

## Chapter 6

### God

A noteworthy feature of the Nyāya tradition is its rational theology, the effort to prove the existence of God (īśvara) by argument. To use the language of Nyāya, it attempts to establish God's existence and some general sense of his nature through inference (anumāna), the second of the four knowledge sources, in contrast to sacred texts, which are one subtype of testimony (śabda). In the early school, a few theistic arguments are developed by commentators in connection with sūtras 4.1.19–21, the "theistic sūtras." Beginning with Udayana, a separate, complex literature emerges, with dozens of arguments. Since in the Nyāya-sūtra itself, not including the commentaries, the Lord is not invoked outside the theistic sūtras, some modern scholars have speculated that Nyāya was originally atheistic or at least agnostic. The entire classical tradition, however, takes the sūtras to endorse a brand of theism, and our commentators use them to launch a rational theology centered on the notion of īśvara, a being who assembles the manifest world out of eternal, indivisible atoms and governs it according to the karmic merit of individual selves.

Vātsyāyana, our earliest commentator, reads the sūtras as devoted to showing compatibility between God's power and karma. He does not argue in any detail to establish the existence of īśvara, although he does sketch out the creator's nature. But Uddyotakara and all later classical commentators argue explicitly and elaborately that God exists while also articulating in broad outline what they see as the divine nature.

Nyāya's theology seems rather minimalist compared to, say, Vedānta's notion of Brahman, the Absolute. The Nyāya principle seems to be to avoid theological pronouncements

beyond what is necessary for its explanations, and we may suspect that there were many Naiyāyikas who, to one degree or another, had more robust theological commitments than are expressed here. Some were Vedāntins, such as Vācaspatiśrī who wrote a brilliant commentary within the school of Advaita Vedānta.

Inference is the main knowledge source in Nyāya discussions of īśvara. While our philosophers sometimes cite sacred texts, in particular certain Upaniṣads, and some hold that there is possible a mystical awareness of God as a kind of yogic perception, the mainstream attitude is that when trying to prove something within metaphysics and the deepest truths of a world view, inference must be the knowledge source that plays the crucial role. Thus, Nyāya's rational theology is dominated by a concern to find the best provers of God's existence. The one that comes to receive the most attention is sometimes called the argument from product-hood: earth and the like are products, like a pot. As a product, earth and the rest require a conscious agent capable of putting their parts together, down to atoms, which do not naturally join up. Naiyāyikas conclude that the only being fit to bring about the order that we know as the world is God, an all-pervasive, unembodied spirit or self.

Our theistic sūtras are embedded within a long discussion of causation and the origins of the world as we experience it (see the outline of the Nyāya-sūtra in Appendix A). The topic of causation is introduced through a concern with rebirth and the karma caused by action. Our sūtras, 4.1.19–21, then take up the role of īśvara, God, in relation to factors that influence the unrolling of an individual's life. The issue is the relationship between dispositions made by past human action (karma) and the power and grace of God (īśvara) when it comes to one's future lot. However, Uddyotakara takes the opportunity here to talk about a wider scope of God's activity, to include God as a causal factor for practically everything. Nevertheless, our commentators agree minimally that the first two sūtras voice competing claims, respectively that God has exclusive determinative power, and that no human action does. A third position synthesizes the two and presents

*the accepted Nyāya view: one's actions shape one's future birth through the creation of karma but only if the karma is actuated by God.*

**4.1.19: God is the sufficient cause, since we find that human action sometimes does not come to fruition.**

**4.1.20: No, that is wrong, since in the absence of human action there is no fruition.**

**4.1.21: That, too, is not a good reason, since fruition is actuated by God.**

**Vātsyāyana [228.3–16]:** God grants causal power to what has been done by human beings. That is, for an individual who is acting for a certain karmic fruit, God makes that fruit come forth. If God did not, human action would be karmically fruitless. Thus, what humans do is not sufficient for karmic fruition, **since fruition is actuated by God**, and yet **in the absence of human action there is no fruition**.

God is distinct from other selves owing to his special qualities. God is most akin to a self; it doesn't make sense to think of him as something else. But he is different from other selves in that demerit (*adharma*), mistaken cognition, and delusion are absent, while he is perfect in merit (*dharma*), knowledge, and yogic concentration and accomplishment (*samādhi*). As a consequence of his merit and concentration, he possesses lordliness in the form of the eightfold yogic powers (*siddhi*), such as the ability to make oneself as small as an atom. His merit (*dharma*), which conforms to his intention, activates the merit and demerit collected in each individual self as well as in gross elements such as earth. And so God's irresistible will in creating should be understood as enacting what individuals have themselves done; that is to say, it is not insulated from the influence of what individuals themselves have done.

God is a trustworthy authority. His relationship to creatures is like that of a father to his progeny. His nature is not to be thought of as something other than that of a self. None of his properties aside from knowledge could serve as an inferential mark proving his existence, and from sacred tradition

we know that God is a perceiver, a knower, and omniscient. And if the Lord were entirely beyond the range of perception, inference, and scripture, who could ever demonstrate that he was not knowable through a characteristic like knowledge?

If one proposed that God's creative actions occur without being influenced by what individuals have themselves done, this proposition would be refuted for all the reasons we have given against the view that bodies are born independently of karmic merit.<sup>1</sup>

*The Yoga-sūtra and other yogic texts mention eight powers or perfections (siddhi) that a yogically perfected being may possess. By describing God's greatness with yoga terminology, Vātsyāyana shows close affinity between Nyāya and Yoga, which will be shown again in chapter four of the Nyāya-sūtra (see Chapter 8, "The Right and the Good," of this volume) when yogic samādhi (perfected concentration) is taken up.*

*Commonly, karmic merit is thought of as adṛṣṭa, "Unseen Force," which, according to the Mīmāṃsā school of Vedic exegesis, is a factor influencing absolutely everything that happens. Nyāya and other schools appear to have a similar view, except that a role for God as overseer is thought to be demanded.*

**Uddyotakara [432.14–433.3]:** We do not claim that God creates independently of karmic merit and the like. Rather, the Lord grants human action causal power. What is meant by *grants* here? When the time comes for what anyone has done to fructify karmically, the Lord accordingly apportions causal power at that moment. Anyone who would suggest that God acts with indifference to karmic histories would face unacceptable consequences such as the impossibility of liberation. But such consequences are avoided on the view we have advanced, namely, that God's creative action is in accord with karma. The rest is made clear in Vātsyāyana's *Commentary*.

When the sūtras say thus "**fruition is actuated by God**," the Lord is taken to be an efficient cause. An efficient cause is that which grants causal power to two other kinds of cause,

<sup>1</sup> Nyāya-sūtra 3.2.60–72.

the inherence and the co-inherence causes, as a shuttle or the like works on threads and their connections to make a piece of cloth.

*The idea here is that an efficient cause (the weaver along with his weaving tools) works on threads (the inherence cause) and the thread's own properties, which include connections with other threads (the co-inherence causes). By working with the other two causes, the weaver arranges things such that the threads and their properties give rise to a newly produced piece of cloth.*

**Uddyotakara** [433.3–16]: And so it may be asked, "If God is an efficient cause of the universe, then what is its immediate material cause?" The answer is that for earth and the like it is the manifest material cause in its most subtle form—what we call "ultimate atoms."

There is agreement about what is the manifest material cause, but the distinct nature of the efficient cause is yet controversial. While we propose that it is God's activity, various views are disputed by philosophers. Some say the efficient cause is time, others God, and others that it is nature itself. So given the disagreement about the specific cause, what then is the reasoned view? We say that it is God, for the knowledge sources support this view irrefutably.

Objection: But the existence of God isn't proven.

Answer: By this you appear to be trying to confound our position by suggesting that one must first prove God's existence and then by refuting rival views establish that he is the efficient cause. But we deny that this is the case. God's existence is implicit in the proposition that he is the world's efficient cause. The reasoning that establishes God's causality also establishes his existence. Something that doesn't exist cannot function as a cause.

Objection: What then is the proof of God's causality?

Answer: The following may be put forth:

1. Primordial matter, atoms, and karma have to be directed by a conscious agent before they can function,
2. Since they are insentient,
3. Like an axe.

4. As axes, due to insentience, cut only when directed by an axeman, so too do insentient things, such as primordial nature, atoms, and karma, come to function.
5. Therefore, they too are directed by a conscious agent as a cause.

*Having provided now a fundamental argument—namely, that insentient causes demand sentient guidance—Uddyotakara goes on to reject competing proposals for an efficient cause of the universe. One is Sāṃkhya's primordial matter (pradhāna), which is claimed to unfold of its own accord for the sake of the selves that populate creation. Another is atomism, the atoms themselves considered simply to come together under the influence of Unseen Force (karma) without need for a superintending God. Uddyotakara's refutations delve into details of each proposal. Here let us note only that the general principle motivating his refutations is that structured effects require conscious agency within the causal complex sufficient to produce them. He often repeats that the problem with the alternative proposals is that they identify only insentient (acetana) causal factors. Even Unseen Force or karma is insentient, as it is a kind of informational state and moral vector that is generated by the efforts of conscious beings. As such, it cannot function without superintending intelligence.*

*Next, Uddyotakara responds to questions and objections that allow him to develop his theology and, in particular, answer the question of why God creates the world. His position is close to that of the British philosopher Alfred North Whitehead: It is God's intrinsic nature to create. Here he explicitly differentiates his view from Vedānta, in its contention that the world is God's līlā, "play."<sup>2</sup>*

**Uddyotakara** [437.14–438.13]: Objection: What purpose could the Lord have in creating the world? For we find that in everyday life people act out of some particular concern, thinking, "I will gain this," or "I will avoid that." God, however, need not avoid anything, as he is free from pain and suffering. Nor need he gain anything, as he has complete self-mastery and control.

<sup>2</sup> Vedānta-sūtra 2.1.33.

Reply: Some say that creation is for the sake of play, that the Lord creates the universe as a kind of sport or pastime. But this is wrong. For play is done for the sake of enjoyment by those who would lack enjoyment without it. And it is false that the Blessed One would seek enjoyment in this way, since, as has been said, he suffers no unhappiness. Those who are unhappy engage in amusements to become happy.

Others say that creation is for the sake of revealing the glory of the Lord. They think that God creates the manifold universe as a testament to his glory. This is similarly wrong. For the Lord would not gain even a hint of distinction by means of his glory being revealed (to the likes of us), nor would he lose anything by not revealing it.

Why, then, does he create? The proposal that cannot be faulted is that he does so because that is his very nature. As elements like earth function by their own nature in acts such as providing support, the Lord is also active in accord with his nature. The fundamental truth about him is that it is his intrinsic nature to act.

Objection: Then because of his intrinsic nature God would have to be always active (and there could be no *pralaya*, no periodic dissolution of the world, along with other unacceptable consequences). . . .

Response: Our view does not suffer such a fault, because we understand God to possess intelligence. Being intelligent, as we have explained, is included in the Lord's intrinsic nature. And to be intelligent means to act with sensitivity to specific factors. Such sensitivity ensures that God does not do everything all at once nor the same thing all the time. . . . Something happens when all the causal factors sufficient for it are in place. Something whose causal conditions are not all present does not happen. Not everything has its causal factors in place simultaneously with everything else. Thus our view does not face the unfortunate consequence that everything would happen all at once. In acting, the Lord looks to the proper time for the manifestation of karmic merit and demerit. That is to say, he looks to the conditions sufficient to bring something about. This includes the creatures who have accumulated karmic merit, the right time

for the ripening of the merit and demerit that belongs to individuals, and the absence of conditions that would block such manifestation.

*Later portions of Uddyotakara's long commentary on sūtra 4.1.21 consider where God would best fit within Nyāya's categories. He argues that the theistic proof presupposes that God possesses knowledge, and is thus a property-bearing substance and specifically a self. Uddyotakara further considers the uniqueness of God's knowledge, arguing that it is not produced by any kind of physical or mental mechanism and is thus unlimited, as is required for the creative function. He also considers whether it is better to regard God as liberated or bound, concluding that these terms do not neatly apply to a being who has never been bound to begin with. God is a unique self, with special properties, although there are properties, such as number—God has the property of being a single being—that God shares with other beings and individual selves.*

**Uddyotakara [438.22–440.6]:** Question: . . . Is God a substance or in another category such as quality, or is he something entirely different?

Answer: God is a substance, since he possesses the quality of knowledge, like other quality-possessing substances.

Question: Since he possesses knowledge, is he just another self?

Answer: No, he is a special self because of his distinct qualities. As earth and the like are substances yet not selves because of their special properties, so there is a distinction between the Lord and ordinary selves. He is not just another self.

Question: What are his distinct qualities?

Answer: Some say that (he has the qualities of a perfected yogin). . . . In any case, he excels other selves by having eternal knowledge. It is this quality that makes him unique. Other qualities like number, are shared with other beings. God has six main qualities (number, extension, pervasiveness, distinctness, conjunction, and disjunction), like ether.

Question: What evidence (*pramāṇa*) is there that God has eternal knowledge?

Answer: The inference already provided, that atoms come to function as they must because an intelligent cause superintends them.

Question: But that proves an intelligent cause. What proves that the knowledge is eternal?

Answer: That it's not possible that God's attention be restricted to individual objects. Cognitions such as ours that are restricted to individual objects depend upon a collection of causes, including a body, in order to come about. But we see that the Lord's knowledge cannot be restricted to individual objects when he produces various effects simultaneously, such as the simultaneous production of enormously variegated vegetation. This wouldn't be possible if the Lord's knowledge were restricted to individual objects. . . .

Question: But if God has knowledge, wouldn't this mean he also has a body?

Answer: If we posited that to be the case, we could not avoid declaring whether such a body is eternal or non-eternal. If we said non-eternal, that would entail that God is subject to karmic merit and demerit (which govern the production of bodies), and that would not be the "God" we accept. If, on the other hand, we were to accept that the body God had is eternal, we would propose something contrary to experience (all bodies we have encountered being non-eternal instead). Better than this is to posit eternal knowledge (which, being uncaused, doesn't necessitate having a body). . . .

. . . And without the Lord's having such knowledge, the world could not have been created. Moreover, this knowledge, grasping all things, past, present, and future, is perceptual in character, not inferential or testimonial. For the Lord does not infer or rely on testimony. Nor is it a matter of memory and mental dispositions, as the Lord's knowledge is eternal.

**Vācaspatimiśra** [563.7]: When Uddyotakara says that the Lord's knowledge is perceptual in character, he means that it is unmediated and direct. It is not that it is produced by eyes (etc.), since the Lord's knowledge is eternal. To call it "perceptual" is an analogical extension of the term.

*On the question whether God should be considered liberated or bound:*

**Uddyotakara** [440.11–12]: Is the Lord bound or liberated? He is not bound, as he is entirely free from pain and suffering. And since he is not bound, he cannot be liberated either. It is only the bound who are liberated, and the Blessed One is not bound in any way. Thus he is not liberated.

*Next let us look at some of Vācaspatimiśra's development of themes and concerns introduced by Uddyotakara. A prime worry is to show that one can reasonably employ inductive reasoning to infer a unique type of being. A challenger is made to argue that if Nyāya's God is a self who knows and acts, then like all selves who know and act, God must have limitations. Chief among these is reliance upon a physical body. Vācaspati denies that this must be the case. What is crucially at stake in the controversy is the power of inductive reasoning to discover unique and novel truths, while relying on correlations known through common experience. Vācaspati devotes himself to defending the possibility of inferring a unique creator God without violating basic rules of inference.*

*First, however, he introduces his own formulation of the argument for God's existence from producthood, putting it alongside Uddyotakara's—which is, as we have seen, that primordial nature, atoms, and the like are insentient, like an axe, and require a conscious agent to function.*

**Vācaspatimiśra** [563.11–19]: This is what our revered teacher (Uddyotakara) is saying: . . . there are three kinds of things in this universe: (a) those known to have an intelligent maker, such as palaces, watchtowers, gates, and arches; (b) those known not to have an intelligent maker, such as atoms and ether; and (c) those for which having an intelligent maker is in doubt, such as bodies, trees, earth, and mountains. There is doubt about this third group's having an agent as a cause, because it is something that is yet to be known or because it is disputed, and no *pramāṇa* or defeater that would settle the matter has been identified. And it is not the case that mere non-perception is enough to refute God's existence, as

there may be existing things that by nature are imperceptible, such as atoms. And so we argue:

1. Things that are the subject of dispute, such as bodies, trees, mountains, and the ocean, have a maker who is knowledgeable about their material cause,
2. Since they are produced; alternatively, since their material cause is insentient.
3. Whatever is produced—and whatever has a material cause that is insentient—is, like a palace, preceded by a maker who is knowledgeable about the material cause.
4. Things that are the subject of dispute, such as bodies, trees, mountains, and the ocean, are produced and have insentient material causes.
5. Therefore, they too are preceded by a maker who is knowledgeable about their material cause.

*Vācaspatimiśra proffers here two different provers within one argument: that the material objects in question are produced, and that they have insentient material causes. He goes on to argue that his proof is not beset on either alternative by logical defects or faults. Then he has an interlocutor claim that the nature of the supposed creator is incompatible with the materials to be used in creation being known, since having a body is a condition required to have knowledge.*

**Vācaspatimiśra** [564.9–12]: Opponent: Knowledge, whose object is a material cause such as earth<sup>3</sup> or the like, would have to be produced (like all knowledge) by causal factors that include a self/*manas* connection and a body. In the absence of any of these, cognition would be absent. Therefore, your argument should be rejected. Furthermore, my point, which is established, is not defeated by any consideration that you have advanced. If the collection of causal factors including a body, etc., were not in place, then such knowledge too would not occur, as necessarily when heat is absent there is no fire, as the source of the burning is absent.

<sup>3</sup> Reading *kṣiti* instead of *kṣipta* (564.9).

*Arguments for God's existence that begin with our experience of agential creation seem subject to the objection that all such agents have features that God should not have but would have to have if the argument is sound. This is, for example, a major strategy in David Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, which is famous for refutations in this vein. In India, both Buddhists and Mīmāṃsakas contend that having a body is a necessary condition for knowledge, as found in common experience, as heat is necessary for combustion. In our experience, all agential causation involves the agent's having direct experience of the materials upon which he or she works. A potter sees and touches the pot she crafts. And all such producers or creators have bodies without which knowledge would not arise. Nyāya's God would thus have to have a physical body if the argument is to be consistent with the supporting evidence.*

*In classical Indian logical discourse, the common term for entailment is "pervasion" (vyāpti). To say that x is pervaded by y means that every x instance is also a y instance. Being a cow is "pervaded by" being a mammal. Immediately below, Vācaspatimiśra accepts a challenger's claim that when ordinary knowledge is produced, a body/mind complex is required. But God's knowledge is unlike ours in that it is uncaused and eternal. Since it is not produced, God's knowledge does not need a body/mind complex. It and thus knowledge in general is not "pervaded" by the knower having a mind and a body. That God would have to have a body is thus not entailed.*

**Vācaspatimiśra** [564.12–15]: Answer: No. It is not true that denial of a non-pervasive factor requires one to deny something that is not pervaded by it. If something could be counted a cause when it is not pervasively associated with a certain effect, then behold, our entire practice of inferential reasoning—which depends on the pervaded/pervader relationship—would be destroyed. Your objection might be right if the cosmic maker's knowledge of material causes such as earth was an effect, but we hold that his knowledge is eternal. Therefore, the absence of a body does not entail the absence of the knowledge required. . . .

The challenger argues next that the class of objects in the reference class that are supposed to show correlation between "being a product" and "having a conscious maker" has no example of a God-like maker. Therefore, to infer a special God-like maker would cross the boundaries of legitimate inference. Vācaspatimiśra responds that in all inductive reasoning there is an element of inference to the best explanation that allows one to extend the correlations to a novel case that may well have special properties. This procedure relies on what is called pakṣa-dharmatā-bala, "from being a property of the inferential subject," or what is entailed in a property actually qualifying a specific subject of inference. Knowledge of pervasion (vyāpti = entailment) is not all that makes inference work. Such knowledge together with knowing that the proved property qualifies this particular inferential subject allows us to infer something new—something about a current subject as a novel case—from the proved property as its qualifier. Specific details about what's inferred may be filled out according to what else we know about the particular subject. For example, an anthropologist infers that footprints found in a rock stratum are humanoid, on the grounds that the prints have properties that are reliable indicators of human feet. Then she fills out details of the specific humanoids in question, such as migratory patterns or likely diet, according to what would be required for such creatures to be in a position to leave such traces in that area. Vācaspatimiśra says below, "(the maker has to have knowledge of) the simultaneity of production of effects throughout immeasurable and unlimited space at every place and location, effects perceptible and imperceptible in animals and plants and the organic world as a whole and so on" [565.14–15]. In other words, now that we have proved that human bodies, mountains, and the like are indeed produced, we may infer a maker who is capable of all this. No ordinary agent will fit the bill, but only a God-like maker.

**Vācaspatimiśra** [565.6–566.4]: Opponent: The property being produced entails being preceded by a maker knowledgeable about the material cause, etc., but nothing more, as seen in examples such as pots. You may establish this much only for things

such as earth. Where do you get the distinct property *having a maker with eternal knowledge that grasps all things*? For, it is not found in examples of things produced such as pots.

Response: From the property *being an action*, which holds for our perceptual experience of colors and so on, how do we get an inference proving the existence of sense organs? (The process is not direct.) For, we don't find that actions such as cutting prove that there are sense faculties. Rather, they prove the existence of things such as axes. But by force of *being a property of the inferential subject*, the inferential mark, *being an action*, does prove the existence of sense faculties, although, indeed, it is not found to belong to the property-possessing example. For, the fact that perception of color is an action means that it relies on an instrument that is capable of producing perceptual cognition. According to the principle of what's involved in *being a property of the inferential subject*, we are led to eliminate instruments such as axes, which do not have the proper character, and conclude that there are organs of sight and so on, although such things have not been known previously (in some other fashion).

The same holds here with the argument for God. If the maker's knowledge was not eternal (uncreated), and did not range over all things, there could not be what there is in fact: the simultaneous production of effects throughout immeasurable and unlimited space at every place and location, effects perceptible and imperceptible in animals and plants and the organic world as a whole and so on, from which we prove that the maker is God.

And such knowledge belonging to the Supreme Lord could not be produced by things that are themselves effects, created bodies and sense faculties like our own. We would have to conjure up yet another Lord to produce such a body that is capable of generating the knowledge in question, and this would entail an unavoidable difficulty, since before that second Lord we would need yet another to create *his* body, *ad infinitum*. It is better to propose a single, imperceptible being with eternal knowledge than innumerable imperceptible beings.

From this consideration alone, the proposal that there is an eternal body or eternal senses is also rebutted.

By this reasoning, what some say —

It may be that anything having the likes of  
structure has some kind of intelligent cause.  
But how from structure or the like could a *single*  
cause be proved?

—is also set aside. One who wishes to refute the omniscience of the maker could do so if fleshy eyes had the power to see atoms along with witnessing selves and the karma inhering in them. But there are no fleshy eyes with such capacity. Therefore, you would have to postulate many beings capable of perceiving such supersensible things who would be very different from us and our kind. It is better, for the sake of simplicity, to posit just one such being.

*Vācaspatimiśra is claiming in effect that the argument for God involves inductive reasoning along with inference to the best explanation as well as an appeal to simplicity (lāghava)—akin to what is sometimes called Ockham's razor—including avoiding the impossibility of an infinite regress. The argument is thus complex. But we may say that in a nutshell it is that a single bodiless creator with appropriate knowledge is the best explanation for the world as brought about.*

*Below, another imagined opponent proposes that there are counterexamples to the proof, cases that illustrate production of structured effects without intelligent agency. If these stand, Vācaspatimiśra's prover, being a product, would "deviate" from what he is trying to prove (see Chapter 9, "Debate," for more on inferential deviation). His response is that these sorts of cases are exactly what he is arguing about, and that they cannot, therefore, be used as counterexamples on pain of begging the question against him.*

**Vācaspatimiśra** [566.7–13]: Opponent: Your argument is beset by deviation, since we that without supervision the mind and senses produce cognition, without guidance, insentient milk flows of its own accord from old to young cow, and without conscious effort, trees flourish in the forest.

Reply: You cannot use these cases as counterexamples, as they are included within the inferential subject of our

very proof and are thus currently under dispute. And you cannot claim that intelligent agency is to be denied in this case because it isn't observed, in the way that we deny that a rabbit has a horn on its head because we don't see one. Since the Lord is not fit to be apprehended by ordinary perception, proof by non-perception does not apply here. And if we are to think that in general non-perception of something that someone is trying to prove is enough to rebut the proof, then inference would be finished! Of course, we accept the evidence of non-perception regarding something like a rabbit's horn, since such a horn is in principle perceptible, like the horns of horned animals such as calves.

*In Indian philosophy and logic, a "rabbit's horn"—an antler-like appendage on the forehead of a rabbit—is a stock example of something that doesn't exist and is universally known not to exist. Here, Vācaspatimiśra notes that we reject the existence of a rabbit's horn because we do not see one when we look at rabbits. Non-perception is enough to refute the existence of something perceptible. But, God is by nature imperceptible and could not be refuted by mere non-perception.*

*In the next passage, Vācaspatimiśra's imagined opponent continues to press the charge that his reasoning crosses the boundaries of legitimate inferential practice, charging this time that not all cases of being produced correlate with having an intelligent agent.*

**Vācaspatimiśra** [566.14–20]: Opponent: It is false that the simple fact of *being produced* is naturally concomitant with *having an intelligent agent*. Rather, it is only a particular kind of *being produced*. When someone sees something that she has not personally witnessed being made, she still knows, upon consideration, that it has been made, by inference. This holds for things such as pots, whose existence or absence is known to conform to the existence or absence of an intelligent maker. But it does not hold for those things that have the unqualified property, *being produced*, such as organic bodies and earth, since these other things are not experienced as being associated with makers in the way you propose. Therefore, the general property, *being produced*, is tied to *having an intelligent maker* only because there is an

additional condition (*upādhi*) that qualifies it. There is no natural relation of concomitance between the two but only one that is supervenient, that is, one that requires this special qualification. Therefore, *being produced* is not fit to establish your claim. If it were, there would be the unacceptable consequence that one could infer fire from the pale color of smoke—which is also found in lotuses and doves!—because it supervenes on the natural concomitance between smoke and fire.

*An upādhi, or "additional condition," is not a counterexample but would entail a counterexample. While smoke is enough to infer fire, the reverse does not hold. The presence of fire is not sufficient for smoke, since something else must be present, namely, wet fuel. Thus, from knowledge of fire, we cannot infer smoke unless we can be sure that there is also wet fuel. A commonly cited counterexample entailed by the upādhi is a hot ball of iron, where it is thought there is fire (accounting for the heat) but not smoke because there is no wet fuel.*

**Vācaspatimiśra** [566.21–567.9]: Response: Here is our answer, which you should think about carefully. Consider the two options: Is the particular kind of *being produced* that you admit correlated (a) with intelligent agency in general, or (b) only with that intelligent agency previously experienced as connected to it? If the first, then yours is our position, precisely what is accepted by us who maintain that things like organic bodies and the earth have an intelligent maker as a cause. For, one cannot shamelessly claim that an effect and its cause are not correlated. Then, to consider the second option, if this particular kind of *being produced* is correlated only with things that have already been directly experienced to have intelligent makers, then people who have not witnessed something's being made would not be able to know it has a maker inferentially. Only that very cloth that has been experienced as conforming to the presence or absence of an intelligent maker could be inferred to be the product of intelligent agency, and not some other one in the market.

Opponent: Well, maybe. Then what we should say is that things of *the same kind* are perceived to correlate positively

and negatively, although the conformity of some specific thing in question is not directly experienced. Being of the same kind, it would be similar.

Reply: Come now, this is not a stick with which you can threaten us, sir! Things such as pots, insofar as they are *produced*, correlate positively and negatively with *having a maker with intelligence*. Something else of the same kind, namely, things produced, such as organic bodies and the earth, would be similar, that is, have a maker with intelligence!

Opponent: Then what we should say is that things of the same kind as pots correlate with an intelligent maker in being produced.

Reply: That is clearly objectionable, since in that case palaces and the like could not be inferred to have had an intelligent maker on the basis of having been produced: they are not of the same kind as pots. We may accept that something not directly experienced as correlating positively and negatively with having an intelligent maker can be inferred to be so, but only so long as things of its same kind are seen so to correlate. But now how is it that things such as palaces that have been made can be considered to have intelligent makers whereas things such as organic bodies and the earth cannot? We may assume that in both cases there has been no direct experience of correlations. There is indeed no difference at all with respect to being of the relevant type (namely, everything that has been made, *kārya-jātiya*). . . .

*Dense discussion follows that considers God's standing with respect to the karma inhering in each individual self. The Lord must be able to "read" it and thus apportion justly one's lot in life, in particular one's future birth. Two standard relationships that exist in Nyāya metaphysics, conjunction (sam yoga) and inherence (samavāya), appear problematic since God is said to be transcendent, untouched by karma whether good or bad. But he has to be related to it in some way or other in order to know and actualize it, according to Nyāya theory. Vācaspatimiśra suggests the relation inherence-in-the-conjoined-conjunct. As an example, a mother can know of a child's fever by kissing his forehead. Here, the mother and child's bodies are related by conjunction, by skin-to-skin*

contact. She then knows of her son's high temperature because of the warmth of his body. Warmth is a quality that inheres in the body of the son, which is itself in conjunction with the mother. She thus knows of his temperature through inherence-in-the-conjoined-conjunct.

In the case of God's knowledge of individuals' karma, the following relation is suggested. God is in contact with the karma in individual selves by way of his contact with selves. The relation to it is even further displaced in that it occurs through contact with the atoms that make up the bodies that are conjoined with selves who are not liberated. Such a displaced relationship captures appropriately the distance between God and karma. Otherwise, it would seem that God would be stained by karma, contrary to the teaching of scripture (e.g., Bhagavad Gītā 4.14). Vācaspatimiśra makes room for distinct ways in which God may control on-going creation without being tainted. And in his view, as in Vedānta and most Buddhist schools too, while there are cycles of creation and destruction, the manifest world is strictly beginningless. Mainstream Hindu theodicy has it that God is never absolutely free to create a world without pain and suffering, as this would ignore selves' karma which he activates at the time of a new round of creation. It is thought that even at the time of a cosmic destruction (pralaya), karmic traces remain in seed form until the next creative cycle begins.

In the following passage, Vācaspatimiśra's goal is not to offer a final, definitive account of the nature of God or his knowledge, but to argue that the impossibility of a theory that is in every detail worked out satisfactorily should not be cited as a reason to deny God's ongoing causal role. The example provided of a healer invokes a common idea that there are people who are able to remove poison by means of chanting mantras, thus not having to touch it directly.

Vācaspatimiśra [568.16–22]: . . . The Lord is capable of over-seeing karmic merit and demerit which inhere in other selves owing to a connection he has with them. For the operative relationship is not direct. It need not be restricted to the two, conjunction and inherence, but could also be inherence-in-the-conjoined-conjunct. Atoms and other primitives have to

be in contact with the (all-pervading) Lord. And selves are connected to atoms (by having bodies composed of atoms). Karmic merit and demerit inhere in selves. Alternatively, the relationship could be inherence-in-what-is-conjoined on the part of God and selves, the possibility of a beginningless conjunction being realized. Furthermore, God would take up karmic merit and demerit without incurring diminution of his own merit (dharma). Alternatively, he would control atoms, which are disposed to initiate their peculiar types of effect, like someone who knows how to extract poison that is set to produce its peculiar effect. By this, his connection with material causes that are conscious is also explained.

*Vācaspatimiśra closes by suggesting that his proof is merely an extension of Uddyotakara's work. And he claims the proof is confirmed by leading accounts of God found in sacred testimony.*

Vācaspatimiśra [568.22–569.15]: Consciousness is the prover provided by Uddyotakara through indirect indication. Reasons such as *being produced* should be understood as implied according to context.

Sacred tradition reinforces our argument:

This is the Imperishable, Gargī, on whose order the heaven and earth remain separate.<sup>4</sup>

The one God producing heaven and earth.<sup>5</sup>  
He reflected to himself: Let me, who am one, become many. Let me propagate.<sup>6</sup>

And so on. And there are traditional texts (*smṛti*) as well.

The unknowing creature is not the Lord. Moving away from the self (*ātman*), impelled by the Lord, they go towards happiness or distress, towards heaven or hell.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 3.8.9.

<sup>5</sup> *Rg Veda* 10.81.3.

<sup>6</sup> *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.2.3.

<sup>7</sup> *Mahābhārata* 3.20.28.

And the Veda reveals that the Lord's knowledge is eternal, without a cause.

Without feet or hands, he is swift, he who comprehends. Without eyes, he sees. Without ears, he hears. He knows what is to be known, but no one knows him. They speak of him as the Great One, the Supreme Person.<sup>8</sup>

And so on. These very texts demonstrate that the Lord is bodiless.

I have elaborated only what was left out by Uddyotakara, the author of the *Vārttika*, and this is now done.

### Suggestions for Further Reading

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John Vattanky, *Gangeśa's Philosophy of God*. Madras: Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1984.

<sup>8</sup> *Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 3.19.

### Study Questions

1. How do the commentators interpreting the theistic sūtras utilize the notion that God actuates human karma?
2. What are Uddyotakara's and Vācaspatimiśra's formal arguments for God's existence?
3. What views inform Nyāya's contention that things made of insentient material require a conscious agent to form them?
4. Why does Uddyotakara deny that God creates the universe as a kind of play or amusement?
5. Into which ontological category does God fit according to Nyāya? Why?
6. In his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, David Hume argues as follows:

If we see a house, Cleanthes, we conclude, with the greatest certainty, that it had an architect or builder because this is precisely that species of effect which we have experienced to proceed from that species of cause. But surely you will not affirm that the universe bears such a resemblance to a house that we can with the same certainty infer a similar cause, or that the analogy is here entire and perfect.

Identify at least three specific instances where Uddyotakara's and/or Vācaspatimiśra's imagined challengers anticipate Hume's concern here. Do our commentators provide adequate responses?

7. Vācaspatimiśra argues that *being a property of the inferential subject* provides a basis to infer that God has unique properties that are unlike makers found within common experience. What is this principle of inference, what are other examples, and is it acceptable?
8. Why do Naiyāyikas claim that God's knowledge is eternal and uncaused?