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

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

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I am honored by Mark Siderits’ response to my article¹ and thankful to him for the opportunity it affords me to clarify the arguments and develop the theses presented therein further. My discussion focuses primarily on a pair of epistemological theses drawing attention to what we can and cannot perceive.² The negative thesis is that we cannot perceive particulars, and, indeed, the very idea of “perceiving a particular-as-such” (which represents the position of some Buddhist philosophers, specifically Yogācāra-Sautrāntikas) is incoherent. The positive thesis, which draws its inspiration from the Navya-Naiyāyikas, is that we can perceive *only* universal features. Siderits focuses his response on the negative thesis. He does not explicitly complain about the positive thesis, although, being an enthusiast for the Buddhist approach, he cannot help but be suspicious about it. He complains that the argument for the negative thesis is wanting, for I seem to have “misconstrued those realist intuitions that stand behind the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika.” Not only that, in section 2 of his response, he claims that my argument rests on a controversial thesis that presupposes a mistaken internalism about *conscious content*. I will argue that the difficulties Siderits raises for my argument are based on a misinterpretation of the central claim that underlies the argument for the negative thesis. This, in turn, will help to develop further the argument for my positive thesis.

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

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

distracts us from the *epistemological* concerns raised in my earlier paper, so I will not examine those differences here.⁴

Siderits rightly emphasizes the mind-independence of Nyāya universals: the thesis is indispensable to their metaphysics. Nyāya holds that some universals, namely those that pick out generic properties, are objectively real. Real universals are not *mere* mental constructions (figments of our imagination, as the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika puts it), or *mere* abstractions formed by putting together the common features of real particulars. Using the typical example of “cowness,” the Naiyāyika explains that when we observe cows we not only grasp “that particular,” we also grasp “cowness” as the common character manifested in distinct particular cows. For the Naiyāyikas, cowness is an example of a real universal: it presents a simple, indivisible property present in every cow and is directly grasped whenever we perceive a particular cow. Real universals are simple unanalyzable properties that exist “out there” and are cognized in perception. They are not complex ideas put together by the mind, and so in this sense they are mind-independent.

However, to say that universals are mind-independent does not amount to saying that the mind cannot be implicated in their perception. Siderits’ sympathies lie with the Buddhists, and, like them, he holds that since perception is our link with mind-independent reality, the perceptual link must be independent of any intervention by the mind. Nyāya universals are not “mind-independent” in *this latter* sense. The Naiyāyikas hold that the perception of universals requires abstraction in singling out one feature or property from the *given*. Furthermore, they would agree that a subject’s perceptual grasp of universals is revealed in acquiring dispositional abilities to recognize other instances exemplifying the same property. The Naiyāyikas would readily admit a mental component for the perception of universals, since it is the best explanation for the presence of dispositional elements in the cognition and recognition of the common property possessed by several instances of the same universal.

In my article, I used an example given by Gaṅgeśa to show that the Navya-Naiyāyikas recognize that there are cases where the sense faculties and the mind cooperate immediately in the first moment of perception to enable determinate perception of a particular blue as the relevant qualifier or property of a disc.⁵ Gaṅgeśa uses this example to deny the causal necessity of indeterminate perception. He insists that this is an example of determinate perception because it exhibits a structured propositional form: the particular as qualified by a property. However, I want again to draw attention to a different aspect of this example: the mind is involved in the very first moment of perception, which, as I said earlier, “results in an instantaneous abstraction of structure: the awareness is that of a particular as a prototypical instance of a simple universal or property” (p. 204). Siderits interprets my claim as merely restating Gaṅgeśa’s point. I do not mean to deny the causal necessity of indeterminate perception, nor do I want to suggest that we perceive a propositional structure in the very first moment of perception. The point I wanted to make then, and reiterate now, is that in the first moment of perception we simply perceive only non-particular individuals.⁶ That is to say, *seeing-as* is not *seeing-that*.

Siderits aligns my views with those of Arindam Chakrabarti, who is also con-

cerned with the same problem: how can an indeterminate perception of an individual as such qualify as a cognitive state, given the problem of accounting for its intentional character. Surely, Siderits is right to point out that both Chakrabarti and I are concerned with the same problem. Nevertheless, our solutions to this problem diverge in important respects. Chakrabarti chooses to deny the need to posit indeterminate perception. My response is not so far-reaching. I only deny indeterminate perception of particulars-as-such, since it is impossible to cash out what it is for such a cognitive state to be intentional. The indeterminate perception of non-particular individuals qualifies as a cognitive state. In what follows, I shall show that my proposed requirement for a cognitive state to be intentional does not rely on controversial internalist assumptions. I then revisit my arguments for the negative and the positive theses in light of Siderits' discussion.

My main objection to the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika position is that it is impossible to make any sense of the claim that we are *aware of* distinct, unique, momentary particulars in perceptual cognition. The Buddhist delinks the awareness aspect from the intentional aspect of cognition and thus cannot answer the question "What is it that we are *aware of* in perceptual cognition?" In the second section of his response, Siderits complains that my objection is based on a mistaken claim that presupposes a controversial internalist thesis about conscious content. In addition to the uncontroversial claim that an internal state can qualify as cognitive only if it is "of" some object, Siderits alleges that I also require that the subject *think of* the state as being "of" that object in a particularly strong sense. This strong reading implicitly assumes controversial internalist theses about conscious content.

Perhaps such a charge can be made against someone who supports a strong reading of the claim that "the subject thinks of the state as being 'of' an object." In a strong reading, the content of the cognitive state must be consciously accessible by the subject so that she is in a position to say what her conscious states are *about*. As Siderits puts it, "the criterion of intentionality must be expressibility." There are passages in my discussion that clearly indicate that I do not endorse such a strong reading. In arguing for the negative thesis, I suggest that "the intentional aspect of perceptual cognition can be accounted for in terms of the cognizer's acquisition of *some* ability to differentiate between distinct particulars, for that provides us with the minimal basis for regarding the given in such experiences as consisting of distinct, unique particulars" (p. 201; emphasis added). In other words, we can say that the subject is thinking "of" an individual by an appeal to recognitional capacities acquired by the subject on account of perceptual experiences. The acquisition of such recognitional capacities may be manifested in the subject's behavior toward individuals presented on the very same or other possible perceptual occasions. The subject need not be *consciously aware* of acquiring such recognitional capacities: it is sufficient that she possess the relevant behavioral dispositions. And, of course, there is no further requirement that the cognizing subject is consciously aware of the identifying features of the individual presented on an occasion. As I put it, "we cannot demand that the cognizer must be in a position to offer necessary and sufficient criteria for the identification of distinct, unique particulars given on such

occasions" (p. 201). We can say that a subject *thinks of* or is *aware of* an individual on the basis of her acquisition of the *right kind* of behavioral dispositions. The behavioral dispositions are sufficient to account for the intentional aspect of perceptual cognitions. This minimal requirement does not commit me to any controversial internalist thesis about conscious content.

Even on this weaker reading of what it is for a state to be intentional and thus qualify as a cognitive state, we cannot make any sense of perceiving particulars-as-such. Siderits claims that, according to the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika view, the subject can manifest her cognitive grasp of the particular in the form of behavior toward the object (to be strict, toward other particulars, and bundles thereof, that are its effects). He admits that such behavior is mediated by determinate perception, which involves a conceptual construction of a propositional content: "this" as qualified by a "universal." He says, "Indeterminate perception of the pure particular is followed by a perceptual judgment expressible as 'This is a mango' and that in turn leads to behavior that satisfies my desire for mango. Determinate perception *alone* cannot explain this behavior." Since the object of a determinate perception is a conceptually constructed universal, and causally inefficacious, it cannot explain the satisfaction of desire. So the only way to explain the satisfaction of desire is to attribute intentionality to the initial indeterminate cognition. Perhaps Siderits is right to insist, like the Yogācāra-Sautrāntikas, that determinate perception *alone* cannot explain this behavior, but they fail to note that indeterminate perception *alone* cannot explain it either. This is because, by their own lights, the behavior (the desire for mango) *results from* and *is directed toward* a complex object: "this" as qualified by a "mango." The behavioral dispositions acquired on account of perceptual episodes are invariably mediated by determinate perceptual judgments, and thus they cannot be offered as grounds for attributing intentionality to the initial indeterminate perception. Thus, we must discard the very idea of an indeterminate perception of a particular-as-such as incoherent. Seeing a particular-as-such could not qualify as an intentional state, for we have no way of cashing out what the state is about.

Siderits, in his attempt to save the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika view from the charge of incoherence, appeals to controversial metaphysical assumptions about the nature of universals. This brings metaphysical disagreements between Buddhists and Naiyāyikas to the fore. In my article I was reluctant to appeal to metaphysical considerations, but now that they are in the picture they must be addressed.

Siderits writes that the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika aversion to universals (non-particular individuals) stems from their conviction that all aggregation involves mental construction. Universals are the product of the mind's tendency to hypothesize aggregates in the interests of cognitive economy "(the same tendency whereby we speak of a 'heap' of bricks instead of referring to each brick separately)." The Yogācāra-Sautrāntikas are right to suggest that the mind is involved in the cognition of universals, but they go doubly wrong in insisting that universals are merely aggregates of particulars that are heaped together arbitrarily by the mind. The analogy of the heap is misleading for it suggests that the cognizing mind arbitrarily aggregates particulars in a non-principled fashion solely in the interests of cognitive

economy. Furthermore, this presupposes the dubious thesis that there is a cognition of particulars-as-such that can be arbitrarily gathered together by the active mind. The Naiyāyikas would vehemently disagree with such a worldview. For them, the world consists of particulars, universals, and facts. Discrete individuals in the world exemplify properties and relations and thus instantiate real universals. Inspired by the Navya-Nyāya suggestion that the mind and the senses can cooperate instantaneously in the first moment of perception, I propose the following account of perception of universals, which will throw some light on this metaphysical debate as well as help bolster my positive thesis: we can perceive *only* non-particular individuals.

On a perceptual occasion, the interaction between the senses and the given results in a sensory impression that is instantaneously cognized (or recognized) by the mind as a non-particular individual. We can say that the cognitive grasp is *of* a non-particular individual on account of the subject's acquisition of a dispositional ability to recognize *another one of those non-particulars*. The recognitional capacities acquired by the subject to respond to "more of the same kind" can account for the intentionality of the perceptual state. The cognition of a non-particular individual in the very first moment of perception presupposes a prior dispositional grasp of the universal or at least some familiarity with some or other instance of the same universal. One may dismiss this apparent circularity, as Chakrabarti does, by saying that it is a conceptual requirement rather than an actual introspectible temporal predecessor to the perceptual episode.⁷ However, there is a way to avoid the circularity by appeal to forward-looking dispositions to behave appropriately in response to other non-particular individuals of the same kind.

The cognizing mind synthesizes the immediately presented individual with *possible* past and future individuals of the same kind. The synthesizing activity depends on abstracting a universal from the immediately presented non-particular individual. Although the mind is implicated in the cognition of non-particular individuals, there is no imposition of structure. The indeterminate perception of a non-particular individual is structured in the sense that the active mind unites the individual presented on a perceptual occasion with possible past and future non-particular individuals of the same kind. But the structure is not arbitrarily *imposed by* the mind. The structure is *exhibited by* the given and cognized by the joint activity of the senses and the mind in the first moment of perception. It is important to note that the structure grasped in the first moment of perception is non-propositional. In the first moment of perception there is not a cognition of three things: a particular-as-such, a universal or a property exemplified by the particular, and the relational tie that binds the particular and the universal together to result in a determinate perception. In the first moment of perception, there is simply a cognitive grasp *of* a non-particular individual.

In the last section of his response Siderits complains that he cannot see how my position can be reconciled with realism. He offers a specific argument based on the theory of error to insist that we had better not give up the very idea of indeterminate perception of individuals if we hope to be faithful realists.⁸ The theory of error tells

us something about the role of the mind and structure in cognition. The cognition of a state of affairs consists of grasping a relational complex: *this is F*. Such cognition may be veridical when it represents the relational complex that does, in fact, obtain, or it may be erroneous when it does not, in fact, obtain. Siderits takes this to mean that “even when we correctly represent how the individuals stand to one another, their being so represented involves the mental act of putting together, conceiving. And conception, too, is not immaculate.” Since the apprehension of a structured complex involves the “mental act” of putting together discrete individuals in a certain way, Siderits thinks that the only way to defend realist intuitions that are sacred to Naiyāyikas and Yogācāra-Sautrāntikas is to acknowledge that the individuals so structured are antecedently given in indeterminate perception.

Siderits is right to assert the premise, but his conclusion follows only if we grant further controversial metaphysical assumptions.⁹ The quote above indicates that Siderits agrees with the Yogācāra-Sautrāntikas that reality consists of discrete individuals. All structure is a figment of our imagination and thus is purely conceptual.¹⁰ Naiyāyikas would agree with the Buddhists that reality consists of discrete individuals, including particulars and universals, but disagree that particulars are heaped together arbitrarily to form universals. As we discussed above, non-particular individuals exhibit non-propositional structure and are cognized-as-such in perception. If the world really is structured into universals and facts, as faithful Naiyāyikas believe, we can claim to be realists without requiring that particulars be antecedently given in indeterminate perception.¹¹ Neither the perception of universals nor the representation of states of affairs *necessarily* requires an act of mental construction. Unless Siderits offers us an independent reason for why we should take the controversial assumptions on board, he has no legitimate grounds to insist that the only way to respect realist intuitions is to allow the indeterminate perception of individuals.

Siderits’ attempt to offer a parallel account of veridical and non-veridical (structured) cognitions fails to make the point that all representation of structure requires mental construction. In fact, his appeal to the theory of error uncovers a slip-up. It reveals an internalist prejudice: causal explanations are not justifications. In veridical perception we see a particular as qualified by a property, and our causal interactions with the world explain our perception of facts and knowledge of truths. No further justification is required, nor is there any reason to think that we need a parallel account of error and falsity. Siderits ought not to disown this important insight of the externalist turn, since he appeals to externalist considerations elsewhere in his discussion. Moreover, this externalist insight offers a promising route (indeed, one that Siderits takes) to cash out the intentional content of the cognitive states.

I have not addressed all the points raised by Siderits in his stimulating response to my article. His discussion is rich and informative on many points of detail that I have steered away from in my reply in the interest of parsimony. I hope this exchange results in further fruitful discussion on these important problems. Before I close the discussion, I will add that perhaps Siderits is right to complain that I have misconstrued the realist intuitions of the Yogācāra-Sautrāntikas. However, the point

of my article was to investigate the coherence of the epistemological thesis upheld by the Yogācāra-Sautrāntikas. The only metaphysical conclusion we can safely draw from that discussion is that the Yogācāra-Sautrāntika epistemological position fails to support the realist intuitions that are so dear to them. This is not to say that the realist intuitions cannot be defended, only that we must look for support elsewhere.

Notes

I am grateful to the Australian Research Council for providing funds for our project “Mindful Things: Cross Cultural Perspectives on the Mind,” which provided the forum for the discussion and development of these ideas. Special thanks is due to Dirk Baltzly, John Bigelow, Jacqueline Broad, and Fiona Leigh.

- 1 – Monima Chadha, “Perceptual Cognition: A Nyāya-Kantian Approach,” *Philosophy East and West* 51 (2) (2001): 197–209.
- 2 – In using the term “perception,” in the context of an epistemological discussion in Indian philosophy, one must be careful not to miss the distinction between indeterminate perception and determinate perception (perceptual judgments). Buddhists and Naiyāyikas agree that indeterminate perceptions qualify as perceptions, but there is a major controversy between the two schools about whether perceptual judgments are to be classified as perceptions or inferences. Most Buddhist schools hold that perceptual judgments are inferences. My use of the term “perception” stands for indeterminate cognitions unless it is qualified with the prefix “determinate.”
- 3 – Arindam Chakrabarti, in his “Non-Particular Individuals,” in *The Philosophy of P. F. Strawson*, ed. P. K. Sen and R. R. Verma (New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1995), uses the term “individuals” to encompass both particulars and universal instances. I am grateful to Siderits for bringing this discussion to my notice.
- 4 – I maintain, as before, that the coalition between Nyāya universals and Kantian concepts is spontaneous, once we choose to bypass the realist/nominalist debate. I chose to focus on epistemological theses at the cost of ignoring differences in details of grand metaphysical systems elaborated in the works of Kant, Naiyāyika, and Buddhist philosophers in an attempt to show how the world, the senses, and the mind cooperate to make room for perceptual experiences. The project is to combine the insights of Kant and the Naiyāyikas to put forward a philosophically respectable account of that which is cognized in perceptual experiences.
- 5 – For the purposes of this discussion, I follow the Naiyāyikas, who regard the mind as distinct from the self or conscious agency. The mind, or “inner sense” as they call it, is an instrument employed by a conscious agent (self) for cognizing external and internal sensory stimulations. The importance of this point will emerge in the discussion of some of the objections raised by Siderits.

- 6 – Siderits may complain that this is question-begging since the thesis is in question in our discussion. Perhaps it is so at this early stage, when I have not answered all his objections, but by the end of the discussion the point will stand.
- 7 – See Chakrabarti, “Non-Particular Individuals,” p. 141.
- 8 – In the foregoing discussion I admit that non-particular individuals are given to us in indeterminate perception, and thus Siderits may spare me for disrespecting the realist intuitions that are so dear to the Naiyāyikas.
- 9 – Both the assumptions reveal the characteristic Buddhist position defended by Siderits in this article and elsewhere.
- 10 – The preferred Yogācāra-Sautrāntika formulation of this assumption would replace the term “individuals” with “ephemeral particulars.” I think Siderits himself would prefer to use the term “individuals” given his hesitant agreement with my positive thesis. He writes that “there is something odd about the notion of perceiving a pure particular as such. There may well be good reasons for dismissing this as just one more version of ‘the myth of the given.’”
- 11 – It is possible that reality contains particulars and facts; however, the epistemological considerations discussed here cannot offer any support to these metaphysical claims. There may be independent considerations to support the claim that reality displays propositional structure in addition to non-propositional structure. But that is not my concern in this discussion.

Perceiving Particulars Blindly: Remarks on a Nyāya-Buddhist Controversy

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Introduction

The discussion by Mark Siderits in this issue—“Perceiving Particulars”—and two pieces by Monima Chadha—the first her article “Perceptual Cognition: A Nyāya-Kantian Approach” (Chadha 2001) and the second her reply to Siderits in this issue—have taught me much.¹ I have little to add beyond agreeing on the whole with Siderits and making a few tweaks concerning Nyāya. Chadha astutely captures the insight of Gaṅgeśa, the fourteenth-century Naiyāyika cited by her (and by Siderits): indeterminate perception does not have a “particular as such” as its object (*viśaya*), but only, as she says, a non-particular individual such as a universal or another qualifier that is in principle recurrent (recurrent out in the world), perceiv-