahंसas*—or to be *presented* or *set forth* in scripture (*pratipadyamānam vā*) with or without intending to inculcate the unity-and-difference of the first principle with its powers. This optionality is important: it *manifests*, or is *set forth*. Jīva seems to have in mind two kinds of texts in the *Bhāgavata* and scripture generally, one in which the three aspects are *taught* propositionally, and another one in which it is illustrated how they are *seen* in meditation. If we relate this with the definition of *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa*—seeing that is inerrant because its foundation is in language—we may link scriptural *doctrine* with forms of paradigmatic religious *experience* (paradigmatic because of being scriptural), and go on to state just what learned perception *at its most specific* is. First, objects—the three aspects of the first principle—are *taught* in scripture, along with a paradigmatic means of seeing them. Second, they are *seen* by knowers of the first principle, *tattva-vids*: indeed, at the end of the *Bhagavat-sandarbhā* where the *arvācīna* notion was discussed in the context of the distinction between the learned and the unlearned (*vidvāns* and *avidvāns*), Jīva calls the first *bhagavat-tattva-vids*, such that it is crystal clear that the *vidvāns* privy to *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa* are the *tattva-vids* of the three kinds.⁶⁷ And, third, the *learning* of scripture facilitates one’s seeing these objects directly in meditation. 19.50 19.55 19.60 19.65 19.70

19.30 We arrive, in other words, at a blueprint for common meditators (*upāsakas*) in historical rather than scriptural time, i.e., those who can see the first principle ‘scripture’s way’.

19.75

The experience of Brahman

19.35 The question now presents itself: what is the ground for such epistemological pluralism? Why should there be three ways in which the first principle is seen in learned perception? As we have seen, Jīva says that the first principle is taught as possessing properties or as being without them, and that meditative experience is variously associated with these possibilities.⁶⁸ Elsewhere he says that the peculiarities of manifestation of the first principle are contingent on gradation of ‘suitability’ (*yogyatā*), which must refer to what various meditators are able to see, to their perceptual competence as it were.⁶⁹ Put differently, meditators perceive varieties of the first principle contingent, partially at least, on what they have been trained to see. This 19.80 19.85

obviously brings to the fore the significance of training, specifically scriptural learning, for religious experience. In this section, then, I focus briefly on the experience of Brahman being conditioned by learning, and then draw its wider implications for Jīva's religious epistemology. 20.45

20.5 The direct experience of Brahman is predicated on what Jīva calls the 'generality' or 'commonality' (*sāmya*) of the first principle, which is likely used in the same sense as *sāmānya-lakṣaṇa* or 'common property' in the definition of Brahman but bears a slightly different connotation than it did with Dignāga and others.⁷⁰ The direct experience of Brahman is, in fact, an experience of Brahman's general property of consciousness, insofar as that is what the meditator shares with Brahman. It is not a cognition of Brahman *per se*, not initially in any case, but rather an intuition of one's own pure consciousness shared with Brahman as the general property. In other words, the experience of Brahman is just an experience of oneself. Because I am in kind what Brahman is, by knowing my nature of pure consciousness I know Brahman as well. As Jīva says earlier in the *Bhagavat-sandarbha*: 20.55

20.15 Although this particular verse (BhP 11.13.27) presents only the nature of the pure soul, its intention is not restricted just to that. Rather, the full consciousness [= Brahman] is intended, possessing its power (*śakti*) called the inner soul etc. Where one cannot show the whole thing, then one may partially point it out, like the ocean with the fingertip. The grasping of Brahman is possible only through the vision of non-difference.⁷¹ 20.60

20.20 The point is simple: Brahman is pure, uniform consciousness, and so am I. If I can intuit perfectly my own nature, I have thereby experienced what kind of a thing Brahman is. Thus, the *sāmānya-lakṣaṇa* or the generic property that is the epistemological ground of non-conceptualised perception plays a key and very idiosyncratic role in Jīva's theory of religious experience. 20.65

20.25 This kind of experience of the nondual Brahman through knowledge of oneself by way of qualitative sameness rather than numeric identity is not quite an experience of Brahman as the great ground of Being, beyond the limited self. The proper experience of Brahman requires something like a 'cognitive jump', going beyond the inner self to which the great Brahman is necessarily the other. Jīva is aware of this, and he accommodates *fully* the experience of the nondual Brahman—of Brahman as properly or numerically identical with oneself—but on his own terms. Here is his final statement on the matter: 20.70

20.30 [Objection:] But then, how could the cognition of *full* consciousness, as my own nature of being Brahman, flash in the cognition of the individual soul which is *minute* consciousness in nature? 20.75

20.35 [Reply:] It is possible through understanding the oneness of the pure individual soul [lit. *tvaṁ-padārtha*, the reference of the word 'you'] by way of sameness of the cognitive image of consciousness. Even though immediately after the experience of oneself as such there would be no effective means to obtain a cognition of 20.80

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non-difference from Brahman, *such cognition does arise by the power of the Lord, worshipped by sādhana-bhakti, which in all cases is the independent means and was previously applied for that purpose.*⁷² 21.45

21.5 In the ultimate analysis, Jīva is a theologian of *bhakti*, devotion to Kṛṣṇa, and such devotion turns out to carry the utmost value in the experience that Jīva is describing, and indeed, in *any* form of religious experience. The cognitive jump from intuiting one's own nature of minute consciousness to cognising Brahman the unlimited consciousness happens only by the grace of the Lord, elicited by some form of cultivation of devotion. Along similar lines in the *Sarva-saṁvādinī*, with this grace of the Lord Jīva associates what he calls a 'special perception' (*pratyakṣa-viśeṣa*): 21.50

21.10 However, because the statements of the omniscient Lord are difficult to understand for individual souls who are not omniscient, only those who have special perception, received by His power, can always understand them, but not the logicians.⁷³ 21.55

21.15 This 'special perception' must be learned perception,⁷⁴ and with respect to knowing Brahman Jīva crucially quotes the following verse from the *Bhāgavata* that comes right after the verse that introduces the three aspects and names of the first principle, and returning full circle to learned perception: 21.60

21.20 Sages who place their trust in the first principle see the Self in the self by means of devotion, which has been secured through learning (*śruta-grhītā*) and is furnished with knowledge and dispassion.⁷⁵ 21.65

21.30 The meditator on Brahman manages to cognise Brahman in oneself by means of devotion, but such devotion, insofar as it is the ability to perceive the first principle, is shaped by way of learning and culture. In fact, Jīva goes on to substantiate the 'special perception' statement in the *Sarva-saṁvādinī* with a quote from a *Puruṣottama Tantra*⁷⁶ to the effect that personal experience or *anubhava*, which is here a stand-in for 'special perception', is the best of epistemic warrants, but that kind of experience which is 'possessed of the meaning of scripture' (*śāstrārtha-yukta*).⁷⁷ 21.70 21.75

21.35 Now, what Jīva says with respect to the experience of Brahman holds true across the 'varieties of religious experience' (with a nod to James) theorised by him: of Brahman, of Paramātmān, and of Bhagavān. The specific difference in the experience of Brahman is that learning and culture go only to the distance of the generic property, the non-conceptualised, and fail to disclose the full range of properties that qualify the first principle. One may indeed say that the cognitive faculties of those who experience Brahman are limited to grasping the general property. What they cannot do, like Kumārila's children and the mute, is discern the specific properties of Bhagavān—his powers, abode, personal features—for which a more advanced form of learning and culture to facilitate devotion is required. 21.80 21.85

Consequences

Jīva habitually talks about Bhagavān as 'the complete manifestation' (*pūrṇāvirbhāva*) of the first principle. Given the epistemological pluralism that does not see *vikalpas* as conceptual constructs but rather as real properties, as we have seen above, it follows that the supersensible perception of the first principle along the three aspects and the conceptualised/non-conceptualised divide is, like with Kumārila, a process of gradual discovery of the object, of properties that Bhagavān actually has. It also must follow that Bhagavān is the most vivid experience of the first principle.

Many more questions arise from Jīva's religious epistemology. How is the experience of nonduality possible, insofar as experience is definitionally a transitive—dual—act? How is 'sensing the supersensible' possible? Can more be said on the ontological identity of things, concepts, and words? And how can language function with respect to categories that are *prima facie* non-linguistic? I will address these and other related issues in future publications, and here I would like to pull the threads of this article together by raising again the two questions that we opened up with: what is learned perception and why call it that?

As we have seen both with Jīva and the legacy of yogic perception, sensing the supersensible, insofar as it is available to human agents, universally concerns doctrinal truths, i.e., objects that are taught in scripture and already known to those who allegedly become privy to direct experience. It is attained by way of scriptural learning or training in dogma, and its validity or *prāmāṇya* in the ultimate analysis is parasitic on scriptural validity. As Jīva himself puts it, the experience of Bhagavān happens through what has been ascertained as true by means of scripture.⁷⁸ In light of this, one may as well call such perception 'learned' or 'scriptural', whether one is a yogin, a Buddhist, or a Vedāntin. For Jīva, of course, scripture is the Vedas: that is why his perception is *vaiduṣa*, of the *vidvān*, rather than some other, more generic term for learning.

Along with this, the scope and gravitas that the lexeme *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa* carries are not quite the same as that of other terms available in Jīva's intellectual milieu. Along with its problematic status in Brahmanical epistemology—is it or is it not a *pramāṇa*, and what relation might it have with *śruti* that is professedly the only reliable warrant for the supersensible?—the discourse of yogic perception has predominantly been of the non-conceptualised, as we saw above, or exceptionally, with the Śrīvaiṣṇavas, of the fully conceptualised.⁷⁹ Neither of the two works well for the textual material that Jīva set himself to turning into systematic theology, the *Bhāgavata Purāna*, which talked about three ways of approaching the first principle. Insofar as these were the ways of the *tattva-vids*, 'knowers of the first principle' and yet another instance of the all-important verbal root *√vid* that we identified in the first heading, it again seemed natural to call their perception *vaiduṣa*, 'of knowers'. That Jīva did not opt for terms such as *anarvācīna* or *kevala-jñāna*, although acquainted with them, surely means that in some sense he did not find them fully adequate. Part of the reason must be that they are negative terms that do not express the

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- mediated character of learned perception. For, whether it is of God, liberated souls, or perfected yogis, learned perception is shot through with the words of the Vedas as the categories in virtue of which cognising is possible: to say that it is the perception of those who are not ‘on this side’ does not say enough. Learned perception is not just perception: it is cognising through concepts and words.⁸⁰ 23.45
- Relatedly, as rightly argued by Edelmann and Dasa (2014), *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa* is not only seeing through the Vedas, but also the avenue through which the eternal Vedic word makes its way to the sphere of the corruptible.⁸¹ In an important sense, learned perception is a perception of the Vedas, in the objective genitive sense. 23.50
- Two more senses of the subjective genitive contribute to the semantic field of learned perception. First, as we saw in the opening section, inherent to language in general and scripture in particular are ‘linguistic perception and inference’—language facts and causal relations—the epitome of which is scripture. They are what ‘purify’ the other epistemic warrants that are inherently liable to error: they are foundational in the most direct sense. And, this is perhaps the most important connotation of learned perception: it is by the cultivation of learning (*vidvattā*) that perception becomes learned (*vaiduṣa*). Second and relatedly, such linguistic perception and inference in the shape of the Vedas are something like night vision goggles for peeping into the supersensible, even for those who may be liable to the four faults that defeat validity and are not yet privy to yogic perception. To this effect, in the *Sarvasaṁvādīnī* Jīva goes on to quote a verse from the *Bhāgavata* that likens the Vedas to an ‘eye’ for seeing what is otherwise beyond the senses (*anupalabdhe arthe vedāḥ cakṣuḥ*), for all agents that are clearly ‘on this side’—forefathers, gods, and men.⁸² There is a way of seeing peculiar to the Vedas—seeing through their eyes—such that any cognition through their means is *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa*, even if not quite direct experience yet. 23.10 23.55 23.15 23.60 23.20 23.65 23.25
- Varieties of religious experience, constructivism, and perennialism** 23.70
- Now, I think we can draw the further consequence that learned perception in Jīva’s system was properly a hermeneutical intervention that introduces conceptualised and non-conceptualised perception as a way of making sense of apparently incongruent descriptions of divinity in the scriptural corpus that Jīva, as a systematic theologian, was thinking through. As we have seen, *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa* is intimately associated with the three names of the first principle that involve three different notions of divinity. Insofar as the three are put in a hierarchy, Barbara Holdrege is right to describe a theology of this kind as one of ‘superordination’. 23.30 23.75 23.35
- The Gauḍīyas’ hierarchical analysis provides a striking example of what I term the theology of superordination in that, in contrast to a theology of supersessionism, the Gauḍīyas do not claim to exclude or replace the contending models of realization propounded by the exponents of Advaita Vedānta and Pātañjala Yoga, but rather they posit a model of realization that incorporates and domesticates the Advaitin and Pātañjala Yoga models by recasting them as lower levels of realization of their own all-encompassing Godhead.⁸³ 23.80 23.85

The superordination is applied over scriptural data from the *Bhāgavata*, and by that much, it is ultimately a theology of interpretation. In an important sense, then, learned perception is a principle of hermeneutics derived from the *Bhāgavata*, and applied exegetically to the *Bhāgavata*. 24.45

24.5 This notwithstanding, Jīva's can also be read as an original account of religious experience—indeed, there is something structurally alike in the *Sandarbhās* with James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* (James 2004), in that Jīva is working through case studies taken from the *Bhāgavata*—to the effect that what is seen in such experience is not independent of concepts, learning, and culture. Insofar as it is experience, it is *determined by* rather than merely *expressed in* them. And Jīva does mean culture *generally*—all forms of Sanskrit learning including erotic, poetry, and art—for they all facilitate and achieve consummation in the experience of Bhagavān.⁸⁴ 24.50

24.10 Such an approach to religious doctrine and experience has come to the fore only in the second part of the 20th century, with the linguistic turn in philosophy and the humanities in general, in the works of philosophers such as Steven Katz (1978) and Wayne Proudfoot (1985) and theologians such as George Lindbeck (1984), arguably all inspired by Wittgenstein's concept of language games. In the study of religion, this approach has become known as 'constructivism' insofar as it locates religious experience in what the subject brings to a cognition, and it has developed against the so-called 'perennialism' that seeks to justify experience on the side of the object. 24.55

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24.20 Briefly, this turn in understanding was set against the duality of experience and interpretation derived from Friedrich Schleiermacher's hermeneutics, in which the divine is experienced *directly* as a sense of the infinite that is not inferential nor structured by concepts or beliefs, i.e., is an experience *sui generis*, but becomes conceptualised in reports after the fact.⁸⁵ Integral to perennialism is the idea of the so-called 'common core'—constituted by the direct experience of 'the infinite' in Schleiermacher or 'the holy' in Rudolph Otto and others—access to which have mystics of all religious backgrounds. Against this, Steven Katz argued that there is a causal connection between the religious and social structure one brings to experience and the nature of one's actual religious experience. George Lindbeck likewise argued that culture and language function like the Kantian *a priori* categories of the understanding—albeit quasi-transcendental insofar as they are culturally formed—that *shape* rather than *interpret* experience. 24.65

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24.30 The important insight of this constructivist critique was that there is no such thing as a common core—the Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist experience are all different and with internal varieties as well—and that religious experience, insofar as it is experience, must also be shaped by some categories of the understanding and practices of cultivation.⁸⁶ While constructivism has brought the enormous benefit of approaching religions on their own terms and with full sensitivity for religious diversity, with the removal of the common core short is the step towards either non-realist interpretation of religious experience, or to arguing that the objects of such varied experiences must be various as well. 24.75

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Jīva's account of religious experience, then, bears great affinity with these constructivist approaches. Language, concepts, culture, and society are the precondition of becoming human, and every cognition is mediated by them. This includes even the alleged experience of the infinite, or the 'pure consciousness event' as called more recently by the neo-perennialist Robert Forman.⁸⁷ Indeed, I had mentioned that even the non-conceptualised for Jīva is better described as under-conceptualised: it is transitive consciousness of the generic property, and it is predicated on a very specific type of learning, one in negative theology. Even the basic typology of three varieties of religious experience can be quickly multiplied to no end: one could say that the varieties are endless, and all are associated with a specific kind of cultivation. Jīva's uncle Rūpa Gosvāmin claimed precisely this in his *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta*:

There are various identities in the Lord which manifest to meditators in accordance with their specific meditation. Just as a single thing like milk always possesses attributes as colour and taste and is perceived variously by the faculties—white to the eyes, sweet to the tongue—so the Lord, though one, is perceived variously by various forms of meditation. All forms of meditation are like the tongue that can taste only sweetness and the other faculties that grasp only their respective object. Devotion, however, is like consciousness, because it captures the entire sensible range.⁸⁸

That said, however, in the final analysis Jīva is not a constructivist theoretician of religious experience. While his account accommodates epistemic relativism, it does so without drawing the conclusion that all religious experience is just a cultural construct. What Kumārila's theory of perception and its intimate relation with language allowed theologians like Jīva to imagine is the following: just as the conceptualised perception of a ball may be, in an ontological realism, a gradual discovery of the ball's properties, or a specific perspective on it facilitated by concepts, language, and culture, religious experience might just as well be a discovery of divine properties facilitated by scriptural learning and practice. Like the perennialists, for Jīva religious experience in the end tracks the nature of the object.

This, I propose, is a thesis that should interest philosophers of religion and theologians, as it is an argument for religious realism that recognises experience as conditioned by religion-specific practices and doctrine, yet need not be either reduced to a common indistinct core or be of distinct objects. While in Jīva's case a thesis of this kind is undergirded by a specific ontology of relations—of mutually conflicting capacities and properties that are yet perfectly compatible with the first principle—most theologies that take God to be an omnipotent Being should be comfortable with it.

25.40 Abbreviations

BhS: Jīva Gosvāmin's *Bhagavat-sandarbha* 25.85
 BhSSS: Jīva Gosvāmin's *Sarva-saṁvādinī* on his *Bhagavat-sandarbha*

PS: Jīva Gosvāmin's <i>Paramātma-sandarbha</i>	
ŚVPP: Kumārila's <i>Śloka-vārttika Pratyakṣa-pariccheda</i>	26.45
TS: Jīva Gosvāmin's <i>Tattva-sandarbha</i>	
TSSS: Jīva Gosvāmin's <i>Sarva-saṁvādinī</i> on his <i>Tattva-sandarbha</i>	

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Notes

- 29.25 I have discussed the content of this article with many colleagues over more than a decade, and here I would like to acknowledge in particular Jonathan Edelmann, whose research on *vaidya-pratyakṣa* has cleared much of the past insufficient scholarship on Jīva's epistemology; Davey Tomlinson, a fellow fan of yogic perception; and Travis Chilcott, who alerted me first that Jīva can be constructively read with Katz and Forman and whose innovative research on religious experience in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism should be published shortly. Along with them, I should like to thank the two anonymous reviewers and the careful editorial eye of Lucian Wong: they have all improved the article substantially. Finally, I thank the MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale University: without their institutional support, this research would never have seen the light of day. 29.70
- 29.30 I have presented versions of this article on many occasions, but here I will only mention the 'From Jetavana to Jerusalem' conference in honour of Phyllis Granoff, held on 7–9 November 2021, and sponsored by the Glorison Global Network for Buddhist Studies. It is with profound thanks and admiration that I dedicate this article to Phyllis. 29.75
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- 29.40 1 'Learned perception' (and the associated 'perceptual learning') is used in contemporary psychology in a sense related but not identical to *vaidya-pratyakṣa*. It refers to changes in perceptual experience that is 'learned'—acquired and long term—through repetition, and is sometimes distinguished from 'cognitive penetration', i.e., 29.85

the influence of beliefs, desires, etc. on one's perceptual experience. The role of linguistic and social categories in shaping perception and counting towards perceptual learning is debated (Connolly 2017). 'Conceptualised perception' is closer in sense to what Jīva has in mind, but not quite identical, insofar as learned perception for him can also be non-conceptualised. I use 'learned' rather than 'of the learned' to keep the language idiomatic. 30.45

2 The literature on Caitanya is massive. For a succinct account with essential bibliography, see Valpey (2018). 30.50

3 On Jīva's life and works, see Brzezinski (1992, pp.14–44), who establishes 1516/17–1608 as Jīva's dates.

4 For a detailed overview of the structure and content of the *Sandarbhās*, see De (1961, pp.193–320); briefer accounts are available in Dasa (2007, pp.376–387) and Gupta (2007, pp.201–207). 30.55

5 Cf. definitional statements in TSSS 9, such as *pratyakṣam tāvan mano-buddhīndriya-pañcaka-janyatayā ṣaḍ-vidham bhavet* (p.11), 'Perception is of six kinds insofar as it is originated by the mind and the five cognitive faculties'; *go-saḍṛśo gavaya iti jñānam upamānam* (p.16), 'The cognition 'a wild buffalo is similar to a cow' is resemblance'; *aṅguly-uttolanato ghaṭa-daśakādi-jñāna-kṛc ceṣṭeti* (p.16), 'Gesture is a cognition-maker of things such as a group of ten pots by raising fingers'. Otherwise, throughout the account, the onus is on how perceptual or inferential cognitions (*jñāna*) err (*vyabhicarati*), i.e., on their validity, with very little interest in the respective causal mechanisms, except to the degree that they are liable to error. 30.60

6 In this direction is Jīva's long quote from Vācaspati Miśra's *Bhāmātī* in TSSS 10 (pp.17–18), where it is precisely argued that scripture (*āmnāya*) is independent of perception with respect to validity (*prāmānya*) even if it is dependent with respect to arising (*utpatti*). The quote is meant to extend the argument in TSSS 9 that language (*śabda*) is assisted by perception only to the degree that it is not contradicted by it. Incidentally, Vācaspati's argument is derivative on Maṇḍana Miśra's *Brahma-siddhi* (pp.39–41). 30.65

I translate *śabda* here—literally 'word' but standing for any form of meaning-expressing speech, from a single morpheme to an entire work—as 'language', because 'word' is too restrictive. As shall become obvious, *śabda* for Jīva specifically refers to what is said in scripture, although he sets the frame in more general terms of language *per se*. To be consistent, I keep 'speech' for *vāc*, which Jīva uses as well, though arguably there isn't any material difference between the two. Perhaps B.K. Matilal's 'knowledge from linguistic utterance' (Matilal 1990, p.49) captures best what *śabda* ultimately means, and 'language' here may be taken as its convenient shorthand. 30.70

7 *tathā hi, pratyakṣam tāvan mano-buddhīndriya-pañcaka-janyatayā ṣaḍ-vidham bhavet. pratyekam punaḥ savikalpaka-nirvikalpaka-bhedena dvādaśa-vidham bhavati. tad eva ca punar vaiduṣam avaiduṣam ceti dvidvidham*; TSSS 9 (p.11). 'It is like this: perception, to begin with, is of six kinds, as it is originated by the mind or the five cognitive faculties. Through the distinction "conceptualised" and "non-conceptualised" in the case of each of them, it is twelve-fold. This [twelve-fold] itself is of two kinds, belonging to the learned and those who are not learned'. 30.75

8 *tatra vaiduse na vipratipattiḥ, bhramādi-nṛ-doṣa-rāhityāt, śabdasyāpi tan-mūlatvāc [ca]*; TSSS 9 (p.11). Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābā's text has no *ca* (1965, p.5), and it is the more 30.85

- straightforward reading, allowing *api* to be taken as a conjunction between the two reasons—perhaps better expressed as ‘also’, which can leave space for *ca* as ‘and’—or to read the second reason as a justification of the first. 31.45
- 9 *yady api pratyakṣānumāna-śabdārṣopamānārthāpatty-abhāva-sambhāvaitihya-ceṣṭākhyāni daśa pramāṇāni viditāni, tathāpi bhrama-pramāda-vipralipsā-karaṇāpātava-doṣa-rahita-vacanātmakah śabda eva mūlaṁ pramāṇam.* TSSS 9 (p.10). 31.5
- 10 On Kumārila’s idea of *svataḥ-prāmāṇya* and its development in Mīmāṃsā, see [Arnold \(2005, pp.59–114\)](#). 31.50
- 11 Cf. [Kṛṣṇadāsa’s Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-līlā 7.125](#): *svataḥ-pramāṇa veda—pramāṇa-śiromaṇi*, ‘The Veda is self-proven, the crest-jewel of proofs’. Translation [Dimock and Stewart \(1999, p.246\)](#). Jīva operates with the idea that the words of the Vedas have *svataḥ-prāmāṇya* because they are inherently related to their meaning—*artha* in the sense of referential objects they pick out—specifically as they concern Kṛṣṇa’s names and his properties, and as long as the primary signification function (*mukhya-vṛtti*) is exercised. *Anuccheda* 98 of BhS may be read with profit on this, where Jīva interprets Chapter 87 of Book Ten of the *Bhāgavata*. The ideas about *svataḥ-prāmāṇya* are stated in the *pūrva-pakṣa*, not to be controverted, however, but to provide the ground against of which Jīva’s interpretation will work. Parts of *anuccheda* 47 are also relevant. 31.10 31.55
- 12 Jīva puts things in terms of *tadyaṁ jñānaṁ hi vyabhicarati*, ‘perceptual cognition deviates [from being consistently veridical]’. TSSS 9 (p.12). 31.15 31.60
- 13 *atha pratijñā-hetūdāharaṇopānaya-nigamanābhidha-pañcāṅgam anumānaṁ yat tad api vyabhicarati. tatra viśama-vyāpau ... tad evaṁ tādṛśa-pratyakṣasyaiva pramāṇi prati vyabhicāre sama-vyāptāv api tad-vyabhicārah.* TSSS 9 (pp.14–15). 31.20 31.65
- 14 *na tu śabdaḥ [vyabhicarati], yathā—himālaye himam, ratnākare ratnam ity ādau.* TSSS 9 (p.12). Here and in the next note *vyabhicarati* is my addition. 31.25
- 15 *na tu śabdaḥ [vyabhicarati], sūrya-kāntāt saura-marīci-yogenāgnir uttiṣṭhate ity atra.* TSSS 9 (p.14). 31.70
- 16 This understanding of language is arguably inherited from the linguistic ontology of Bhartṛhari; see [Pinchard \(2013\)](#), particularly: ‘We could even say that language is the “*a priori* form” (similar to the one that Kant describes in his “transcendental esthetics” and “transcendental logic”) through which the thing in itself manifests itself to us and which organizes our collective everyday experience into the mode of “objects”’ (pp.337–338). 31.30 31.75
- 17 *tac chabdenaiva baddha-mūlam, yathā dṛṣṭa-cara-māyā-muṇḍakena kenacid bhramāt satye’py āsraddhiyamāne satyam evedam iti nabho-vānyādau jānann api vṛddhopāsanaṁ vinā na kiñcid api tattvena nirnetuṁ śaknotīti hi sarveṣāṁ nyāya-vidāṁ sthitiḥ.* TSSS 9 (p.12). The illustration is ultimately derived from *Vaiśeṣika-sūtra* 2.2.19 and the commentaries thereon, although the doubt generally pertains to whether Devadatta is shaven or not, rather than to whether the shaven head is of Devadatta or someone else. See [Sinha \(1923, pp.84–85\)](#). 31.35 31.80
- 18 There is, thus, an entirely identical structure of examples in the *Sarva-saṁvādinī* of potentially erroneous perceptual and inferential cognitions (Devadatta’s head; smoke on the hill), followed by indubitable linguistic facts and causal relations (snow on the Himālaya, fire from sunstone), followed by perceptual and inferential cognitions set right by language (it is Devadatta’s head, there is fire not on this but on the yonder mountain). 31.40 31.85

- 19 *kiñ ca, paśv-ādibhiś cāviśeṣān na pratyakṣādikañ jñānañ paramārtha-pramāpakam. dr̥ṣyete cāmiṣām iṣṭāniṣṭayor darśana-ghrāṇādīnā pravṛtti-nivṛtti. na ca teṣāñ kácit paramārtha-siddhiḥ; dr̥ṣyate cātibalānāñ mātara-pitr-ādy-āpta-śabdād eva sarva-jñāna-pravṛttiḥ, tañ vinā caikākitayā rakṣitānāñ jaḍa-mūkateti. na ca vyavahāra-siddhir iti* (TSSS p (p.12)). 32.45
- 32.5 This passage is likely inspired by a passage in Śaṅkara's *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya* 1.1.1 (Vol. I, 1910, pp.3-4) that begins with the identical *paśv-ādibhiś cāviśeṣāt*. Śaṅkara there makes the point that there is no distinction between men and animals in how epistemic warrants function (*samānaḥ paśv-ādibhiḥ puruṣāṇāñ pramāṇa-prameya-vyavahāraḥ*), for animals are alarmed by scary sounds and run away from men with raised sticks, yet they approach those with grass in their hands, all through inference from perceptual data. The context of the argument, though, is that epistemic warrants function based on ignorance equally in men and animals, and scriptural knowledge consisting of injunctions and prohibitions is no different. Jīva is surely not claiming anything of the kind. 32.50
- 32.10 Jīva's creative manner of borrowing, then, may additionally suggest that he does take inspiration for *tan-mūlatvāt* from Śaṅkara, as discussed in the [Appendix](#), without necessarily understanding *mūla* in the same sense as Śaṅkara. 32.55
- 20 There is some affinity between Jīva's very brief argument and the philosophical anthropology of Ernst Cassirer and his insistence that the capacity for symbolic or properly linguistic thought is what sets apart men from animals. See [Cassirer \(1956\)](#). 32.60
- 32.20 21 [Broo \(2006\)](#) and [Edelmann and Dasa \(2014\)](#) may be usefully consulted on this. 32.65
- 22 See TSSS 10 and the entire *pramāṇa* section of TS (*anucchedas* 9-28); also, [Uskokov \(2018a, pp.41-44\)](#). In the BhSSS on *anuccheda* 97, the scope becomes maximally wide and includes, directly or indirectly, the Vedāṅgas, the Upavedas, Vedānta and Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya and Yoga, Kāvya, Alāṅkāra, the arts, political science and architecture, etc., with the argument that all forms of learning (*vidyā*) culminate in, and thereby are useful for, directly experiencing Bhagavān and his properties. In this, too, Jīva is very much an heir to Kumāriḥ (see *Tantra-vārttika* on MS 1.3). 32.70
- 32.25 23 *tasmād yo nija-nija-vidvattāyai sarvair evābhyasyate, yasyādhigamena sarveṣāñ api sarvaiva vidvattā bhavati, yat-kṛtayaiva parama-vidvattayā pratyakṣādikam api śuddhanī syāt, yaś cānāditvāt svayam eva siddhaḥ, sa eva nikhilaitihya-mūla-rūpo mahā-vākya-samudayaḥ śabdo'tra gṛhyate. sa ca śāstram eva, tac ca veda eva.* TSSS 10 (p.17). 32.75
- 32.30 24 BhS 56 (p.152), in a gloss on the phrase *avehi kṛṣṇam* in BhP 10.14.55: *mat-prasāda-labdha-vidvattayaivānubhava, na tu tarkādīnāñ vicārayety arthaḥ*. Here *vidvattā* is ultimately gotten by Kṛṣṇa's grace, and this is a consistent feature of Jīva's theology: ultimately *all learning*, including that in the featureless Brahman, must elicit Kṛṣṇa's grace if it is to lead to personal experience. 32.80
- 32.35 25 That is, the two are formed from *vidvat* and *vidus*, stems of the participle of the reduplicated perfect of *√vid*, 'to know'. 32.85
- 32.40 26 A second influence may be Pāñcarātra, where mantras are thought to be identical with the deities that they represent. Much of Jīva's soteriology is predicated on Pāñcarātra practices, i.e., on meditations that involve repetition of mantras that eventually transition into visions *just because* the mantras as speech are not different from their meaning as reference. See [Holdrege \(2014\)](#).

- 27 On the doctrine expressed in these three *sūtras*, see Uskokov (2022, pp.70–72).
- 28 *anādi-siddha-vedānurūpaiva pratikalpaṃ tat-tan-nāmādi-pravṛttiḥ*. TSSS 10 (p.19). 33.45
- 29 Jīva otherwise operates with the notion of *śabda-brahman*, the ‘linguistic brahman’ that are the Vedic names essentially associated with meaning; see BhS *anucchēdas* 47, 83, 85, 87, 88. This view of language as the creative word is, perhaps, the most consistent shared notion in metaphysics from Greece to India. See Avicēna’s ideas about the eternal forms of things as ‘the eternal object of thought by the First principle’ (Gutas 2016). Comparable notions permeate Scholastic Catholic philosophy, and perhaps the Stoic *logoi spermatikoi* are closest to Vedānta. I am thankful to the anonymous reviewer for turning my attention to this. 33.50
- 30 *prakṛtaṃ brahma śabda-hīnaṃ na bhavati. kutaḥ? ikṣateḥ. ‘tad aikṣata bahu syāṃ prajyāyeya’* [ChU 6.2.3] *ity atra bahu syām iti śabdātmakekṣa-dhātoḥ śravaṇāt. tad etaḍ āha, ‘abhijñāḥ’. ‘bahu syām’ ity ādi-śabdātmaka-vicāra-vidagdhaḥ. sa ca śabdādi-śakti-samudāyas tasya na prakṛtaḥ ... tataḥ svarūpa-bhūta eva. Paramārtha-sandarbhā* (PS) 105 (pp.319–320). The entire long *anucchēda* 105 is edited and translated in Gupta (2007). The inspiration for this comes from Śāṅkara’s *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya* on 1.3.28. 33.55
- 31 *tatra vaiduṣe yatheśvarasya, tat-pārśadānām labdha-samādhinām sidhānām ca vaiduṣa-pratyakṣe*. TSSS 9 (p.11). 33.60
- 32 This view of Parāśara Bhaṭṭar is cited by Vedāntadeśika Veṅkaṭanaṭha in his *Nyāya-pariśuddhi* (1923, pp.82–83): *pratyakṣasya caivaṃ vibhāgo ‘bhihitaḥ. dvividhaṃ caitat pratyakṣam arvācīnam anarvācīnaṃ ca yugapad-āśeṣa-viṣaya-sākṣātkāra-kṣamam anarvācīnam. tad yogi-mukteśvarāṇām prabhāva-viśeṣādhinām upapādayiṣyata ityādi* (see also Mesquita 2016, p.32). This in effect is a definition of omniscience. 33.65
It should be noted that not all Śrīvaiṣṇava accounts of perception would group yogic perception with the seeing of God and the liberated souls, insofar as the perception of the first is considered ‘impermanent’, *anitya* (Narayanan 2008, p.37). Thus, although Parāśara’s terminology is rehearsed in Śrīnivāsacārya’s *Yatīndra-mata-dīpikā* (1967, pp.9–11), yogic perception there is classed under *arvācīna*, and clearly the idea is that that only what is perceived by agents that belong to the so-called *nitya-vibhūti*, i.e., Vaikuṇṭha, is *anarvācīna*. The perception of yogis is sort of middle ground because they do cognise with their common senses as well.
- 33 A verse from a famous Rigvedic hymn on Speech (*vāc*) puts the two instructively together: 33.70
- imé yé nārvān ná parás cáranti
ná brāhmaṇāso ná sutékarāsaḥ |
tá eté vācam abhipádyā pāpáyā
sirís tántram tanvate áprajajñayaḥ || 10.71.9.* 33.75
- Who move neither close (*arvāk*) nor far away (*parás*),
who are not brahmins, and who do not perform in the soma-pressing,
they, having fallen upon speech in a bad way, stretch streams of water
as their warp-thread, producing nothing. (Translation Brereton and Jamison 2014, p.1498.) 33.80
- Sāyaṇa explicitly connects here *arvāk* with ‘this world that is downward directionally’ and *parás* with the world of the gods, and it is ignoramuses (*avidvānsaḥ*) who 33.85

associate with Brahmins in neither of the two domains that do not know Speech, i.e., are not devoted to the meaning of the Vedas. *ime ye avidvānsaḥ arvāk arvācīnam adho-bhāviny asmiml-loke brāhmaṇaiḥ saha na caranti ye paraḥ parastāt devaiḥ saha na caranti te brāhmaṇāsaḥ brāhmaṇāḥ vedārtha-tatparāḥ na bhavanti* (Vol. 4, p.536). 34.45

34.5 Madhva makes the provision that such unmediated awareness of the yogis can be modulated by the senses, at which point it takes a downturn (*arvāc*). For a thorough discussion, see [Mesquita \(2016, pp.29ff\)](#).

34.10 35 TSSS 10: *nanv arvāg-jana-saṁvādādi-darśanāt katham tasyānāditvādi*; 'How can it be eternal when we see it in the discussions of agents "on this side"?' Jīva replies that the Vedas enter the sages and are, therefore, not their personal creation. He cites, following Śaṅkara, from the very same Rigvedic hymn on Speech where we traced the *arvāc/paras* divide: 34.50

yajñéna vācāḥ padavīyam āyan
tām ānv avindann ṛṣiṣu praviṣṭām | 10.71.3ab 34.55

34.15 'Through sacrifice they searched out the foot-tracks of Speech: they discovered her entered in the seers'.

36 *vidvad-upalabdihārtha-śabdair vyañjītam*. BhS 101 (p.280). 34.60

37 See BhS 101-2 (pp.279–284). Note that Jīva glosses both *avara* of *Bhāgavata* 10.87.24 (in BhS 101) and *apara* of *Bhāgavata* 9.8.21 (in BhS 102) with *arvācīna*, and quotes the famous *Nāsadiya-sūkta* ([Rigveda 10.129](#)) to justify the absence of ability to ascertain the properties of the Lord in the 'unlearned' precisely because they are 'on this side' of creation: 34.20

kó addhā veda ká ihá prá vocat
kúta ājātā kúta iyám vísrṣṭih |
arvāg devá asyá visárjanena
áthā kó veda yáta ābabhūva || 10.129.6 34.65

34.25 Who really knows? Who shall here proclaim it?—from where was it born, from where this creation? 34.70

The gods are on this side of the creation of this (world). So then who does know from where it came to be? (Translation [Brereton and Jamison 2014, p.1609](#).) 34.30

Cf. Sāyana: *arvāk arvācīnāḥ kṛtāḥ* (Vol. 4, p.782). Clearly, Jīva stakes a lot on *arvāk*.

34.35 38 The precise ontological nature of the *svalakṣaṇas* is unclear and contested, and my understanding of them is largely indebted to [Dan Arnold \(2003\)](#). [Richard Hayes \(2009\)](#) talks about the *svalakṣaṇas* as what can be 'sensed' (rather than perceived), and about the conceptual as what is superimposed over such sense data, with the useful illustrations of a sweet taste that can be sensed vs. a cherry that can only be conceived. His is also a brief and very lucid account of *apoha*. 34.80

34.40 39 Dignāga's theory is shared by most yoga-based epistemologies. Cf. [Gokhale's \(2020, p.28\)](#) comments on the *Yoga-sūtra* 1.7: 'Vyāsa's explanation of the three *pramāṇas* seems to be influenced by Buddhist epistemology. The idea that the object has two aspects—universal and particular (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa* and *svalakṣaṇa*)—is found in Vasubandhu. Vyāsa holds that out of the two characteristics, namely specific (*viśeṣa*) and universal (*sāmānya*), perceptual cognition grasps mainly the specific aspect (*viśeṣāvadhāraṇapradhānā vṛttih pratyakṣam*) and inferential cognition grasps mainly 34.85

- 49 On Rāmānuja's take on the pramāṇic status of *smṛti* or recollection, see Schmücker (2009, pp.284–285, nt. 1). 36.45
- 50 McCrea (2009), referred to in nt. 39, is an illuminating reading on this. 36.45
- 36.5 51 Kumārila's *Tantra-vārttika* 3.3.2 is cited within the long comment from Vācaspati's *Bhāmātī*, and TSSS 11 is thoroughly immersed in the Mīmāṃsā discourse (and Mīmāṃsā-Vedānta polemics) on language and modes of interpretation; see Broo (2006, particularly pp.15–17). 36.50
- 52 It bears mentioning that Kumārila's own account of the non-conceptualised being a 'mere seeing' of the thing was indebted to Praśastapāda (Halbfass 1992, pp.100–102). For the Śrīvaiṣṇavas, unlike Jīva, yogic perception was solely conceptualised (Schmücker 2009). 36.10 36.50
- 53 I translate here *tattva*, literally 'that-ness' or 'being that', as 'first principle' in a somewhat Aristotelian vein; I could have also experimented with 'ontological real' or 'ontological primitive'. Be that as it may, it should be borne in mind that its reference in Jīva's ontology is God. 36.15 36.55
- 54 *tataś ca sadā paramānandaika-rūpe 'pahata-kalmaṣe bhagavati prākṛtasya sukhābhidha-duḥkhasya prasiddha-duḥkhasya ca sūrye pecaka-caḥsur jyotiṣa iva tamasa iva cātyantābhāvāt tat-tad-anubhavo nāsty eva. Paramātma-sandarbha* (PS) 93 (p.265). 36.15 36.60
- 55 This is not the occasion for an extended discussion, but the positing of the first principle as bliss substantive (*vastu, viśeṣya*) is, in fact, derived from the second chapter of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, wherefrom the standard definition of Brahman as *satyam, jñānam, anantam, ānandam* originates. Jīva engages extensively with the chapter twice in the BhSSS, on *anucchedas* 10 and 93. It is to be remembered that the Upaniṣad presents the doctrine of *pañca-kośa*, the five sheaths, where Brahman's being *ānandamaya* distinguishes Brahman—for Jīva—from *vijñānamaya* that is the soul, constituting thereby its uniqueness. Cf., in particular, the following: 'We ask, moreover: is Brahman's identity bliss or not? If it is, it is apposite to call it "bliss", and it is the counter-positive of suffering. If it is not, then it cannot be the highest good. Therefore, Brahman is bliss in identity. However, it's having the identity of bliss is not the bliss that is known in the world: only this much need be said. If that is the position, it is a good argument for us'. 36.20 36.65 36.70
- 36.25 *kiṁ cedam pṛcchāmaḥ, tad ānanda-rūpaṁ bhavati na vā? bhavati cet, āyātā asya tat-samjñā duḥkha-pratīyogitvaṁ ca, neti cet apuruṣārthatvam. tasmād ānanda-rūpaṁ bhavati. kintu na loka-prasiddhānanda-rūpaṁ tad ity eva vācyam iti sthite tv asmākam eva samīcīnaḥ panthāḥ.* 36.30 36.75
- 56 *advaya-jñāna-lakṣaṇaṁ tat tattvaṁ sāmānyato lakṣayitvā...* BhS 1 (p.1). 36.35 36.75
- 57 *tad ekam evākhaṇḍānanda-svarūpaṁ tattvaṁ thūtkṛta-pārameṣṭhyādīkānanda-samudayānām paramahamsānām sādhana-vaśāt tādātmyam āpanne, satyām api tadīya-svarūpa-śakti-vaicitryāṁ, tad-grahaṇāsāmarthyē cetasi yathā sāmānyato lakṣitaṁ, tathaiḥ sphurad vā, tadvad evāvivikta-śakti-śaktimattā-bhedatayā pratipadyamānaṁ vā brahmeti śabdyate.* BhS 2 (pp.3–4). 36.80
- 36.40 58 *atha tad ekam tattvaṁ svarūpa-bhūtayaiva śaktyā kamapi viśeṣaṁ dhartuṁ parāśām api śaktīnām mūlāśraya-rūpaṁ tad-anubhāvānanda-sandohāntar-bhāvita-tādṛśa-brahmānandānām bhāgavata-paramahamsānām tathānubhavaika-sādhakatama-tadīya-svarūpānanda-śakti-viśeṣāt maha-bhakti-bhāviteṣv antar bahir apīndriyeṣu parisphurad vā tadvad eva vivikta-tādṛśa-śakti-śaktimattā-bhedena pratipadyamānaṁ vā bhagavān iti śabdyate.* BhS 2 (pp.4–6). 36.85

- 59 *atha tathā-vidha-bhagavad-rūpa-pūrṇāvirbhāvaṁ tat tattvaṁ pūrva-vaj jīvādi-niyantrtvena sphurad vā pratipādyamānaṁ vā paramātmēti śabdāyata iti. yady apy ete brahmādi-śabdāḥ prāyo mitho 'rtheṣu vartante, tathāpi tatra tatra saṅketa-prādhānya-vivakṣayedam uktam.* BhS 3 (p.12). 37.45
- 37.5 60 The Śrīvaiṣṇava debt is nowhere clearer than in the following statement: *evaṁ cānanda-mātraṁ viśeṣyaṁ, samastāḥ śaktayo viśeṣaṅāni, viśiṣṭo bhagavān ity āyātam. tathā caivaṁ vaiśiṣṭye prāpte pūrṇāvirbhāvatvenākhaṇḍa-tattva-rūpo 'sau bhagavān. brahma tu sphuṭam aprakaṭita-vaiśiṣṭyākāratvena tasyaivāsamyag-āvirbhāva ity āyātam. idaṁ tu purastād vistareṇa vivecaṇiyam.* BhS 3 (pp.7–8). ‘Thus, bliss is the bare substance, all powers are qualifiers, and Bhagavān is the qualified substance. And when thus qualification obtains, Bhagavān is the unitary principle as being the full manifestation. Brahman, on the other hand, is clearly an incomplete manifestation, because of being non-manifested diversity in nature. This will be explained in detail later’. 37.50
- 37.10 61 Very useful readings here are Gupta (2014) and Okita (2014, pp.236–252). The divine cosmology produced by this basic ontology is discussed in detail by Barbara Holdrege (2015, pp.29–79). 37.55
- 37.15 62 See Rāmānuja’s *Vedārtha-saṅgraha* §63 (1956, pp.107, 227–228). 37.60
- 63 Consider the following statement: *tad evaṁ siddhāyāṁ bhāva-śaktau, sā ca trividhā—antarāṅgā, taṣṭhā, bahiraṅgā ca ... atrottaror anantaraṅgatvaṁ, tābhyāṁ parameś-varasyāliptatayā śaktitvaṁ ca nitya-tad-āśritatayā tad-vyatirekeṇa svato’ siddhatayā tat-kāryopayogitayā ca.* Sarva-sarvādinī on the *Bhagavat-sandarbha* (BhSSS) 11 (p.83). ‘We have proved that the power is natural to Brahman. It is also threefold: the internal; the in-between; and the external. ... The latter two [i.e., the in-between and the external] are not internal, for the Supreme Lord is not tainted by them; yet they are powers, because they are eternally dependent on him, do not have existence separately from him, and can, for this reason, be Brahman’s effects’. 37.65
- 37.20 64 Most important places where Jīva discusses this are BhS 16 and 99. 37.70
- 65 *sarvato brhattamatvād brahmeti yad vidus tat khalu paramasya puṁso bhagavataḥ padam eva, nirvikalpatayā sāksāt-krteḥ prāthamikatvāt. brahmaṇas ca bhagavata eva nirvikalpa-sattā-rūpatvāt, vicitra-rūpādi-vikalpa-viśeṣa-viśiṣṭasya bhagavatas tu sāksāt-krtes tad-antarajatvāt, tadya-svarūpa-bhūtaṁ tad brahma tat-sāksāt-kārāspadam bhavaty arthaḥ.* BhS 7 (p.20). 37.75
- 37.30 66 *vadanti tat tattva-vidas tattvaṁ yaj jñānam advayam | brahmeti paramātmēti bhagavān iti śabdyate ||* BhP 1.2.11. 37.80
- 67 See BhS 101, where the properties of the Lord are said to be *sanandanādyair bhagavat-tattva-vidbhir munibhir vibhāvyāṁ vicāryāṁ sāksād-anubhavanīyāṁ ca*, ‘to be meditated, reflected on, and directly experienced by sages who know the first principle, such as Sanandana’, which properties are *tad-bhakta-vidvat-pratyakṣa-siddham*, ‘established by the perception of the knowers who are the Lord’s devotees’, although *arvāg-drṣṭibhir asambhāvyamānam*, ‘they cannot be conceived by those whose vision is “on this side”’. 37.85
- 37.35 68 *tatraikaṣyaiva viśeṣaṇa-bhedena tad-aviśiṣṭatvena ca pratipādanāt tathaiva tat-tad-upāsaka-puruṣānubhava-bhedāc cāvirbhāva-nāmnor bheda iti.* BhS 4 (p.14). ‘The two names of the manifestations (Nārāyaṇa and paramātman) are different because none other than the first principle is taught, (either) through difference of characteristics or as not being qualified by them; or because the manifestations are experienced differently by respective worshipers in a corresponding manner’. Jīva here 37.85

comments on *Bhāgavata* 11.3.-35-6 and the conversation between king Nimi and sage Pippalāyana.

69 *yogyatā-vaiṣiṣṭyenāvīrbhāva-vaiṣiṣṭyam*. BhS 6 (p.17).

70 In *anuccheda* 93 of BhS, consciousness, metaphorically identified with light, is explicitly *sāmānya*.

71 *yady api ... iti darśanena śuddha-jīva-svarūpam evātropasthitam bhavati, tathāpy atra na tan-mātram vivakṣitam, kintv antar-bhūta-jīvākhyādi-śaktikam pūrṇa-cid-rūpam eva vivakṣitam. yatra pūrṇam vastu darśayitum na śakyate, tatraika-deśa-nirdeśenāvoddīśyate—* *āṅguly-agre samudro 'yam itivat. brahmatva-grahaṇam cābheda-drṣṭyaiva syād iti*. BhS 4 (pp.15-16).

72 *nanu sūkṣma-cid-rūpa-tvam-padārthānubhave katham pūrṇa-cid-ākāra-rūpa-madīya-brahma-svarūpam sphuratu? tatrāha—ananya-bodhyātmatayā cid-ākāratā-sāmyena śuddha-tvam-padārthaiḥ bodhya-svarūpatayā. yady api tādr̥g-ātmānubhāvānantaram tad-ananya-bodhyatākr̥tau sādḥaka-śaktir nāsti, tathāpi pūrvaṁ tad-artham eva kṛtayā sarvatrāpy upajīvyayā sādḥana-bhaktiyārādhitasya śrī-bhagavataḥ prabhāvād eva tad api tatrodāyata iti bhāvaḥ*. BhS 6 (pp.15-16).

73 *kintu sarvajñeśvara-vacanatvenāsarvajña-jīvair durūhatvāt tat-prabhāva-labdha-pratyakṣa-viśeṣavadbhir eva sarvatra tad-anubhave śakyate, na tu tārkikaiḥ*; TSSS 11 (p.21), translation Broo (2006, p.13).

74 It may be that under special perception Jīva has in mind something like what has otherwise been called *śāstra-caḥṣus*, divine vision, in the manner of Kṛṣṇa's revelation of his universal form to Arjuna in the 18th chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Indeed, Śrīvaiṣṇavas have generally distinguished this *śāstra-caḥṣus* from yogic perception (see, for instance, Vedāntadeśika's *Nyāya-parīśuddhi*). I do not think, however, that distinguishing *śāstra-caḥṣus* from *vaiśeṣya-pratyakṣa* is entirely meaningful. For Jīva any supersensible experience is predicated on the grace of the Lord as its necessary and final factor. Cf. the 'Appendix', my note on BhS 56, where arguably the same idea is expressed, with an explicit role for *vidvattā*, 'learning'. Additionally, even though in Jīva's system it seems entirely possible for divine revelation to happen without the practice of learning, as truly a form of *special* grace, his ontology is such that the cognition would still be informed by concepts and language and thereby 'learned'.

75 *tac-chraddadhānā munayo jñāna-vairāgya-yuktayā / paśyanty ātmani cātmānam bhaktiyā śruta-grhītayā* // BhP 1.2.12, in BhS 6 (p.19).

76 The *Puruṣottama-tantra* is likely one of the 'fictitious' texts that Madhva is famous for 'citing'. See Mesquita (2000, p.31). Jīva notes in the TS 28 that he will quote from Madhva's works texts that are 'currently nowhere in circulation' (*samprati sarvatrāpracarad-rūpam*), and in the BhS he often has separate paragraphs for such quotations. I am thankful to the anonymous reviewer for bringing this to my attention.

77 *śāstrārtha-yukto 'nubhavaḥ pramāṇam tūttamam matam / anumādyā na svatantrāḥ pramāṇa-padaḥ yuyuh* // In TSSS 11 (p.12 in Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābā's edition).

78 See the 'Appendix', quoting BhS 96.

79 See Schmücker (2009).

80 Learned perception's being linguistically mediated is arguably one of the reasons why Jīva does not talk about *sākṣī-pratyakṣa* as Madhva did, although it is all but certain that he must have been acquainted with it. In fact, *śabda* for Jīva plays the

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- same role as Madhva's *sākṣin*, that of the guarantor of a cognition's validity. On *sākṣi-pratyakṣa* see Mesquita (2016, pp.53–74). 39.45
- 81 See the Appendix.
- 82 *pitṛ-deva-manuṣyānām vedaś cakṣus taveśvara | śreyas tv anupalabdhe 'rthe sādhyā-sādhanayor api ||* BhP 11.20.4, quoted in TS 11 (p.20). 39.5
- 83 Holdrege (2015, p.44).
- 84 See nt. ²³.
- 85 On Schleiermacher and his formative influence over the study of religious experience, see Proudfoot's landmark work (1985). 39.50
- 86 Good work has been published in recent years by scholars of Buddhist studies who engage constructivist accounts of religious experience, particularly by Davey Tomlinson (2023) and Yaroslav Komarovski (2015), who both argue that while for Buddhist yogis 'religious experience is direct, non-conceptual, and ineffable', it 'is not spontaneous or sporadic but must be intentionally and rationally cultivated', and 'prejudices, expectations, and interpretative structures of the practitioner shape the character of the experience in question' (Tomlinson 2023, p.1). 39.10 39.55
- 87 Forman is the most influential revivalist of perennialism and critic of the constructivist theories of religious experience. See Forman (1999). 39.15 39.60
- 88 *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* 1.5.200-204 (pp.429–431; translation mine; cf. Gopīparāṇadhāna Dāsa's translation therein); see also in Lutjeharms (2014), who explicates a Gauḍīya theory of religious experience as a product of Indian classical theory of aesthetic experience (*rasa*) with the *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* passage as its starting point. Rūpa's passage is derived from *Bhāgavata* 3.32.33 and Śrīdhara's commentary thereon, quoted by Jīva in BhS 87. 39.20 39.65
- 39.25 **Appendix: On the meaning of *śabdasyāpi tan-mūlatvāt***
- The phrase *śabdasyāpi tan-mūlatvāt* that Jīva provides as the second reason why *vaiḍuṣya-pratyakṣa* is not erroneous can be interpreted in two different ways, depending on what kind of a compound *tan-mūla* is taken to be—a *tatpuruṣa* or a *bahuvrīhi*—with several nuances that are contingent on the precise meaning of *mūla* in the context. Both avenues have been taken. In the first possibility, it means 'because of language's being its [learned perception's] foundation'. This is followed in Bhanu Swami's translation (2012, p.15), who reads 'The *pratyakṣa* of the learned person is without the four faults which create error and is based upon *śabda*'. Stuart Elkman likewise takes *vaiḍuṣya-pratyakṣa* as perception that is based on *śabda* in the notes to his *Tattva-sandarbhā* translation (Elkman 1986, p.74). 39.30 39.70 39.75
- In the second possibility, the meaning is 'because of language's being what has it [learned perception] as its foundation'. This second meaning has generally been preferred. Thus, De (1961: 196) says that *vaiḍuṣya-pratyakṣa* 'becomes the basis of *śabda* itself when it is the *Pratyakṣa* of the great seers'. Likewise, Chakravarti (2004: 4): '[T] he unerring perception of the great seers is supremely authentic since it forms the basis of *śabda* itself'. And Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa (2013: 260) translates: 'Moreover, the perceptions of the wise are the basis of even verbal testimony [*śabda-pramāṇa*]'.
- 39.40 39.80 39.85

Two scholar-practitioners in particular have promoted this line of interpretation into a Nyāya-like epistemology where the validity of scriptures, including the Vedas, is grounded in their being reports of what is seen in supersensible cognition. Mahanambrata Brahmachari (1974, pp.103–104) has called *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa* 'philosophical' and 'divine' perception, an 'integral knowing which gives us genuine knowledge of reality', a 'direct intuition' of a Spinozian kind, the 'divine perception' of the original Vedic sages that has been recorded in works such as the Upaniṣads and the *Bhāgavata*. Kapoor (1994, pp.65–70) likewise associates *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa* with 'mystical experience' and everything that is in vogue in *philosophia perennis*.

The only serious engagement with *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa*, of Jonathan Edelmann and Satyanarayana Dasa (2014), while still preferring the second possibility, has rightly pushed back against interpretations like those of Kapoor and Brahmachari. Their argument is that, insofar as *mūla* has an epistemological sense, it refers to scripture 'entering' sages like Brahmā and Vyāsa and being 'experienced' or 'understood' by them. In other words, *mūla* means *praveśa* or 'entrance' and *anubhava* or 'experience', but it is the entrance and understanding of the otherwise independently valid Vedas.

The interpretation of Edelmann and Dasa is an important corrective to how *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa* has otherwise been interpreted, as it rightly puts the onus back on scripture. Besides that, the interpretation of *mūla* = *praveśa* & *anubhava* has good appeal, since Jīva often talks about scripture being revealed in meditation, to the learned (*vidvān*), particularly the *Bhāgavata* being revealed to Brahmā and to Vyāsa. Cf., for instance, BhS 101, where the first principle is defined 'in words whose meaning is perceived by the learned', *vidvad-upalabdihārtha-śabdair vyañjitam* (p.280). Similarly, in BhS 59, to the effect that the learned (first) cognise and (then) talk about Bhagavān in different ways, ... *bhagavān iti vidvadbhiḥ pratīyate prayujyate ca* (p.158). And, in BhS 81: 'This was already established through many statements that are the experience of the learned', *tat pūrvam eva vidvad-anubhava-vacana-pracayena siddham* (p.205). The sequence that suggests itself is that of seeing first, report second.

It is possible to further nuance this account, however. It should be noted first that Jīva's statement is almost certainly inspired by Śāṅkara's comment on the *Brahma-sūtra* 1.3.33, of the *devatādhikaraṇa* that plays such a crucial role in Jīva's account of scripture. There Śāṅkara argues against Kumārila's ideas about the origin of *smṛti* and other canonical but non-*śruti* literature—specifically the epics and the *Purāṇas*—as they are presented in the *Tantra-vārttika* on the *smṛti-pāda* (1.3) of the *Mīmāṃsā-sūtra*. Kumārila there argues that the origin (*mūla*) of *smṛti* works are Vedic texts that were previously cognised by *smṛti* authors but have since been lost, i.e., that *smṛtis* are *veda-mūla*, originating in the Vedas. In the process, Kumārila rejects the possibility of *smṛti* originating in 'personal experience' (*anubhava*), which here clearly stands for yogic perception and omniscience, his favourite topics for scholarly polemic. Śāṅkara, however, accepts both possibilities, while clearly favouring perception:

- 41.5 *itihāsa-purāṇam* api vyākhyātena mārgeṇa sambhavan-mantrārthavāda-**mūlakatvāt** prabhavati devatā-vigrahādi sādhayitum. **pratyakṣādi-mūlam** api sambhavati. bhavati hy asmākam apratyakṣam api cirantanānāṁ pratyakṣam. tathā ca vyāsādayo devādibhiḥ pratyakṣaṁ vyavaharantīti smaryate. (Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya 1.3.33, p.207; boldface mine) 41.45
- Itihāsa-purāṇa*, insofar as it is possible that they are based on *mantra* and *arthavāda*, are capable of establishing that the gods have forms in the described manner. It is also possible that they are based on perception, for things that are imperceptible to us may have been perceptible to the ancients. In fact, *smṛtis* say that Vyāsa and others deal with the gods directly. 41.50
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- This is the closest language to Jīva's turn of phrase that I have been able to find. Śāṅkara goes on to say that the seers of the *mantra* and *brāhmaṇa* texts, i.e., the Vedas in the strict sense, had superhuman cognitive powers like those of Vyāsa, the upshot of which is that supersensible perception has something to do with the cognition of *śruti* as well. 41.55
- 41.15
- Still, the *śruti-smṛti* distinction remains operative for Śāṅkara, and even though Jīva argues strongly that both constitute the Veda, he distinguishes *śruti* from all other veridical scriptures on the ground of their having fixed accent and word order (TS 12). Which leads me to the following observation. In the BhS 98, Jīva couples *śruti* with *vidvad-anubhava* (= *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa*) in the dual as two sorts of *pramāṇa*: *viśeṣataś cātra śruti-vidvad-anubhavāv api pūrvam eva pramāṇī-kṛtau* (p.253), 'Specifically, on this point *śruti* statements and the experience of the learned have already been adduced in evidence'. The reference in 'already adduced in evidence' is to the long *anuccheda* 47, more precisely to Jīva's argument about the non-difference of Bhagavān and his names. As one may expect, Jīva's citations there include *śruti* followed by statements from the *Purāṇas*, *Pañcarātra* texts, etc. Importantly, while commenting there on *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 5.18.54, he glosses *īḍyase* in the phrase *kṛṣṇācyutānanta-viṣṇu-nāmabhir īḍyase*, 'You are praised with the names 'Kṛṣṇa', 'Acyuta', 'Ananta', 'Viṣṇu'', with *munibhir vedaiś ca ślāghyase* (p.124), 'You are praised by the Vedas and sages', and alternatively with *nitya-siddha-śruti-purāṇādibhiḥ ślāghyase* (p.125), 'You are praised by the eternally established *śruti* and *Purāṇas*'. Note the pairs, then: Vedas and sages; *śruti* and *Purāṇa*. 41.60
- 41.20
- Jīva's citation practice likewise suggests that *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa* as the source of scripture refers primarily to the *Bhāgavata*. Particularly instructive in this regard is *anuccheda* 79, another very long section, which narrates the vision of Vaikuṅṭha by the four Kumāras from the third book of the *Bhāgavata*, in the context of which vision the Kumāras are called 'highest knowers' to whom something of the Lord's power of bliss has been 'shown' as it manifests in the residents of Vaikuṅṭha 41.70
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- (*teṣāṁ parama-viduṣāṁ sprhāspadāvastheṣu teṣu śrī-vaikuṅṭha-puruṣeṣu kasyā api bhagavad-ānanda-śakter vilāsamayatvaṁ darśitam*; p.191; boldface mine). Indeed, I have argued above that the entire account of *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa* is modelled on the *tattva-vids* of *Bhāgavata* 1.2.11. 41.75
- 41.35
- 41.40

The collective import of this is that *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa*, insofar as it is the source of scripture, refers primarily to kinds of works which are generally classed as *smṛti* or otherwise associated with *named speakers*. Therefore, although Jīva's definition of *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa* accommodates the argument about the entrance of the eternal word through perception by the Vedic ṛṣis, insofar as Jīva uses *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa* in this more restricted sense I propose that it is more accurate to translate the phrase as, 'And, because learned perception is an *origin* of language [i.e., scripture] as well', in other words, of a *specific set* of scripture that may be said to originate with sages like Vyāsa, in a time subsequent to world creation and the cognition of *śruti*, albeit they are understood as eternal as well. Put differently, to scriptures in the cognition of which paramount is *artha*, meaning, rather than *śabda*, word.

To complicate this account, I should mention that in the context of the *Sarvasaṁvādinī* chapters on epistemology, Jīva tends to use *mūla* to mean 'epistemic foundation' (i.e., *mūla* = proper *pramāṇa*), as I have argued in the body of this article. It remains, therefore, appealing to keep the understanding of *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa* as that perception which is veridical because it is the kind of seeing rooted in the categories of scriptural language; in other words, to translate the phrase as 'because of scripture's being its foundation' in a *tat-puruṣa* manner, where *mūla* means 'epistemic foundation'. After all, *vidvattā* or learning that culminates in *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa* as a consummate perceptual experience (*anubhava*) is predicated on the study of the Vedas, in Jīva's broad sense, as we have seen in the article; and perception, language, and reflection are a single act of cognising the supersensible where the possibilities of the perceptual are directly facilitated by the linguistic. In all cases where Jīva mentions *vidvad-anubhava* and related ideas, it is direct seeing of what is scripturally veridical. Cf. his comment on *Bhāgavata* 2.9.30 in *BhS* 96—*me mama bhagavato jñānam śabda-dvārā yāthārthya-nirdhāraṇam. ... tac ca vijñānena tad-anubhāvenāpi yuktam gṛhāṇa* (p.235; the boldface represents the *Bhāgavata* original glossed by Jīva)—where it is knowledge as what is ascertained as true by means of scripture that is subsequently experienced. Insofar as *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa* is experience, it is *paradigmatic* rather than *historical* experience, one whose *epistemic foundation* is scripture.

Thus, although I am secure that Jīva took a cue for his definition of *vaiduṣa-pratyakṣa* from Śaṅkara's *Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya* on 1.3.33, and by that much that *tan-mūlatvāt* involves a *bahuvrīhi*, nothing material would change for the purposes of my argument if he meant one or the other possible meaning, for they are both true depending on what *mūla* stands for in the definition: the cognitive act itself as the *source* or *origin* of scriptural accounts, or the *ground* or *foundation* in virtue of which such cognitive act is valid. This is a case of a productive ambiguity that may—indeed, should—be allowed to remain. It may be usefully compared to *Brahma-sūtra* 1.1.3 ([*brahmaṇaḥ*] *śāstra-yonitvāt*) which Śaṅkara (1910, Vol. I, pp.13–14) reads both as a *tatpuruṣa* and a *bahuvrīhi* to mean either that the omniscient Brahman is the source (*yoni*) as origin (*kāraṇa*) of the Vedas, or that Brahman is what has the Vedas as its source as *reliable epistemic warrant* (*pramāṇa*). Ultimately both readings are valid, yet not for the same reason.