‘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’]. 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

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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. A nephew of Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmins, who were likely taught by Caitanya himself, Jiva 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.

It was through Jiva’s writings that Caitanya’s religious movement positioned itself in the fold of theistic Vedānta (Gupta 2007). Jiva’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). Jiva’s magnum opus, then, was a work called Sat-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. To the first four of the six Sandarbhās, Jiva 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 Jiva 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 Sat-sandarbha.

Jiva Gosvāmin’s epistemology: perception and language

Jiva’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
from a contact of a sense faculty with an external or an internal object, Jiva 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. Jiva’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.

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. Jiva’s wording (dvādaśa-vidham bhavati, tad eva ca punar vaiduṣṣam avaiduṣṣan 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.

Jiva does not say much more about learned perception, except that unlike its avaiduṣṣa 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:

In learned perception, there is no erroneous cognition, because there are no human faults such as confusion, and because language is its foundation.

I note here that the second part of Jiva’s definition—śabdasyāpi tan-mūlatvāt—is ambiguous, as it depends on whether tan-mūla is read as a tatpurusa or a bahuvrīhi compound. If it is the second reading, Jiva 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, 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 Jiva’s epistemological account in the Sarva-saṁvādini 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 discussed pramāṇas:

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.
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 Kumārila’s sense where every cognition is prima facie justified unless and until proved wrong. 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, Kumārila’s notion of intrinsic validity (svataḥ-prāmāṇya) is applicable only to forms of language that are definitionally inerrant.

To demonstrate this, Jīva argues that perceptual and inferential forms of awareness—the other seven epistemic instruments are reduced to perception, inference, and language—are commonly erroneous yet incapable of overturning what is known from language. Perception is intrinsically invalid 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.

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 Himalaya, 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. The second is illustrated with ‘fire arises from contact with sunstone’. 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.

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’ (vrddha) ‘It is Devadatta’s head’ supplies the requisite validity, for which reason language is ‘foundational’ as in ‘providing foundation’.17

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

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

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: 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

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

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 Mīmāṁsā-Vedānta theory of scripture as apauruṣeya-śruti, texts that were not composed by a human or divine agent—i.e., are non-personal form
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 *apauruṣeyasya-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 creation; 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.

Elsewhere Jīva says that it is ‘learning’ by means of which one comes to ‘personally experience’ Kṛṣṇa.

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 *vaiḍūya* from which we derived learned perception. 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. 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. 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’. What he means is that when Brahman or the supreme Lord creates all beings in the beginning of creation, he
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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 intuits in the *Timaeus* in order to make all things in their image. In that sense, things are not distinct from their Vedic names.29

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.

7.10

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 aṅkṣata bāhu syāṁ prajāyeya*), is verbal and conceptual in nature, *just because* it is accompanied by the words ‘how about I become many’:

7.15

The topical Brahman is not beyond words. How so? Because the verb √īkṣṇ is used, that is, because in ‘It reflected, “how about I become many, procreate myself”,’ the verb √īkṣṇ ‘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 (abhiṣṇa). 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

7.20

Crucial here is the use of the root √īkṣṇ, 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.

7.35

**The legacy of yogic perception**

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
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.

In fact, Haridāsa Śāstrī’s comment is suggestive of classifications of perception in the Śrīvaishṇava 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

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.

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-saṁvādinī 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

The most important passage among these is the end of the Bhagavat-sandarbha (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,
and include not only Brahmā, but also the divinities that govern the faculties on macrocosmic and microcosmic level. *Arvācina*, 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 *arvācina* faculties. 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 *arvācina* 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 *vaiḍuṣa*, learned, without a readily apparent precedent for doing so, rather than through some of its better-known appellations, such as anarvācina; and more generally, why, if *vaiḍuṣa-pratyakṣa* at least in part of its semantic range includes such perception as achieved in *sāmādhi*, 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 *vaiḍuṣa-pratyakṣa*, although partially a form of yogic perception, was more a product of the epistemological legacy of yogic perception’s fiercest critic Kumārila Bhatta (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 Kumārila’s ideas about perception and the background of *yogī-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*, Kumārila 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. Kumārila’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 (*avyāpadeśya*) 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*). 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.

Kumārila 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 Kumārila’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 Kumārila’s account is the acquisition of language. Kumārila 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-saniskṛtāḥ) (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 Kumārila’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, Kumārila 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 Mīmāṁsā 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. Although Kumārila 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 Kumārila’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.

In what follows I will draw primarily on Dignāga’s follower Dharmakīrти, 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

It is formally non-controversial to define yogic perception after Dharmakīrти: ‘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).

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’ (bhāvanamayī 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.

The perceptual experience at the culmination of the meditative practice is just a mental image where no conceptual awareness obtains. Dharmakīrти, in fact, compares it to hallucinations of objects that are not present, i.e., are not real, yet are
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. 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 prasaṅkhyaṇa 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—sravana (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 (Brhad-āranyaka Upaniṣad 2.4.5 and 4.5.6)—the prasaṅkhyaṇa 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). 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 Miśra, 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.

We finish this section with the following note. Dharmakīrti added to his definition of yogic perception that it is \textit{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 \textit{pramāṇa} not because it arises from meditation, but because its object is determined as veridical by scripture and reasoning,\textsuperscript{46} and it is \textit{pramāṇa} because—for the likes of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti—\textit{pramāṇa} is both (or either) the cognitive process and the cognitive outcome.\textsuperscript{47} Insofar as the cognition in yogic perception is veridical, it is \textit{pramāṇa} even if so in virtue of scripture and reasoning; it is not validity, but vividness and non-conceptuality that repeated meditation provides.

Vedāntins, on the other hand, insisted that only the Upaniṣads are the \textit{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, \textit{even when it culminates in a vivid cognition of Brahman}, is not a \textit{pramāṇa} insofar as it is but a recollection of an object that was previously known, i.e., known from the Upaniṣads.\textsuperscript{48} It is not \textit{pramāṇa} not because it is not veridical, but because it fails the formal criterion of \textit{pramāṇa} disclosing an object of its own unique domain without being recollective or ‘second-hand’ awareness.\textsuperscript{49} And, it is not \textit{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.\textsuperscript{50} In other words, regardless of yogic perception being or not being \textit{pramāṇa}, it \textit{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.

To conclude briefly, then, there is something mysterious—some may even say paradoxical—about scripture being the \textit{pramāṇa} for the supersensible in the accounts of yogic perception and meditative vision that we have presented: it is both revealing and concealing of it’s 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, \textit{śravaṇa}) that facilitates perception, but the alleged perceptual experience goes in
the opposite direction, from conceptualised to non-conceptualised, and there is a radically divergent understanding of what an object’s being vivid involves.

**Ontology and religious epistemology**

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.

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 him—or took inspiration from Nyāya, Śrīvaishnava, or Mādhva Vedānta versions of *savikalpa/nirvikalpa pratyakṣa*, is somewhat beside the point. 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 theology, while informed by vast learning, is not derivative.

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’.

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 Gaudīyas, 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-saṁvādini* epistemological account. Jīva talks about perception (*sākṣātkṛti*) that is either *nirvikalpa* or involving *vikalpa*, and the entire context is that of how the first principle is ‘scripturally called’ (*śrutaya*) 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.
The first principle is a nondual substance, \textit{advaya tattva}, with three aspects, to which correspond three names: Brahman, Paramātman, and Bhagavān. Its being a substance is defined as being undivided or substantive bliss, \textit{akhaṇḍānanda-svarūpa}, which reminds one of Brahman of the Advaita Vedānta. What the first principle being bliss as substance (\textit{ānanda-mātra viśeṣya}) means is difficult to say—none the less so because for Jīva both consciousness and bliss are both substantive and attributable—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 \textit{Paramātma-sandarbha}:

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.

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 (\textit{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 (\textit{svarūpa}) of the first principle, in an important sense it is identical with its capacity of inherent identity (\textit{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.

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. That consciousness is a \textit{general} property means that it is not one of its \textit{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:

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 \textit{paramahāntas} 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.
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:

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

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:

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

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.

It should be noted that this ontological structure of Jīva’s is inspired by—even appropriated from—the Śrīvaisnava viśistādvaita, 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 Śrīvaisnava primarily cosmological or the Advaita theoepistemological context, and this is achieved by subsuming the notion of distinguishing attribute under another category, that of śakti, i.e., power or capacity.

The first principle is said to have three such capacities that are labelled the ‘external’ (bahirāṅga), the ‘in-between’ (taṭastha), and the ‘internal’ (antaraṅga): 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.
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).\(^6\) 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.

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.\(^6\) 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.

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., Vaikuṇṭha 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.\(^6\)

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
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-sandarbha 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 (sāksātkṛti) 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

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 non-dual 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 paramahaṁsa—or to be presented or set forth in scripture (pratipadyamānaṁ 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-sandarbha 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.

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’.

The experience of Brahman

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
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.

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. 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:

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.

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.

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:

[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?

[Reply:] It is possible through understanding the oneness of the pure individual soul [lit. tvam-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
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.\textsuperscript{72}

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):

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.\textsuperscript{73}

This ‘special perception’ must be learned perception,\textsuperscript{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:

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-grhitā) and is furnished with knowledge and dispassion.\textsuperscript{75}

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\textsuperscript{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).\textsuperscript{77}

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 Paramātman, 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.
Consequences

Jīva habitually talks about Bhagavān as ‘the complete manifestation’ (pūrṇāväirbhāva) 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. 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. Neither of the two works well for the textual material that Jīva set himself to turning into systematic theology, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, which talked about three ways of approaching the first principle. Insofar as these were the ways of the tatva-vids, ‘knowers of the first principle’ and yet another instance of the all-important verbal root vīd 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 anarvācina 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
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

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.

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 Sarva-sāṁvādini 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 vedaḥ caṇṣuḥ), 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.

Varieties of religious experience, constructivism, and perennialism

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’.

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
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.

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.

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.

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. 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.

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. 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.
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-bhāgavatāmya:

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.

Abbreviations

BhS: Jīva Gosvāmin’s Bhagavat-sandarbha
BhSSS: Jīva Gosvāmin’s Sarva-saṅvādini on his Bhagavat-sandarbha
‘Learned Perception’ as a Form of ‘Religious Experience’

26.5

References

All citations of Jīva’s works are according to Haridāsa Śāstrī’s editions listed below, unless noted otherwise. I do not reproduce his own in-text comments given in square brackets, except in footnote 32 where they are reproduced in regular type, as a comment on Jīva’s TS text which is reproduced in bold. All Sanskrit translations, unless noted otherwise, are my own.

Primary sources


Secondary sources


**Notes**

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 *vaiḍūya-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.

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 Glorisun Global Network for Buddhist Studies. It is with profound thanks and admiration that I dedicate this article to Phyllis.

1 ‘Learned perception’ (and the associated ‘perceptual learning’) is used in contemporary psychology in a sense related but not identical to *vaiḍūya-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.,
30.5 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.

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

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 Sandarbhas, see De (1961, pp.193–320); briefer accounts are available in Dasa (2007, pp.376–387) and Gupta (2007, pp.201–207).

5 Cf. definitional statements in TSSS 9, such as pratyakṣaṁ tāvan mano-buddhīndriya-paṇcaka-janyatayā sād-viddhāṁ bhavet (p.11), ‘Perception is of six kinds insofar as it is originated by the mind and the five cognitive faculties’; go-sadṛśa gavaya iti jñānam upamānam (p.16), ‘The cognition ‘a wild buffalo is similar to a cow’ is resemblance’; aṅguly-attolanato ghata-daśakādi-jñāna-kṛc cesteti (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.

6 In this direction is Jīva’s long quote from Vācaspati Miśra’s Bhāmatī in TSSS 10 (pp.17–18), where it is precisely argued that scripture (āmnāya) is independent of perception with respect to validity (prāmāṇya) 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).

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.

7 tathā hi, pratyakṣaṁ tāvan mano-buddhīndriya-paṇcaka-janyatayā sād-viddhāṁ bhavet. pratyekāṁ punah savikalpa-nirvikalpa-bhedena dvādaśa-viddhāṁ bhavati. tad eva ca punar vaidūṣayām avaidūṣayām ceti dvividhām; 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’.

8 tatra vaidūṣe na vipratipattiḥ, bhrāmādi-ṇṛ-dosa-rāhityāt, śabdasyāpi tan-mūlatvāc [ca]; TSSS 9 (p.11). Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābā’s text has no ca (1965, p.5), and it is the more
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.


11 Cf. Kṛṣṇadāsa’s Caitanya-caritāmṛta Ādi-lilā 7.125: svataḥ-prāmāṇa veda—prāmāṇa-sīromaṇi, ‘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 (mukhyāvṛtti) 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.

12 Jīva puts things in terms of tadāyāni jñānaḥ hi vyabhicarati, ‘perceptual cognition deviates [from being consistently veridical]’. TSSS 9 (p.12).


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.

15 na tu śabdaḥ [vyabhicarati], sūrya-kāntāt saura-marīci-yogenāgnir uttiṣṭhate ity atra. TSSS 9 (p.14).

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).

17 tac chabdenaiva baddha-mūlam, yathā dṛṣṭa-cara-māya-muṇḍakena kenacid bhramāt satyeṣyāprasā overhevām iti nabhō-vānīyādau jānān api vrdhposaṇān vinā na kiṃcid api tattviva nirṇetum śaknotī api sarvēṣvāṁ nyāya-viḍāṁ sthitī. TSSS 9 (p.12). The illustration is ultimately derived from Vaiṣeṣika-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).

18 There is, thus, an entirely identical structure of examples in the Sarva-saṁvādīni 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).
kiṁ ca, paśv-ādibhiś cāviśeṣān na pratyaksādikam jīnānam paramārtha-pramāpakan. 

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 (samānah paśv-ādibhiḥ puruṣānāṁ 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.

32.10

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.

32.15

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).

32.20

Broo (2006) and Edelmann and Dasa (2014) may be usefully consulted on this.

32.25

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 Mīmāṁsā, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya and Yoga, Kāvya, Alaṅkāra, the arts, political science and architecture, etc., with the argument that all forms of learning (vaiduṣya) culminate in, and thereby are useful for, directly experiencing Bhagavān and his properties. In this, too, Jīva is very much an heir to Kumārila (see Tantra-vārttikā on MS 1.3).

32.30

tasmād yo niṇa-niṇa-vidvattāyai sarvair evābhyaṣyate, yasyādiḥṣamena sarveṣām api sarvaiḥ vidvattā bhavati, yat-kṛtayaiva paraṇa-vidvattayā pratyaksādikam api śuddhaṁ syāt, yaś cānāditvāt svayam eva siddhaḥ, sa eva nichilaitihyā-mūla-rūpo mahā-vākya-samudayaḥ śabdo’tra grhyate. sa ca śāstram eva, tac ca veda eva. TSSS 10 (p.17).

32.35

In a gloss on the phrase avehi kṛṣṇam in BhP 10.14.55: mat-prasāda-labdhā-vidvattayaivānubhava, na tu tarkādaṁ vicārayer arthāḥ. 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.

32.40

That is, the two are formed from vidvāt and vidus, stems of the participle of the reduced perfect of ṛvid, ‘to know’.

32.45

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).
On the doctrine expressed in these three sūtras, see Uskokov (2022, pp.70–72).

Jīva otherwise operates with the notion of śabda-brahman, the ‘linguistic brahman’ that are the Vedic names essentially associated with meaning; see BhS anucchedas 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 Avicena’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.

prakṛtaṁ brahma śabda-hīnaṁ na bhavati. kutaḥ? ikṣateḥ. TSSS 9 (p.11).

This view of Parāśara Bhattar is cited by Vedāntadeśika Veṅkaṭanātha in his Nyāya-pariśuddhi (1923, pp.82–83): pratyakṣaṁ caiva ‘bhihitaḥ. dvividhaṁ caitat pratyakṣam arvācinam anarvācinam ca yugapad-āśeṣa-viśaya-sākṣātkāra-ksamam anarvācinam. tad yogi-mukteśvarāṇām prabhāva-viśeṣādhiṁ upapādaya-ityādi (see also Mesquita 2016, p.32). This in effect is a definition of omniscience.

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 Śrīnivāsācārya’s Yatīndra-mata-dīpikā (1967, pp.9–11), yogic perception there is classed under arvācāna, and clearly the idea is that only what is perceived by agents that belong to the so-called nitya-vibhūti, i.e., Vaikuṇṭha, is anarvācāna. The perception of yogis is sort of middle ground because they do cognise with their common senses as well.

A verse from a famous Rigvedic hymn on Speech (vāc) puts the two instructively together:

imē yē nārvāṁ nā parāś cāranti
nā brāhmaṇāso nā sutēkārāsah |
tā ete vācam abhipādyā pāpāyā
sirīs tāntraṁ tanvate āprajajnayaḥ || 10.71.9.
Who move neither close (arvāk) nor far away (parāś), 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.)

Sāyaṇa explicitly connects here arvāk with ‘this world that is downward directionally’ and parāś with the world of the gods, and it is ignoramuses (avidvāṁsah) who
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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 avidvāṁsaḥ arvāk arvācinam adho-bhāvīny asmitil-loke brāhmaṇāsah saha na caranti ye parah parastāt devāh saha na caranti te brāhmanasyāsah brāhmaṇāḥ vedārtha-tatparāḥ na bhavanti* (Vol. 4, p.536).

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).

35 TSSS 10: *nanv arvāg-jana-saṁvādādi-darśanāt kathāṁ tasyāṁdītvādā; ‘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:

> *yaṁśeṇa vācāḥ padaviyām āyān <br> tāṁ ānō avindanāṁ fūṣā prāviśtām |* 10.71.3ab

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

36 *vidvad-upalabdhāṛta-śabdair vyañjitam*. BhS 101 (p.280).

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 Nāsadīya-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:

> *kād veda kā iḥaḥ prá vocat <br> kūta ājātā kūta iyāṁ vīśṛṣṭiḥ | <br> arvā迦 devā asyā visājanena <br> āthā kā veda yāta ṛabhāvā || 10.129.6<br> Who really knows? Who shall here proclaim it?—from where was it born, from where this creation? 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.)

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

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*.

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 (*viśeṣāvadhaṇapradhānā vṛttih pratyakṣam*) and inferential cognition grasps mainly
the universal aspect (sāmānyāvadāhāranaprathēnā vṛttir anumānanam). This idea is close to the epistemology of Dīnāga and Dharmakīrti, according to which the object of perception is a particular whereas the object of inference is a universal’.

On the details of Kumārila’s critique, see McCrea (2009), who shows that Kumārila’s primary concern in rejecting yogic perception isn’t as much its impossibility as is its being useless (and potentially harmful) for knowing dharma.

The yoga parallels can be pursued further in Gokhale (2020).

bhūtārtha-bhāvanā-prakāśa-paryanta-jañi yogi-jñāna ca iti, Nyāya-bindu 1.11 (p.67).

I should like to note that my account here is indebted to the work of Vincent Eltschinger (2009) and John Dunne (2006). The two arrive at diametrically opposite conclusions on how the object seen in meditation can be real, but that is immaterial for the needs of my argument. Much useful discussion, in particular on how yogic perception fits in Dharmakīrti’s wider epistemology and what its object is, is also available in Prévèreau (1994).

Cf. Rāmānuja’s Śrībhāsyā 1.1.3 (Vol. 1, paragraph 87, p.201): nāpi yoga-janyam. bhāvanā-prakāśa-paryanta-janmanas tasya viśadāvhasatve ‘pi pūrvānūbhūtā-visaya-smṛti-mātratvān na prāmāṇyam. ‘And, yogic cognition is not an epistemic warrant. Although the cognition born of the culmination of excellence of meditation is vivid, it is not an epistemic warrant because it is merely the recollection of a previously known object’. Cf. Schmücker (2009, p.285, nt. 3). Vedāntadeśīka’s Nyāya-paśuddhi (p.73): bhāvanā-balajā-mātratin jagat-kartari pratikṣaṇaḥ pratikṣiptaṁ śāstra-yony-adhikaraṇe. ‘In Brahma-sutra 1.1.3, it has been refuted that perception that is merely born of the power of meditation [is applicable] with respect to the creator of the world’. Sureśvara uses the same terminology (bhāvanopacaya, bhāvanā-ja) when he talks about the so-called prasankhyāna meditation (see Naiṣkarmya-siddhi, vṛtti on 1.66; 3.93). Really, everyone operates with Dharmakīrti’s definition.

See nt. 47.

See nt. 44, on Sureśvara.

See Dharmottara’s comment on Dharmakīrti’s Pramāṇa-viniścaya, reported in Eltschinger (2009, p.193), to the effect that what guarantees the veracity of yogic perception is that the cognition, though non-conceptual, bears upon an entity that has been purified by pramāṇa (pramāṇa-pariśuddha-vastu-viṣaya). See also Dharmakīrti’s own statement in Pramāṇa-vārttika 3.286 (p.76):

tatra pramāṇaṁ saṁśīvādi yat prāṁ nirnīta-vastu-vat |
tad-bhāvanā-jaṁ pratikṣaṁ ivaṁ śesā upapalavāḥ ||

‘Of these [non-conceptual cognitions that are either of real or unreal objects, cf. 3.284-85], the cognition born of meditation whose object has been already ascertained [as real] is veridical and trustworthy. The rest are mistaken’. Cf. Prévèreau (1994: 93–95), to the effect that what is previously ascertained as real are the Buddhist dogmas subjected to critical scrutiny, i.e., one may say, what is known by śrutamayī and cintāmayī prajñā. See also Tomlinson (2024) on how yogic perception is different from the more general yogic awareness—of the kind of soteriologically wholesome yet ultimately false images—with respect to their pramāṇic and phenomenal status.

See Arnold (2005, p.60).

See nt. 44.
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On Rāmānuja’s take on the pramāṇic status of smṛti or recollection, see Schmücker (2009, pp.284–285, nt. 1).

McCrea (2009), referred to in nt. 39, is an illuminating reading on this.

Kumārila’s Tantra-vārttika 3.3.2 is cited within the long comment from Vācaspati’s Bhāmati, and TSSS 11 is thoroughly immersed in the Mīmāṁsā discourse (and Mīmāṁsā-Vedānta polemics) on language and modes of interpretation; see Broo (2006, particularly pp.15–17).

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 Śrīvaishṇavas, unlike Jīva, yogic perception was solely conceptualised (Schmücker 2009).

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.


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 Taṇṭiriya 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 paśca-koṣa, 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 as postive 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’.

kiṁ cedāṁ prccāmaḥ, tad ānanda-rūpam bhavati na vā? bhavati cet, āyātā asya tat-saṁjñā duḥkha-pratiyogitaṁ ca, neti cet apuruṣārthatvam. tasmād ānanda-rūpaṁ bhavati. kintu na loka-prasiddhānanda-rūpaṁ tad ity eva vācyam iti sthite tv asmākam eva samīcināṁ panthāḥ.

Advaya-jñāna-laksanāṁ tat tattvaṁ sāmānyata laksayitvā... BhS 1 (p.1).

The Śrīvaiśnavite debt is nowhere clearer than in the following statement: 

\[\text{evaṁ cānanda-mātraḥ viśeṣyaṁ, samastāḥ śāktayo viśeṣanāṁ, viśiṣṭo bhagavān ity āyātama. tathā caiva viṣeṣaṁ vātapataye śaktivaṁ caḥ atrotārakṛtvas tad-vyāprativedas atrayatvād.} \]

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'.

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

69 yogyatā-vaiśīṣtyena-vibhāva-vaiśīṣtyam. BhS 6 (p.17).

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

71 yady api ... iti darśanena śuddha-jīva-svarūpam evātropasthitaṁ bhavati, tathāpy atra na tan-mātraṁ vivakṣitam, kintv antar-bhūta-jīvākhyādā-saktikaṁ pūrṇa-cid-rūpam eva vivakṣitam, yatra pūrṇam vastu darśayitum na śakyate, tatraṅka-desā-nirdesānanirodhiṣṭate—aṅguly-agre samudro 'yam itivat. brahma-bhaganaṁ cābheda-drṣṭyaiva syād iti. BhS 4 (pp.15–16).


74 It may be that under special perception Jīva has in mind something like what has otherwise been called śastra-cakṣus, divine vision, in the manner of Kṛṣṇa's revelation of his universal form to Arjuna in the 18th chapter of the Bhagavad-gītā. Indeed, Śrīvaiśnavaś have generally distinguished this śastra-cakṣus from yogic perception (see, for instance, Vedāntadeśika's Nyāya-pariśuddhi). I do not think, however, that distinguishing śastra-cakṣus from vaiḍūya-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-chraddadhā munayo jñāna-vairāgya-yuktayā |
paśyanty ātmani cātmānaṁ bhaktyā śruta-grhitayā || BhP 1.2.12, in BhS 6 (p.19).

76 The Paraṣottama-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 that texts that are ‘currently nowhere in circulation’ (sampratī 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 śāstra-cakṣus-pratyakṣa 'nubhavah prāmāñānī tattvanamī matam |
anumādyā na svatantrah prāmāṇa-padaviṁ yayuh || 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 sākṣi-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
same role as Madhva’s sākṣī, that of the guarantor of a cognition’s validity. On sākṣī-
pratyakṣa see Mesquita (2016, pp.53–74).

See the Appendix.

82 pīṭṛ-deva-muṇḍyānāṁ vedaś cakṣus taveśvaram / śreyas tv anupalabdhe ‘ṛthe sāḍhya-sāḍhanayor api // BhP 11.20.4, quoted in TS 11 (p.20).

Holdrege (2015, p.44).

84 See nt. 23.

On Schleiermacher and his formative influence over the study of religious expe-
rience, see Proudfoot’s landmark work (1985).

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).

87 Forman is the most influential revivalist of perennialism and critic of the construc-

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 Gaudīya
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.

Appendix: On the meaning of śabdasyāpi tan-mūlatvāt

The phrase śabdasyāpi tan-mūlatvāt that Jīva provides as the second reason why
vaidūṣa-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 tatpurūṣa or a
bahuvvṛ̹hi—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 vaidūṣa-pratyakṣa as perception that is based
on śabda in the notes to his Tattva-sandarbha translation (Elkman 1986, p.74).

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 vaidūṣa-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 Dāṣa (2013: 260) translates: ‘Moreover,
the perceptions of the wise are the basis of even verbal testimony [śabda-pramāṇa]’.
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-pratyākṣa ‘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-pratyākṣa with ‘mystical experience’ and everything that is in vogue in philosopia perennis.

The only serious engagement with vaiduṣa-pratyākṣa, 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-pratyākṣa 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-upalabdhārtha-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 vidvadbhīḥ pratīyate prayujiyate 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 Śaṅkara’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 Śaṅkara argues against Kumārila’s ideas about the origin of śruti 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 śruti works are Vedic texts that were previously cognised by śruti authors but have since been lost, i.e., that śruti are veda-mūla, originating in the Vedas. In the process, Kumārila rejects the possibility of śruti originating in ‘personal experience’ (anubhava), which here clearly stands for yogic perception and omniscience, his favourite topics for scholarly polemic. Śaṅkara, however, accepts both possibilities, while clearly favouring perception:
**Itihāsa-purāṇa**, insofar as it is possible that they are based on mantra and artha-vāda, 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, *smṛti*s say that Vyāsa and others deal with the gods directly.

This is the closest language to Jīva’s turn of phrase that I have been able to find. Śaṅkara 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.

Still, the *śruti-smṛti* distinction remains operative for Śaṅkara, 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: višeṣataś cātra *śruti*-vidvad-anubhavāv api pūrvam eva pramāṇi-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 *īdyase* in the phrase kṛṣṇācayutānanta-viṣṇu-nāmabhīr *īdyase*, ‘You are praised with the names ‘Kṛṣṇa’, ‘Acyuta’, ‘Ananta’, ‘Viṣṇu’, with munibhir vedaś 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.

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 Vaikuṇṭha 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 Vaikuṇṭha (teśāṁ parama-vidusāṁ sprhāpadāvastheṣu teṣu śrī-vaikuṇṭha-puruṣeṣu kasyā api bhagavat-ānanda-śakter vilāsamayatvam 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.
The collective import of this is that vādusā-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 Śiṅva’s definition of vādusā-pratyakṣa accommodates the argument about the entrance of the eternal word through perception by the Vedic rṣis, insofar as Śiṅva uses vādusā-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 Sarva-saṅvādīnī chapters on epistemology, Śiṅva 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 vādusā-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 vādusā-pratyakṣa as a consummate perceptual experience (anubhava) is predicated on the study of the Vedas, in Śiṅva’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 Śiṅva 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-nirdhārānam. ... tac ca vijñānena tad-anubhāvenāpi yuktaiṁ grhaṇa (p.235; the boldface represents the Bhāgavata original glossed by Śiṅva)—where it is knowledge as what is ascertained as true by means of scripture that is subsequently experienced. Insofar as vādusā-pratyakṣa is experience, it is paradigmatic rather than historical experience, one whose epistemic foundation is scripture.

Thus, although I am secure that Śiṅva took a cue for his definition of vādusā-pratyakṣa from Śaṅkara’s Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya on 1.3.33, and by that much that tan-mūlatvā involves a bahuvrihi, 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 ([brahmaṇah] śāstra-yonitvāt) which Śaṅkara (1910, Vol. I, pp.13–14) reads both as a tatpuruṣa and a bahuvrihi 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.