

Understanding a philosophical text: the problem of “meaning” in Jayanta’s *Nyayamañjarī*, book 5

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Contents

| | |
|---|----------|
| 1 Introduction | 2 |
| 1.1 Critical edition of non-literary texts | 2 |
| 1.2 A specialist approach is always needed: A case of misinterpretation | 3 |
| 1.3 The case of philosophy of language and linguistics | 4 |
| 1.3.1 Whitney’s misunderstanding of Pāṇini | 4 |
| 1.3.2 Approaching Indian philosophy of language from without | 5 |
| 1.4 A European comparison | 7 |
| 2 A case study: Jayanta on meaning and reference | 8 |
| 2.1 Jayanta’s <i>Nyāyamañjarī</i> , book 5 | 9 |
| 2.2 A point of departure: the question of “naïf referentialism” | 9 |
| 2.3 Words and things in NM 5 | 10 |
| 2.4 A problem of synonymy? | 11 |
| 2.5 Word, meaning and referent? | 13 |
| 2.6 Language and reality according to Jayanta | 13 |
| 2.6.1 The Buddhist challenge | 13 |
| 2.6.2 Jayanta’s reply | 15 |
| 2.7 Internal evidence against terminological synonymy in NM 5 | 17 |
| 2.7.1 <i>vācya</i> | 17 |
| 2.7.2 <i>vastu</i> and <i>vāstava</i> | 17 |
| 2.7.3 <i>viśaya</i> | 21 |
| 2.7.4 <i>piṇḍa</i> and <i>vyakti</i> (or <i>viśeṣa</i>) | 22 |
| 2.7.5 <i>artha</i> | 24 |
| 2.7.6 <i>bāhya</i> and <i>bāhyārtha</i> | 26 |
| 2.8 A tentative solution | 27 |

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1 Introduction

What did Bhaṭṭa Jayanta want to say when he used different terms which could apparently all be translated as “meaning”? And how can we settle the issue? Inner consistency and comparison to related coeval texts are of key importance, but should not we also try to attain an increased awareness of the problematics at stake? The present study aims at addressing both the specific question and its more general outputs.

1.1 Critical edition of non-literary texts

Generally speaking, European¹ philologists have been mostly interested in the textual criticism and edition of literary texts rather than of non-literary ones. Such an attitude became predominant especially after the beginning of the 19th century, when the Romanticist canons influenced both arts and literature and the scientific disciplines devoted to their analysis. Within such canons, “beauty” was mostly considered worth of scholars’ attention, and only art and literature were viewed as having such quality. Therefore, the attention paid by the textual and literary critics to the literary tradition of the ancient civilizations, such as Classical Greece and India, exceeded by far the interest towards their technical writings: philologists dealt primarily with writings that could lead to aesthetic pleasure, and tended to disregard the remaining branches of the cultural heritage of the past. Thus, in many cases the non-literary or technical texts — ranging from architecture to culinary — of Greek and Latin authors have lacked any critical edition and scholars’ interest they deserved up to recent times. The Ancient Indian technical literature received even less attention.²

A deplorable consequence of such an attitude is the fact that the technical literature of the past, even when taken into consideration, was studied, translated and edited by authors mostly coming from a humanistic, philological background, with no specialised competence in the corresponding fields of knowledge. In many cases this disregard of the technical skills of the ancient authors, as well as the underestimation of the scientific training needed for their correct comprehension, led to a number of misunderstandings and, consequently, to some inappropriate emendations of the extant texts.

¹Throughout this essay, we will use “European” in a cultural and not merely geographical sense, including people based in countries (such as USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia) in which the European culture played the major role in shaping the society.

²Some noteworthy exceptions are still attested, especially in the field of Grammar and, later, Buddhist philosophical and religious texts; we wish to mention, for example, O. Böhtlingk’s work on the Ancient Indian grammatical tradition (which turned out to be a highly formalized scientific field), which started with his edition and translation of Pāṇini’s *Aṣṭādhyāyī*.

1.2 A specialist approach is always needed: A case of misinterpretation

As an example of an ancient technical text (from the European tradition) that has been correctly understood and fully investigated only a few years ago, when a specialist approach was applied to it, we may refer to the case of Archytas of Tarentum, an Ancient Greek scholar of the Pythagorean school, Plato's contemporary and fellow, who wrote a treatise on the nature of sound phenomena. Until recent times, the fragmentary remnants of this text had been studied and critically edited only by classical philologists who had a very average knowledge of modern acoustics. Not surprisingly, many of Archytas' statements were considered too confuse, unrealistic or simply wrong by the first editors. However, a recent study by C. Ciancaglini (1998) showed that what seemed senseless to the first editors of Archytas could be interpreted as a brilliant anticipation of today's scientific view if read by a reader skilled in contemporary acoustic theory. More specifically, what the first editors of Archytas did not realize was the fact that Archytas was not dealing with an abstract physical theory of sound (as scientists would do today), but rather tried to explain some concrete phenomena observable during sound *production* and *perception*. Indeed, if we admit that what he described is to be viewed as belonging to the domain of the psychoacoustics, then his seemingly odd or inaccurate observations suddenly become meaningful and also brilliant, and can be seen as anticipating modern achievements in this field.

Thus, for instance, when Archytas claimed that the pitch of a sound is directly correlated to something that he called "force" he was not confusing the frequency with the amplitude of the oscillation, as it could seem at first sight. He was instead describing quite accurately a phenomenon which is well known to the modern psychoacoustics, i.e., that of *perceived loudness contour*: the correlation between intensity and pitch within the human hearing apparatus is not flat, with frequency response of human hearing varying with amplitude. In order, for us, to perceive either a very high-pitched or a very low-pitched sound at a certain loudness level we need more sound energy comparing to the middle-range frequencies at the same loudness level. In other words, the extremities of the human auditory field require a major sound pressure for being heard. This is what Archytas stated in his treatise, even if only from a loosely empirical point of view. Instead, what his first editors had in mind is the abstract principle according to which the frequency of an oscillation is in no way correlated with its intensity. This is generally true, but does not apply to the specific case that Archytas had in mind, namely, the perception of sound by the human ear.

This example shows how a scientific approach to an ancient text can help us to interpret and appreciate possibly brilliant intuitions therein. Accordingly, we have to give up the assumption that every field of the ancient science is so primitive that no modern scientific education is needed in order to understand it.

Furthermore, not only our comprehension of the ancient texts is improved, but also the textual criticism in itself can benefit from such an approach. Indeed, the clearer we understand a text (apparently odd or meaningless), the fewer wrong or unneeded emendations we will conjecture. In this respect, a *lectio difficilior* repre-

sents a challenge for the reader who is called to give it a new interpretation through a deeper scientific analysis.³

To sum up, our point in this paper consists in defending the following assumptions:

1. ancient scientific treatises might be very smart and anticipating, and are therefore not to be considered “primitive” or “naïf” by default;
2. they deserve a thorough textual analysis and critical edition; if the existing editions have been prepared by non-experts they must be considered inaccurate and inappropriate;
3. the edition of such kinds of text requires, from the editors, specialised skills in the scientific fields they are dealing with.

Thus, for example, treatises on astronomy must be studied with the collaboration of astronomers, or, similarly, treatises on medicine must be interpreted with the collaboration of medical specialists: philologists alone are not enough. Such an approach might help us discover some non-obvious aspects of the ancient thought, and sometimes even allow us to recover a passage from the wrong readings possibly suggested by non-specialist editors.

1.3 The case of philosophy of language and linguistics

One could think that only the most technical writings of the ancient authors require a specialised approach, while many other topics can be easily understood by an average philologist with no specialist training in the corresponding field. Philosophy of language and general linguistics might be thought to be one of such “easy to understand” fields. Indeed, every well-educated adult speaker of a language is naturally induced to think that s/he can grasp the inner functioning of such a language thanks to her/his speaking abilities. However, this is not necessarily the case. Studies on language have developed enormously in the last two centuries and in no way are their arguments easy to grasp for a non-specialist. Ancient studies are often — especially in the case of Ancient Indian thought — at least as sophisticated and refined as the modern ones (as the technical sophistication of Pāṇini’s grammar easily shows).

1.3.1 Whitney’s misunderstanding of Pāṇini

To exemplify this point we can recall the case of the European reception of the Indian traditional syntactic theory, i.e., Pāṇini’s *kāraka* system. This grammatical device offers a description of the predicate and its arguments in a simple sentence based on a clear-cut distinction between linguistic *forms* and their *functions*, respectively, nominal morphology of the predicate’s arguments vs. their semantic roles. A good comprehension of this distinction has been reached by contemporary linguistics only a few decades ago with Ch. Fillmore’s notion of Deep Cases,

³See, e.g., the discussion of a lacuna in one of Archytas’ fragments by Ciancaglini (1998: §6).

and its later equivalents (see Fillmore 1968). Therefore, we must recognize Pāṇini as a brilliant grammarian who anticipated modern scientific achievements millennia ago (Pāṇini is usually dated to ca. 5th cent. BC).

The first Sanskritists who dealt with Pāṇini's grammar did not have enough skills in the linguistic theory in order to understand many points of Pāṇini's approach. Thus, Whitney totally failed to appreciate Pāṇini's *kāraka* device and, moreover, considered the morphology vs. semantics distinction a "difficult and dangerous method" of analysis.⁴ Whitney's prejudice against Pāṇini's tradition in general, and against this theory in particular has been proven totally untenable only after the contemporary linguistics had developed an analytic approach equivalent to Pāṇini's.⁵

By contrast, thanks to a more scientific awareness of the complexity of this topic, scholars who analyzed Pāṇini's *kāraka* device from a modern linguistic background were even able to use it for a better understanding of Pāṇini himself, e.g., by formulating some textual conjectures regarding the composition history of this part of Indian grammar (see Butzenberger 1995; Keidan 2012).

1.3.2 Approaching Indian philosophy of language from without

Generally speaking, Ancient Indian philosophy of language and grammar theory had reached such a high level of sophistication that contemporary studies on language can establish a direct dialogue with them. Such a dialogue would be a peer-to-peer conversation, not just a matter of historical or ethnographical curiosity. This means that a scholar dealing with Ancient Indian philosophy of language greatly enhances his/her chances to understand the texts s/he is dealing with if s/he has also a theoretical comprehension of the linguistic theories depicted in the text. For a European scholar, such a comprehension is, normally, acquired through the study of modern philosophy of language and linguistics.

An objection which could be raised in this connection (and had been raised by Kamaleswar Bhattacharya during the 15th World Sanskrit Conference, Delhi, January 2012) regards the need of the study of non-Indian linguistics in order to understand a Sanskrit treatise on language. Could not — is the implicit point in our case — the study of Ancient Indian linguistics be enough to understand Jayanta? Why should one do the effort of learning also contemporary linguistics, which is chiefly of European origin?

An approach based also on European material is surely indispensable if one aims not just at understanding, but also at *translating* a Sanskrit text into a European language. Today's readers are, to give an example, well aware of how the

⁴"Pāṇini does not take up the cases as forms of nouns, setting forth the various uses of each, after our manner; he adopts the vastly more difficult and dangerous method of establishing a theoretical list of modes of verb-modification by case, or of ideal case-relations (he calls them *kāraka*, 'factor' or 'adjunct'), to which he then distributes the cases" (Whitney 1893: 171). Whitney's counterclaim was that the case-endings categorization would have been a sufficient and adequate analytic tool in this respect.

⁵The attitude of F. Bopp was quite different in this respect, since he took very seriously the traditional Ancient Indian conception — ultimately based on Pāṇini — of root introducing it into the European linguistic debate (see Alfieri 2014).

translation of *varṇa* as ‘letter’ is not just ambiguous, but plainly wrong (see Wezler 1994). Still, generations of scholars who were not aware of the distinction between a phoneme and its written counterpart have used the term *letter* (or its equivalents in other European languages) as if it were the exact translation of *varṇa*, thus making Indian speculations look naïf and far less appealing to linguists. Similarly, only a good knowledge of linguistic terminology can be the basis of a reliable translation of a Sanskrit linguistic text, since the latter also relies on a specific terminology, and should not be misrepresented as employing vague and imprecise terms. For instance, translating both *pada* and *śabda* in all the contexts as ‘word’ means — in many cases — to project onto the Sanskrit authors an ambiguity which is only due to the translator’s faint knowledge of (contemporary) linguistic theory (on *śabda*, see also *infra*, section 2.4).⁶

However, even in order just to *understand* the gist of a Sanskrit linguistic argument, one needs an adequate training in linguistics. It is surely possible to achieve it from within the Indian tradition, if one happens to be born in it and is not interested in communicating with anyone outside it.⁷ By contrast, we doubt that a purely inner-Indian approach can be enough in case of people initially trained outside it. For this kind of scholar, the lack of awareness on European linguistics will amount to projecting their scant knowledge on much more sophisticated texts.

Conversely, becoming aware of one’s presuppositions is the first step towards being able to predict one’s bias while reading Sanskrit material and, consequently, to avoid their traps.⁸ Accordingly, our attempt in the present paper is to make the reader feel the gap that separates us from the theories of Jayanta.

Among the scholars who have tried to implement a cross-cultural methodology to the understanding of Indian philosophy of language are scholars interested in Buddhist epistemology (e.g., Siderits, Tillemans, and Chakrabarti 2011) or in the philosophical schools of (mostly Navya) Nyāya (e.g., Matilal 1990, Ganeri 1999, Ganeri 1996, Phillips and Ramanuja Tatacharya 2004) as well as in Mīmāṃsā (Siderits 1985, Siderits 1986, Matilal and Sen 1988). They all implicitly or explicitly refer to the framework of analytic philosophy and their results have often been quite interesting, both for Sanskritists and for analytic philosophers (noteworthy is also

⁶While we were finishing this essay, we have been gladly surprised to receive an essay by a Sanskritist working also on contemporary linguistics and closing with a very similar point: “Within contemporary academia, Western terminology represents the only shared medium through which linguistic historiographical communications can be implemented and, therefore, comparisons can be traced. In other words, I argue that there is no alternative to that of finding suitable Western translations for terms such as *varṇa*, *akṣara* and *eḷuttu* that, otherwise, would remain mostly unknown alien objects for the scholarly community. However, this leads to another issue because Western linguistics is not a monolithic or homogeneous discipline. [...] Therefore, if they want to be understood, scholars working in the field of linguistic historiography must be attentive both to the meta-language of the indigenous traditions under investigation and to the Western meta-language through which they choose to present these traditions to the scholarly community” (Ciotti 2012).

⁷By the way, do such native Sanskrit scholars, untouched by the introduction of English education in India, still exist, given what J. L. Mehta (1970: 313) called — following M. Heidegger — the “Europeanization of the Earth”?

⁸A typical example is that of the European concept of “god”, which has been absorbed by most Europeans independently of their personal beliefs and which tends to be automatically — and often erroneously — projected onto the Sanskrit materials.

that some of the above studies have been published on the most established Analytic Philosophy journals, such as *Mind*). The present study hopes to add to their work an enlarged perspective on the evolution of European linguistic thought, which is itself not a single, unmoving reference point, and a deeper understanding of the structure of Jayanta's linguistic thought and of the terminology through which this is expressed. To be more precise, Jayanta's theory of signification has been analysed in Ganeri 1996: 12–16 from the point of view of its opposition to the view of particulars as the meanings of linguistic expressions. We add to Ganeri's analysis a discussion of the other terms involved and of the Buddhist point of view.

1.4 A European comparison

In this section we wish to survey some basic conceptions related to language as they have been defined by the most relevant 20th century theoreticians. Such survey is supposed to refresh the reader's awareness of the philosophical tools that can be helpful in analysing Jayanta's and his opponents' discussion on the nature of language vs. reality relationship.

The so-called "Linguistic turn" in the philosophy of the early 20th century coincided with the foundation of theoretical linguistics as a separate discipline. Interestingly, the starting point for both G. Frege's and F. de Saussure's reasoning on language was practically the same, i.e. the refutation of the naïf referentialist conception that the words are "labels for things". This one-to-one relation between words and things seemed untenable for Frege because different expressions were found out to denote the same referents, while for Saussure it was untenable because language describes reality with arbitrarily shaped words. Questioning the naïf referentialism implied that not only the objectivity of words was put into doubt but also that of extra-linguistic things: not only linguistic expressions can be imperfect and indeterminate, but also the existence of reality, its parts and classes, is not self-evident anymore. Analytic philosophy and Saussureanism offered two different approaches to solve this puzzle.

On the analytic side, the solution was to limit the scientific investigation to the formal language of science (especially logic and mathematics). This simplified enormously the problem of the reference: both the formal language and the reality it describes belong to the realm of abstraction, which is assumed to be certain and objective. Thus, linguistic expressions are assumed to either refer or describe such mental objects as numbers, sets, etc. Synonymity becomes a question of coreference, and Frege's *Bedeutung* 'referent' vs. *Sinn* 'sense' distinction is all about the equivalency of simple expressions (i.e. names) and complex ones (definite descriptions). The indeterminacy of the ordinary language in referring to reality was left totally aside as something secondary and subjective, and therefore less important. The second-generation analytic philosophers who attempted to include ordinary language into analysis were not very successful and did not get plain acceptance, since, in order to achieve this goal, they had to give up some of the most important Frege's postulates (like the necessity, for an expression, to possess a truth value).

Saussure chose exactly the opposite path: he excluded from his investigation everything but the ordinary language. He was neither interested in questions per-

taining to the classification of the extra-linguistic reality, nor in discussing the objective categories of science. He presented natural languages as sets of arbitrarily chosen lexical signs made of an arbitrary pairing of a phonological form with a portion of the semantic continuum. In such a way, the *signified* is all but objective, and does not correspond at all either to a stable element of extra-linguistic reality or to a well-defined scientific category. The only thing we are certain concerning the signified of a sign is that it is different with respect to all other signs. This implies that every historically attested language selects its own set of signs that tailor the knowledgeable continuum into arbitrary segments. Moreover, the sign is an abstract notion belonging to the collective language (termed *langue*), while every single usage of a sign (termed *parole*) creates a concrete contextual meaning (termed *signification*) which is not fully predictable from the abstract sign. This concrete meaning is Saussure's closest equivalent of the notion of 'referent' as it was postulated by the analytic philosophers, with the difference that it is rooted in the individual mental representation of reality, rather than in the reality itself (such individual level was called *subjektive Vorstellungen* by Frege, who however disregarded it totally).

Since Saussure's signified is detached from reality and the objective knowledge, one might ask where it comes from. The answer, that can be inferred from Saussure's writings, is that the concrete usage builds up the abstract sign. In this, he anticipated the notion of meaning-as-use, defended by the late Wittgenstein and developed by other philosophers influenced by him (such as Grice, for example). According to this approach, the only certainty that we can have about the meaning of a linguistic expression is the series of its previous uses. Since a given linguistic expressions has been used in order to refer to such-and-such, the speaker decides to use it with reference to something analogous, hoping that the hearer will understand his or her communicative intention.

2 A case study: Jayanta on meaning and reference

The point that we wish to stress is that also philosophy of language and linguistics are as specialised as many other fields, and deserve a technical approach. In order to critically edit a linguo-philosophical treatise, the editors have to be well versed in philosophical terminology, as far as in the general history of philosophy. If the former is lacking, one will not be able to do justice to the complexity of the text, nor to communicate with philosophically interested readers. If the latter is lacking, one will not be able to evaluate the importance of the contribution of each given author. Moreover, our analysis will highlight that the problems faced (and at times also the solutions found) by Indian philosophers of language were often similar to the ones faced by European philosophers in the last century.

We will now illustrate such a claim by analysing some passages and the terminology of a chapter devoted to the philosophy of language extracted from the *Nyāyamañjarī*, a philosophical encyclopaedia by Bhaṭṭa Jayanta. The *Nyāyamañjarī* belongs to a genre that, within the traditional Sanskrit literary classification, is called *śāstra* 'scientific treatise'. As such, it must be considered as being written

for a specialised audience of philosophers (including all the manifold branches of the Indian philosophical tradition). This means that it demands for the attention of scholars trained in the analysis of the philosophical questions dealt with by Jayanta.

2.1 Jayanta's *Nyāyamañjarī*, book 5

Jayanta lived in Kaśmīr in the ninth to tenth century CE.⁹ His *Nyāyamañjarī* (henceforth NM) is an encyclopaedic compendium in twelve books. It is conceptually structured into two major parts: the first six books treat the *pramāṇas* 'means to acquire knowledge' (such as sense perception, inference and language); the second six the *prameyas* 'objects of knowledge' and the other 14 *padārthas* 'categories' accepted by Nyāya. Four out of twelve books of this treatise are dedicated to language, seen both from a linguistic and from an epistemological points of view. The fifth book of the NM (henceforth NM 5) is the place where the topic of the word- and sentence-meaning is discussed.

NM 5 is located within the portion of the NM dedicated to the study of the instruments of knowledge and, consequently, all discussions about language are to be considered as related to language as an epistemic tool and, therefore, to the conditions for its validity as an instrument of knowledge. More in detail, the validity of language as instrument of knowledge is tantamount to its ability to convey knowledge about reality. Thus, speaking about language meant, for Jayanta, also speaking about the conditions for language to convey knowledge, and to describe reality. In this way, linguistic, epistemological and ontological issues are all intermingled in the NM 5.

The NM proves that its author had mastered both Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā and had a solid knowledge of grammar and of the Buddhist *apoha* theory.¹⁰ This amounts to say that he was conversant with all major linguistic and linguo-philosophical theories of his time.

Thus, Jayanta came from a civilization which excelled in linguistic analysis and was himself a cultivated specialist in the theory of language. Why should one try to understand him without comparably sophisticated instruments? Indeed, as we wish to demonstrate here, a naïf approach to his text runs the risk of missing several important distinctions. By contrast, only a specialist approach to his text allows a full appreciation of his refined categorization of linguistic phenomena.

2.2 A point of departure: the question of “naïf referentialism”

Those who are not used to investigate the relationship of cognition, language and reality are generally inclined to think that there does not exist any particular gap

⁹Unlike in the case of most other Indian authors, his dates can be settled with relative certainty, since he served as minister of king Śaṅkaravarman, who reigned from 883 to 902 according to the chronology of the *Rajatarāṅginī* as reconstructed in Stein (1961: 98).

¹⁰K. Kataoka (see Kataoka 2008, 2009, 2010) and the translation of these portions of the NM 5 elaborated with Alex Watson, and published in this volume shows how he distinguished between different versions of the theory (attributable to Dignāga, Dharmakīrti and Dharmottara). In this article, the term *Buddhist* always refers to the so-called Buddhist epistemological school.

between them: the “thoughts”, the “words” and the “objects” can be superimposed on each other unproblematically and univocally, and words are simple “names” or “labels” for (external) things.¹¹ We will term this position “naïf referentialism”. This approach, though too simplistic, effectively, played an important role as its rejection became the indirect cause of the well-known “linguistic turn” in the philosophy of the end of the 19th century, started by G. Frege. Parallely, also the most influential thinker in the field of linguistics of the same period, i.e. F. de Saussure, grounded his investigations on the criticism of a similar simplistic theory of words as a nomenclature, or “labels for things”, which was quite wide-spread among the linguists of his time.

In the present paper we wish to note that naïf referentialism, which is implicitly adopted by several Sanskritists who attempt to analyse the Ancient Indian philosophy on language (see for instance the way the problem is framed in Bronkhorst 1999), does not, or at least not always, represent a good explanatory framework. This not only because it is not tenable in general, but also because, in particular, it does not represent a fitting parallel to the Ancient Indian thinking on this topic. However, its more sophisticated version, i.e. the referential theory of names (from Millianism to Kripke’s rigid designators and Putnam’s natural kinds), is, on the contrary, partly similar to the positions held by those non-Buddhist Indian thinkers, whose positions are usually described as “direct realist” (Ganeri 1999).

2.3 Words and things in NM 5

NM 5 displays a rich terminology referring to the relation between a *śabda* ‘linguistic expression’ and its corresponding *artha* ‘meaning’ (or ‘referent’, see infra, section 2.4). The latter is said by different *pūrvapakṣins* ‘objectors’ at the beginning of the section on *vākyārtha* ‘sentence meaning’ (NM: 69ff) to be *bāhya* ‘external’, *vāstava* ‘real’, to exist *bahir* ‘outside’, *sattāyā* ‘ontologically’ or, by contrast, to be only a *jñāna* ‘cognition’, to exist *pratīyā* ‘as notion’ or *pāramārthiko nāsti* ‘ultimately not to exist’. Among others, the position of naïf referentialism is presented (“Others, by contrast, say that the sentence-meaning is external [and]¹² that it is a real mutual connection of word-meanings”, NM: 69). This most extreme formulation is rejected by Jayanta in a short passage, as if, in such an extreme form, the naïf referentialism were not really an option worth discussing in full. Jayanta confutes direct realism by eliminating all possible ways to justify it, since he shows that linguistic expressions cannot be said to correspond to their meanings neither as conceived in one’s mind nor as existing in the outer world. Thus, it is impossible to explain through direct realism the meaning and truth-value of normal statements (e.g. “Jayanta was the author of the *Nyāyamañjarī*”). This claim is further elabo-

¹¹By “things” we mean both physical objects and any other manifestations of reality, such as processes, properties, interactions, etc.

¹²Here and anywhere in this article, square brackets delimit insertions of words which are neither explicitly (as distinct lexemes) nor implicitly (through, e.g., verbal terminations) present in the Sanskrit text but are needed for its translation. Insertions within round parentheses indicate, in contrast, glosses by the current authors. Roman punctuation has been adopted in the transliteration of Sanskrit texts and their translations. *daṇḍas* and double *daṇḍas* have been kept only in the case of verses.

rated upon by Jayanta's claim that, to begin with, the totality of word-meanings cannot exist together in one's cognition. In fact, according to the school of Nyāya, to which also Jayanta belonged, each cognition is atomic and cannot be stretched so as to accommodate within itself all concepts needed to understand or justify the truth of any given statement. As for using the outer world to ground the meaning and the truth value of a statement, Jayanta explains that even if all the referents evoked by a certain statement exist together in the external world, this cannot be the basis to ascertain the meaning of a *specific* sentence and justify its truth. In fact, in the outer world *all* referents co-exist, not just the ones named in a given sentence. Thus, if ontology were the basis to ascertain the meaning of a sentence, since all referents co-exist at any given time, all possible meanings would be understood simultaneously, and not just the one of the sentence just uttered. In other words, once one has admitted that we need the outer world in order to understand the meaning of a sentence, there is no way to delimit the specific "universes of discourse" corresponding to each given sentence. And in the actual external world all referents co-exist at the same time, so that if they were the root of the sentence-meaning, all sentence-meanings would have been conveyed at once.

This is not to say that Jayanta was a skeptic and refuted every correspondence between language and reality. A careful reader will probably be able to detect passages not focusing on linguistics and presupposing some correspondence between language and reality without giving further detail. However, when it comes to what Jayanta expressly said about this topic, he depicted the naïf referentialism as one among several options, and one he did not opt for. At the same time, since he also supported the reliability of language as a *pramāṇa*, language must in his view be able to communicate knowledge about the world (and not just be a closed system, though innerly consistent).

2.4 A problem of synonymity?

Jayanta used several terms which seem to be just synonyms, at least at first sight:

- *artha* 'meaning', both in a technical and non technical acceptance of the term (originally denoting 'purpose'),
- *vācya* 'signified' (a nominalised passive verbal adjective from the root *vāc-* 'to speak'),
- *vyakti* 'individual' (literally 'visible appearance'),
- *viśeṣa* 'particular' (literally 'distinction'),
- *vastu* 'thing' (originally a nominal form derived from the intransitive root *vas-* 'to dwell'),
- *vāstava* [*padārtha*] 'actual [word-meaning]' (an adjective, at times nominalised, deriving from *vastu*),
- *piṇḍa* 'concrete thing' (originally a lump of rice offered in the ritual),

- *viṣaya* ‘content’ (originally ‘dominion’ or ‘range’),
- *bāhya* ‘external object’¹³

Furthermore, a related problem regards the ways in which Jayanta said that a word meaning could exist (NM: 5, p. 70, see also above, section 2.3):

- *pratītyā* ‘cognitively’

or

- *sattayā* ‘ontologically’

In the present paper, we aim at answering the following question: Do all the terms above mean the same? Are they really synonyms introduced for the sake of style only? Or is there something else beyond the change in terminology? Ideally, we would like to demonstrate that such terms are not synonymous at all and refer to a very clear-cut conceptual system of Jayanta. Our approach is, therefore, similar to that of P. Kiparsky (1979), who gave a new interpretation to some seemingly synonymous terms found in Pāṇini’s *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (namely *vā*, *vibhāṣā* and *anyatarasyām*), explaining them as having different grammatical meanings, in a way that had been totally overseen by traditional Pāṇinian scholarship.

Until now, many interpreters have translated the terms relating to the concepts standing on the side of *śabda* (for instance, *śabda*, *pada*, *vacana*, *vācaka* and so on) as ‘word’¹⁴ and the terms of the *artha* group (i.e., the ones listed at the beginning of the present section) as ‘meaning’ or as ‘object’, ‘meaning’, ‘thing’ and so on within the same study and with no further explanation. This attitude is very widespread, so that the following examples are only indicative and are not meant as a criticism of the authors involved. Within Arnold (2006) — which is a very interesting attempt to discuss Indian linguistic issues as part of philosophy of language (Wittgenstein, Fodor, Husserl, Augustine and many other authors are quoted and utilised), *artha* is for instance translated neutrally as ‘point’ (fn. 9, quoting Dunne 2004), then as ‘object’ (fn. 9 and p. 436), ‘meaning’ (p. 427), ‘external object’ (fn. 50), ‘thing’ (fn. 68) and ‘referent’ (p. 460 and p. 465, where in the same quotation *artha* is unproblematically translated once as ‘referent’ and once as ‘meaning’). Note that some of these terms are also used to translate other Sanskrit words, e.g. ‘thing’ translates *vastu* in fn. 9 and at p. 436 and p. 445 (thus somehow weakening the specific epistemological strength of the point Dharmakīrti and Prajñākaragupta are making in the quoted passages). Arnold further explains that Dignāga points at defining what is the sense of words, and Dharmakīrti their reference (Arnold 2006: 421). Should these English terms interpret their different understanding of *artha*?

We think that it is now time to try to reproduce the more sophisticated Indian linguistic thought in adequate terms and to give up these naïf translations. We are preparing a longer study devoted to a comprehensive analysis of the various terms

¹³Though an adjective, *bāhya* can also be used on its own in the sense of ‘external object’. ‘External’ means ‘external to cognition’ (see below, section 2.7.6).

¹⁴Although *śabda* is found also in reference to specific phonemes or of longer linguistic expressions.

related to the semantic field of ‘word’ and ‘phoneme’. Here we will, instead, focus on the problem of reference: the relation between language and reality. While doing so, we will also try to dismiss the implicit assumption of naïf referentialism as the best interpretative clue of Jayanta’s, and generally Indian, philosophy of language. Please note that we are not claiming that contemporary linguistics can tell us how to interpret Jayanta, but that enhancing our linguistic awareness may help us appreciate the depth of Jayanta’s argumentation.

2.5 Word, meaning and referent?

For Jayanta, the possibility of using language in order to communicate knowledge was based on the fixed relations holding between linguistic expressions, their meanings and the reality they depict. In other words, reality determines the truth value of the linguistic expressions (as contemporary referentialists would say). In the following pages we will examine this point in further detail.

We start from a terminological stipulation. We will consistently translate the Sanskrit terms *jāti* and *sāmānya* (about which see also below, section 2.6.2) with *natural kind*, thus avoiding the usual translation, namely *universal*, which points to a similar dispute within contemporary philosophy, but has the major disadvantage of having a very different meaning in modern linguistics. We only use *natural kind* in order to denote those classes that exist independently of the classifier’s mind. In fact, as we will see in the next paragraph, Jayanta and his Mīmāṃsā interlocutors maintained that *jātis* exist ontologically and that they can be known and spoken of.¹⁵ By contrast, their Buddhist opponents maintain that *jātis* are only made up and do not correspond to any external state of affairs. Before the present article, the term *natural kind* has been employed for translating *jāti* and *sāmānya* already by S. H. Phillips (1995) and by J. Ganeri (2011a).

2.6 Language and reality according to Jayanta

2.6.1 The Buddhist challenge

Why could Jayanta not just say that the meaning of a linguistic expression simply equals the external entity (thus, leaving the intermediary role of the mind altogether out of the picture)? In other words, why could he not adhere to the naïf theory of a rigid one-to-one correspondence between linguistic expressions and real objects (see Figure 1)?

If one looks at the main theories of language in the 20th c., both Frege’s and Saussure’s approaches to language assume the untenability of this naïf view as their point of departure (Frege arguing against Millianism while Saussure refuting the idea of words as labels of things). In the Indian context, Jayanta had to take into

¹⁵A comparison with the theory of universals by D. M. Armstrong (1978) seems appropriate, at first glance. However, “Armstrong completely rejects the identification of universals with the meanings of general terms and thus rejects the inference from the meaningfulness of a general term to the existence of a corresponding universal” (Sanford 1980: 69), so that his theorisation is of little use in a discussion on language, which is our main concern in the present paper.

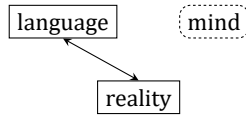


Figure 1: Naïf referentialism

account the sophisticated objections against this view coming from the Buddhist side. These objections start from a standpoint opposite to that of naïf referentialism, and the anti-referentialist and antirealist stances are taken to their extreme consequences. In fact, the Buddhists epistemologists tried to solve the problem of reference by hypothesizing the nonexistence of any reality external to cognition, or — at least — by postulating that all our conceptual knowledge regards mental categories, see Figure 2.

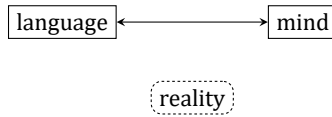


Figure 2: Buddhist mentalism

To sum up, the question is whether the objects and categories to which a language refers, have an autonomous existence transcending the human mind (a sort of “referential realism”), or are creations of the latter (mentalism leading to nominalism).¹⁶

Several powerful Buddhist objections occupy a big part of NM 5. In this book, Jayanta first let a Buddhist (possibly Dignāga himself) speak, next let the Mīmāṃsaka respondent (corresponding to Kumārila Bhaṭṭa) reply, and then again presented a more elaborate rebuttal of Kumārila’s criticism by a Buddhist opponent (possibly Dharmottara). Last comes Jayanta’s final opinion.¹⁷

The Buddhist epistemologists used the theory of *apoha* as a counter-theory against those schools that supported the referential realism in dealing with language.¹⁸ This theory claims that the meaning of linguistic expressions is not a positive content, but rather the *apoha* ‘exclusion’ of whatever is different (noteworthy is the striking parallelism between this theory and Saussure’s idea of the oppositional nature of the linguistic sign, see p. ??). This is justified on the basis of an accurate analysis of all other possible candidates for the meaning of linguistic ex-

¹⁶Please note that this referential realism is not tantamount to the naïf referentialism described in the Figure 1. It does not, in other words, deny altogether any role to the mind (as in the extreme form of naïf referentialism rejected by Jayanta, see above section 2.3). Rather, it emphasises the presence of a consistent link with external reality.

¹⁷See, respectively, Kataoka (2011, 2008, 2009) and Kataoka (2010). For Kumārila’s refutation of the Buddhist view and the Buddhist refutation of Kumārila see Watson and Kataoka (2013).

¹⁸For a first introduction to the vast literature on *apoha* see the present volume and Siderits, Tillemans, and Chakrabarti (2011). For further details on *apoha* in Jayanta, see the studies and translations by Kataoka mentioned in fn. 17.

pressions.¹⁹ All have been proven by the Buddhist epistemologists either not to exist (the natural kinds), or not to be attainable through language (the ultimate particulars). Thus, the Buddhists conclude that there is no straightforward link between a given linguistic expression and a certain real entity, and the only plausible interpretation of the word-meaning consists in considering it as the exclusion of all other meanings.

But how can language perform its communicative function, if it is disconnected from real entities? According to the Buddhist epistemologists, there is no stable and necessary connection between language and reality (unlike the one holding, for example, between fire and smoke).²⁰ Language, therefore, refers to reality in an indirect way, which is considered ultimately unreliable. In fact, since the link is not necessary, it cannot be true. What is at play in this case is the chief concern of the Buddhist epistemological school according to which only what is intrinsically rational can be real and no indeterminacy (like, instead, in the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā theory of the ultimate difference-and-non-difference between universal and individual) can be tolerated. Nonetheless, linguistic expressions retain a loose connection with the object referred to, thus making it possible for the listener to act successfully on the basis of language. As we would put it today, the language is vaguely, or rather non-deterministically connected to reality, but nonetheless one can act successfully on the basis of it.²¹

2.6.2 Jayanta's reply

It is worth remembering that the NM sections dedicated to language are within the larger frame of the discussion about *pramāṇas* 'instruments for acquiring knowledge'. Accordingly, Jayanta's epistemological concern made him favour an explanation in which language refers to reality in a non-random way. This concern is explicit in his polemics against the Buddhist *apoha*, to which Jayanta dedicated a big portion of his NM 5.

¹⁹The refuted options are: *jāti* or *sāmānya* 'natural kinds', *avāntarasāmānya* 'intermediate natural kinds', *vyakti* 'individual objects', *sāṅkaryā* 'aggregates'. "Intermediate" natural kinds are sub-groups within the natural kinds. The example (mentioned at NM: 14) is that of the Śābaleya type of cows. Aggregates are mentioned at NM: 8c as an alternative to the ontological concept of natural kinds existing independently of the individuals instantiating them.

²⁰The example of the smoke as a consequence, and a sign, of the fire, frequently used by the Indian philosophers, recalls the analogous example made by Ch. Peirce in defining the so-called *index*, one of the three types of signs. This could perhaps have been not a coincidence. Pierce could have read this same example in Sextus Empiricus, a late Greek skeptic philosopher, who could have undergone some Indian influence, cf. Scharfstein (1998: 235fn).

²¹As explained in a beautiful simile (of Buddhist origin) in NM 5, the language would refer to the world like the light of a jewel appearing from the keyhole and which one mistakes for the jewel itself (NM 5, Kataoka 2009: 461, §4.3). After having seen it, the observer rushes to the room in order to seize the jewel s/he is convinced to have seen. In fact, by opening the door, the observer does find a jewel, although it is not the jewel s/he was convinced to have seen. Thus, the observer was led by an intrinsically unreliable signal (the light of the jewel, which s/he misunderstood as the jewel itself), but the erroneous signal retained some connection with reality (after all, it was the light of the jewel that the observer misconstrued as the jewel itself, and not, e.g., the light of a candle). This loose connection is, however, strong enough to lead one's actions to their goal (in this case, obtaining the jewel).

Since — within NM 5 — the Mīmāṃsaka objector replies to the Buddhist epistemologist by upholding the real existence of *jātis* ‘general class’ (from *jan-* ‘to be born’, cognate to the Latin word *genus*, used in Aristotelian philosophy with similar purposes), also called *sāmānya* (lit. ‘commonness’, abstract from *samāna* ‘common’),²² the whole discussion displays a realist vs. nominalist (or antirealist) opposition. Jayanta considers both approaches’ arguments, and replies to the nominalists with a comparably powerful argumentation, while, as a matter of fact, he ends up overruling both the Mīmāṃsā referential realism and the Buddhist nominalism by taking into account several elements of the Buddhist approach, especially of its *pars destruens*. For instance, Jayanta could not accept the “illusionistic” output of the Buddhist nominalism (if everything is just cognition, it could be easily concluded that everything is an illusion), but at the same time he criticised the Mīmāṃsā claim that linguistic expressions only refer to *sāmānyas* ‘natural kinds’ (see below, section 2.7.5, for Jayanta’s solution).

What is at stake in the dispute? From the point of view of Jayanta, accepting the *apoha* theory would endanger all certainty about the connection between language and the world. How can one reconcile the absence of a necessary link and the need for an epistemological connection between language and reality? In other words: if the language is indeterminate, then how could it be an instrument of knowledge? The issue of indeterminacy could be solved by formulating a formal type of language which left aside the intricacies of the ordinary language of the everyday communication. However, only at a later stage of Indian philosophy, namely in Navya Nyāya, will scholars resort to a formal language of absolute exactness, to be used as an analytical tool in order to analyse reality and ordinary language. By contrast, in the preceding period authors such as Kumārila and Jayanta deemed it of extreme importance to accommodate ordinary language and experience within their epistemologies (see Freschi 2010; McCrea forthcoming).

Thus, part of Jayanta’s answer in relying largely on the context as a powerful disambiguation tool. Consequently, Jayanta discussed at length (in the second third of NM 6) the *anvitābhīdhānavāda* ‘theory of the denotation [of the sentence-meaning] through [words] which have been already connected’ and the *abhihitānvayavāda* ‘theory of the connection of already denoted [word-meanings] [in order to convey the sentence meaning]’, that is the Prābhākara and the Bhāṭṭa Mīmāṃsā views on sentence meaning, which both uphold the view that the context of a sentence conditions the meaning conveyed by each word (on these theories see Chakrabarti 1989; Matilal and Sen 1988; Sen 2005).

In order to face the issue of a term’s referential indeterminacy vs. the necessity of exactness in communication, Jayanta recurred to a complex scheme (see Table 1 on p. 29), which allows language to retain some vagueness and still be precise enough for the efficacy of communication. His implicit adoption of the scheme suggests that the ultimate individuality of each concrete object does not need to be precisely grasped by language for the purpose of ordinary communication: it is enough to understand that one is talking about a certain individual; then, context-

²²As already mentioned (see section 2.5), both terms will be translated in the following with *natural kind*.

tual and/or pragmatic elements can help in case of ambiguity.

2.7 Internal evidence against terminological synonymy in NM 5

We can turn now to the main discussion of this paper, namely the question of the apparent synonymy within Jayanta's terminology. What follows is a short inquiry on the usage, within NM 5, of the terms listed in the section 2.4.

As is often the case in scholarly analyses, a reader will now have to face the paradox of questions:²³ unless one has a preliminary understanding of what is at stake, it is extremely difficult to understand the answer one receives. Thus, if someone asks what an internal combustion engine is, s/he will hardly understand an answer which deals with wankel, strokes and diesel cycle. In our case, the results of our investigation will be discussed in the section 2.8, so that readers less interested in the intricacies of Sanskrit terms and more interested in our general linguo-philosophical conclusions can refer directly to that section and then come back to this section in order to see how we arrived at those results.

2.7.1 *vācya*

vācya 'signified' is used whenever Jayanta needed an opposing category for *vācaka* 'expresser', and denotes any kind of signified meaning. It pertains to the sphere of language and does not necessarily entail the existence of a reality to which it corresponds. In other words, all linguistic meanings are *vācya*, and the question of their truth value is not even raised. Accordingly, *vācya* can denote a non-referring, i.e. purely linguistic meaning, such as that of a grammatical element (see NM: 69, 80, 81 *et passim*.). Both *vācaka* and *vācya* are therefore located on the abstract level of language, and seemingly correspond to the Saussurean terms *signifier* and *signified*, i.e. the phonological form and the cognitive content of a linguistic expression.

2.7.2 *vastu* and *vāstava*

For Jayanta, *vastu* denotes a content that has been ascertained through an act of valid cognition. Rather than to Saussure's *signified* (which is understood as plainly linguistic, regardless of any link to external reality), it resembles the contemporary philosophical notion of *propositional content* in its being objective and truth-functional.²⁴ *vastu* plays consequently a pivotal role in the framework of NM 5 as it guarantees the possibility to use language as an instrument conveying knowledge about the world.

vastu is often used in Śāstric Sanskrit as a loose term meaning 'object', not necessarily a concrete one. It has, in fact, nothing of the intrinsic physicality of *piṇḍa*

²³About which see Varzi (2001) and Carpenter and Ganeri (2010).

²⁴There is no agreement among analytic philosophers on the precise nature of what amounts to a proposition, and on whether it is real, mind-internal, or only linguistic. Here, we are using the term *propositional content* for its purely epistemological value and do not presuppose any necessary relation with a linguistic expression (as, on the contrary, contemporary philosophers usually do).

(see section 2.7.4). Further, unlike *artha*, *vastu* is not necessarily bound to a linguistic expression. Its main feature is to denote a knowable content which is also epistemologically sound and non depending on the cogniser; i.e., a *vastu* is something that Popper would classify into his World 3. In other words, illusions, dreams and other sources of erroneous cognition cannot be labelled *vastu*.

For instance, in the following statement a Buddhist opposes *vastu* to *bāhyārtha* ‘external object’ and uses the latter in an epistemologically neutral way:

Thus, when conceptual cognitions, which do not directly refer to real entities (*vastu*), appear, common people have the erroneous conception: “I have cognized an external object (*bāhyārtha*), I have undertaken an action towards it and I have obtained it”.²⁵

Or, similarly, at the end of the same section:

But [*apohas*] are different from [*jātis*] in that the latter are not real entities (*vastu*).²⁶

Accordingly, *jātis* are here said to be unreal conforming to the Buddhist nominalist view. In contrast, *apohas* consist only of exclusions and are, thus, only a negation of something else. *apohas*, therefore, do not denote an external referent. Rather, they enable an epistemologically sound communication to occur, through the regulated exclusion of anything other than what is indirectly indicated through the *apoha*. Thus, the external referents, such as the natural kinds, brought forward by Mīmāṃsakas and Naiyāyikas are unreal, according to the Buddhists, since they are nothing but unwarranted postulations. By contrast, the exclusion denoted by *apoha* is real (*vāstava*) from the point of view of epistemology, since it is grasped through a valid act of cognition. Thus, given that *apohas* are qualified as *vastu* by the Buddhist opponents, one can conclude that being an external entity is not part of the definition of *vastu*, whereas having a truth value is. Authors of a realist school would, in fact, by contrast insist that *jātis* are real and that *apohas* are unreal, so that one can conclude that being a *vastu* does not regard the ontology of things, but rather only their epistemological aspect.

As it is apparent in this case, within Jayanta’s polemics against the Buddhists on the existence of *jātis*, the terms *vastu* ‘real’ and *avastu* ‘non real’ were used by the Buddhists with reference to, respectively, *apoha* and *jāti*, and then by Jayanta with reference to, contrariwise, *jāti* and *apoha*. In fact, both sides agree that *vastu* has a truth value (it leads to *pramā* ‘valid cognition’) and that it is actually known through an act of valid cognition. However, they disagree as to its identification.

²⁵*evaṃ bāhyavastusaṃsparśāsūnyeṣu vikalpeṣu samullasiteṣu “bāhyo ’rtho mayā pratipannaḥ, tatra cāhaṃ pravṛttaḥ, sa ca mayā prāptaḥ” ity abhimāno bhavati laukikānām.* (NM 5, Kataoka 2009: 460, §4.4). Kataoka and Watson translate as follows: “Thus, when conceptual cognitions, which lack contact with external entities (*vastu*), appear, people have the erroneous conception: “I have cognized an external object (*artha*), and I have taken action towards it, and I have obtained it” (??, ??).

²⁶*avastutvakṛtas tu bhedaḥ ||* (NM 5, Kataoka 2009: 458, §5). For another translation, see ??, ?. The Buddhist opponent means that one cannot criticise *apohas* like one has criticised the *jātis* as candidates for expressing the meaning of a word, since the latter are just fictitious postulations, whereas the former are correctly cognised as scientific realities (as in Popper’s World 3).

For the Buddhists, only the ultimate particular,²⁷ the *svalakṣaṇa*, is a *vastu* (i.e., only the *svalakṣaṇa* is the real content grasped by a valid act of cognition), whereas for Jayanta a *vastu* does not need to be a unique particular. It can, by contrast, be instantiated in several particulars and be either an individual or a *jāti* (see Table 1 on p. 29). Consequently, the *vastu* is intrinsically simple for the Buddhists, whereas it might also be complex for Jayanta (who was on this point following Kumārila, see section 2.6.1).²⁸

At this point, one might object that the same entity cannot be both simple and complex,²⁹ and the Buddhist opponents do indeed voice this objection with a sarcastic remark about realists such as Kumārila, who maintain that the *vastu* is multifiform in the sense that different entities can be said to be *vastu*:

[Buddhist:] The same thing which is a natural kind, is an individual object, the same thing which is one, is many, the same thing which is permanent, is impermanent, the same thing which exists does not exist: these are [just] the remainders of the Jains!³⁰

And [even] while this is being said, it is not appropriate:

If you (Kumārila) say that there is no contradiction because they (natural kind and individual objects) are [actually] grasped (and actual events supersede hypothetical contradictions), [we reply that] it is not so, because they are not known in this way (i.e., it is not the case that they are actually grasped, they are only later conceptualisations) |

In fact, it has been said that the eye-perception does not grasp a recurring thing ||³¹

²⁷This term has been chosen here instead of ‘individual object’ since we have stipulated that the term ‘individual’ is used in opposition to ‘universal’ or ‘natural kind’ (*jāti* or *sāmānya*), whereas the *svalakṣaṇa* is the only reality and it is not the instantiation of something else. Furthermore, the term ‘object’ has been dropped because Buddhist epistemologists deny that each perceptible moment should be linked to an ontological substrate.

²⁸This point of Jayanta’s criticism of the Buddhists reminds us of a similar debate within the contemporary philosophy between those, most notably Russell, who claim that proper names conceal a description, i.e., are complex entities, and those, notably Kripke and his followers, who admit the existence of linguistic expressions rigidly denoting one and only one entity, and therefore intrinsically simple.

²⁹It is worth recalling that for the Buddhist epistemological school only single things, intrinsically simple, are real, not the sets, categories or other complex entities (see fn. 27), so that the qualities of ‘simple’ and ‘complex’ cannot be validly said to refer as qualities to the same substrate.

³⁰The Buddhist is making fun of the Mīmāṃsaka by claiming that he upholds multiple conflicting views, as in the Jaina *anekāntavāda*, according to which mutually contradictory points of view can all be simultaneously true. For a logical analysis of this approach from the viewpoint of contemporary epistemology, see Ram-Prasad (2007).

³¹*tad eva sāmānyam, sa eva viśeṣaḥ, tad evaikaṃ, tad eva nānā, tad eva nityam, tad evānityam, tad evāsti, tad eva nāsti iti jainocchiṣṭam idam ucyamānam eva na śobhate* — dṛṣṭatvān na virodhaś cet na tathā tadavedanāt | uktaṃ hi nānuvṛttārthagrāhiṇī netradhīr iti ||* (NM: 9) *We are following the reading found in the manuscript by Śitikaṇṭhasvāmin (described under its signature, BORI 390/1875–76 and with the *siglum* P, in Graheli 2012 and in Graheli 2011): *jainocchiṣṭam idam ucyamānam eva na śobhate*. NM: 9 reads *jainocchiṣṭam idam ucyate. ucyamānam api na śobhate* and reports the reading *jainocchinam* in the manuscript it calls *ga*. We are grateful to Alessandro Graheli for this reading from the manuscript BORI 390/1875–76, a copy of which is owned by the project “Metaphysik und Episte-

Some pages later, Jayanta replied:

As for what has been said, namely that “It is illogical that in a single real entity (*vastu*) two contradictory aspects (*rūpa*) simultaneously occur”, this is also wrong. [...]

Like the distinction of colours occurs in the case of a variegated [spot] (which, though one, has several distinct aspects simultaneously occurring within it), |
in the same way, one also distinguishes similarities and differences of a real object (*vastu*) because of its manifoldness ||
Hence, since one distinguishes similarities and differences in this non contradictory way, |
real objects (*vastu*) must have a double nature, like in the opinion of the Bhaṭṭa (Kumārila) ||³²

vāstava is used in NM 5 when Jayanta replies to the Buddhist criticism of the *jāti* ‘natural kind’. Whereas the Buddhist considered the natural kind as an unwarranted conceptualisation, Jayanta answered that it is *vāstava* ‘real’:

Even at the first connection of the sense faculty [with its object] one understands the sameness [of two or more individuals] |
and [their] manifoldness. Hence, commonness and difference are both real ||³³

Thus, the natural kind is real, i.e., it belongs to the reality (*vastu*) itself. It is not, however, tantamount to the *piṇḍa* ‘concrete particular’. Rather, the natural kind, which is epistemologically real, is instantiated (*vṛt-*) in the individual object, which, in turn, corresponds to the concrete particular (see infra, Fig. 5).

vāstava is also found at the beginning of NM 5 while discussing the Buddhist view that linguistic expressions do not “touch” (*spṛś-*) their *arthas*:

mologie des Nyāya III”, FWF P24388. For a list and an appraisal of the extant manuscripts of the NM, see, respectively, Graheli 2012 and Graheli forthcoming.

³²*yad apy abhihitam “itaretaraviruddharūpasamāveśa ekatra vastuni nopapadyate” iti, tad api na samyak. [...] yathā kalmāṣavarṇasya yatheṣṭam varṇanirgrahaḥ | citratvād vastuno ‘py evaṃ bhedābheda-dāvadhāraṇā ||* (NM 5, Kataoka 2010: 194–193, §3.1). *varṇanirgrahaḥ* is our conjecture, based on the NMGBh. *varṇanirgrahaḥ* is the reading adopted in Kataoka 2010, by K1, by the *ga* manuscript quoted in NM and by the NMGBh, which, however, glosses it as if it had the preverb *nih* instead of *ni* (*niṣkṛṣṭasya varṇasya grahaṇam* ‘the grasping of a colour extracted [from the variegated background]’). The other witnesses in Kataoka (2010) have: *varṇaniścayaḥ* (NM, Śāstrī Tailaṅga 1895–1896, probably a tacit emendation of the editors) or *varṇanirṇayaḥ* (the overall unreliable manuscript A1 and the slightly better Z1).

³³*prathamākṣasannipāte tulyatvam avagamyate | nānātvaṃ ceti sāmānyabhedau dvāv api vāstavau ||* (Kataoka 2010: 196, §2.1). The one we adopt here is the reading of the manuscript K1, which Kataoka’s edition rejects as “unmetrical”, preferring instead *prathamākṣanipāte ‘pi* of A1. However, A1 is overall unreliable (as shown also by the fact that in all critical editions of the NM by Kataoka, this is possibly the only time where its reading has been preferred over the ones of the other witnesses), and *sannipāte* ‘conjunction’ (found in all other witnesses, but without ‘*pi*’ only in K1) makes much better sense than *nipāte* ‘fall, ruin’. Last, the sequence of long-short-long (*ragaṇa*) in the 5th to 7th syllable is an acceptable *vipulā* to the standard *anuṣṭubh*. We are grateful to K. Kataoka for having discussed this issue with us.

[Buddhist:] Linguistic expressions do not touch (i.e., refer to, in an epistemologically sound way)³⁴ any real object (*artha*), since no real (*vāstava*) meaning of linguistic expression exists.³⁵

This probably means that linguistic expressions are not reliable, since they have no necessary link with reality, either because their alleged referent (e.g. individuals, natural kinds, relations, etc.) is a sheer hypothesis, or because it lies beyond their reach. In fact, not even meanings understood as *apohas* can be thought to relate directly to concrete entities, which are — according to the Buddhist epistemologists' view — ephemeral and unrepeatable.

To sum up, the term *vāstava* qualifies whatever is actually real and whose truth value can be ascertained, and hence ensures the epistemological validity of a certain act of knowledge. The *vastu* is the real object, the one which is rightly ascertained through a correct use of our instruments of knowledge. According to Jayanta, it is to this *vastu* that the aspects of individuality and the correspondence to a natural kind belong. In order to ensure that linguistic communication is a means of knowledge, this must ultimately lead to the knowledge of a *vastu*, a real entity.

2.7.3 *viṣaya*

Unlike *vastu*, which denotes the object ascertained through an act of valid cognition, *viṣaya* might refer, for Jayanta, to each mental content, be it the content of an instance of valid cognition or also the sphere of application of a hypothetical or illusory one. Thus, the content of a dream or of an hallucination is a *viṣaya*, but by no means a *vastu*. Accordingly, *viṣaya* might be used with reference to an external object, but also to the content of a hypothetical statement, like one about a “horned hare”. In this sense, *viṣaya* is a neutral term and only denotes the content of a mental activity, without stating whether this resulted in a valid cognition (as in the case of *vastu*) or not. In short, *viṣaya* only refers to the mental activities and language, with no link to ontology and without assuming that truth-value attribution should be possible. On a similar vein, Ganeri translates it as “object of thought” (Ganeri 2011b: section 5.1) or as “propositional content” (Ganeri 2011b: section 2.1, n. 2). We cannot fully agree with Ganeri's last translation, since the term *propositional content* is mostly used in contemporary philosophy for a truth-functional content, for which we have established the equivalency to Sanskrit *vastu* (see above, beginning of section 2.7.2). *viṣaya* seems rather similar to what Frege disregarded as “mental representations”, and partly to Saussure's *signification* (although the latter is limited to a concrete speech act, while *visaya* is not).

³⁴The critique to the Mimāṃsā theory of meaning insofar as linguistic expressions do not reach any real referent (*arthāsaṃsparśitva*) has a key significance for the post-Kumārila debate on linguistics, see Kataoka (2008: 210) for its presence in Jayanta. See also Freschi 2012 for its depiction in Śālikanātha's *Nītipatha*, 2 *et passim*. The connection of *artha* with *vāstava* in these contexts (see the present passage and, e.g., *asadarthaviṣayatvam evedam uktam bhavati, śabdārthasya vāstavasyābhāvāt*, NM Mysore 1, p. 236) made us interpret *artha* in this passage as “real object” in this context.

³⁵*vāstavasya śabdārthasyāvidyamānatvād arthāsaṃsparśinaḥ śabdā iti* (NM: 3).

2.7.4 *piṇḍa* and *vyakti* (or *viśeṣa*)

For Jayanta, *piṇḍa* denotes the irreducible particular, which cannot be attained by language, nor can it be grasped by an act of valid cognition. It is nonetheless needed in order to endow with an ontological anchorage the objects referred to by language and grasped by cognition. By contrast, *vyakti* denotes the same particular, but only insofar as it is an instantiation, or a token, of a *jāti* ‘natural kind’.

In śāstric Sanskrit, *piṇḍa* generally denotes a concrete entity, having a corporeal mass. In Jayanta, *piṇḍa* is unambiguously used to denote single concrete particulars existing in the external world. In this respect, a *piṇḍa* is different from a *vyakti*. The latter is an individual — yet abstract — entity, opposed to a *jāti*. The former is only a possible external purport for the *jāti*’s concrete instantiation. Language cannot refer to the concrete particular entities (*piṇḍas*) in a non-mediate way: the linguistic reference is directed to a different level, that of *vyaktis*, i.e. individuals belonging to some natural kinds, which are primarily accessible through language.

The standard translation of *vyakti* could be ‘individual’, which nicely reflects the opposition between *vyakti* and *jāti*, since the latter can be translated as ‘universal’. However, the translation ‘referent’ (Frege’s *Bedeutung*) is preferable when the language-oriented nature of the use of *vyakti* is prevalent.³⁶

Note that *viśeṣa*, when employed technically and not just in the sense of ‘specificity’, is used in the context of NM 5 (e.g., NM: 8d, 30, 32, 38, 39, 59–61) in a similar way, that is, in opposition to *sāmānya*, and will be consequently translated as a synonym of *vyakti*.

Particular has been chosen to translate *piṇḍa* because it is often used, together with the adjective *ultimate*, to translate the Buddhist term *svalakṣaṇa*, which shares some important features with *piṇḍa* in this polemic. We have further characterised the *piṇḍa* as a ‘concrete particular’ in order to stress its corporeality.

In order to better focus on how *piṇḍa* and *vyakti* are distinguished, it is useful to see the sort of objections their distinction is meant to answer. These objections come from the side of the Buddhist epistemologists, who object to the existence of a *jāti* in the following way:

[Buddhist: The natural kind cannot be the epistemological object of conceptual knowledge] because, once this (the individual, *vyakti*) is not grasped, there is no notion of that (its natural kind). For something is distinct from something else if it is grasped even if the other one is not grasped, like a cloth is distinct from a pot. But the natural kind is not grasped if the individual is not grasped. Hence, it is not distinct from that.

[Realist:] It (the natural kind) is not perceived once that (individual) is not grasped, because the natural kind exists within that.

[Buddhist:] No, because [this sort of] existence is illogical. Does the

³⁶Within contemporary philosophy, similarly to the status of *proposition* (see section 2.7.2), it is also under debate whether the referent is language-specific or exists ontologically.

natural kind exist in each concrete individual in its entirety? Or with a part [of itself]? Both are illogical.³⁷

Here, the Buddhist speaker is well aware of the inherence-relation which Naiyāyikas believe to hold between individuals and natural kinds and wants to show its untenability by dropping an element of the circuit (the individual, *vyakti*) and asking how the natural kind can directly exist within a concrete particular. Note that he starts with a non-controversial point (the natural kind is only *grasped* in concomitance with an individual) and then extends this case to the *existence* of the natural kind only within a concrete particular.

Jayanta's answer, some pages thereafter, repeats that natural kinds are only grasped through an individual, but explains that this only happens because the natural kind is empirically *present* (*vr̥tti*) only within the individual; but this does not mean, so Jayanta, that it is (*bhāva*) also *ontologically* inseparable from it. Presence is not the same as essence, and what is concretely the case (the fact that *X* is only present within *Y*) does not exhaust the ontological level.³⁸ In other words, the distinction of the two levels, i.e. *vyakti* and *piṇḍa*, enabled Jayanta to reject the Buddhist criticism of the notion of *jāti* 'natural kind', based on its occurrence only within concrete particulars.

As for [the objection] "[The natural kind does not exist,] since there is no notion of it once the [individual is not grasped], since it is not grasped as having a distinct place", in this regard, the reason is that the natural kind has that (the individual) as substrate, not that it does not exist. Since the natural kind is present (*vr̥tti*) within the individual, it is not grasped as having a distinct place once this (individual) is not grasped, but not because [it, the natural kind] does not exist as separate from it (individual). [...] If you say that then it (natural kind) would not be grasped in another concrete particular, what shall we do? Whom shall we criticize? [Obviously you, the Buddhist, who fail to grasp the distinction between *vyakti* and *piṇḍa*].³⁹

³⁷*tadagrahe tadbuddhyabhāvāt. yad dhi yato vyatiriktam, tat tasminn agrhyamāṇe 'pi gr̥hyate, ghaṭād na ca paṭaḥ. na ca vyaktāv anupalabhyamānāyām jātir upalabhyate. yasmān na tato 'sau bhidyate. tadvr̥ttivāt sāmānyasya tadagrahe tadanupalabdhir iti cet, na. vr̥tṭyanupapatteḥ. kiṃ pratipiṇḍam kārt-snyena vartate jātiḥ. utaikaśeṣena? iti. dvayam api cānupapannam* (NM: 7).

³⁸Note that the polysemy of the verb 'to be' (denoting both the ontological essence and the physical presence), that was the source of a big deal of confusion also in the philosophic debate of the European tradition is here exploited by the Buddhist opponent but carefully avoided by Jayanta, who explained the relation between *jāti* and *vyakti* as that holding between a class *X* and its element x_n .

³⁹*yat tu deśabhedenāgrahaṇāt tadagrahe tadbuddhyabhāvāt iti, tatra tadāśritvaṃ kāraṇam jāteḥ, nāsattvam. vyaktivr̥ttivāj jāteḥ pṛthag deśatayānupalambhas tadagrahe*, na punas tadatiriktāyā abhāvād iti. [...] piṇḍāntare tadupalambho na syād iti cet, kiṃ kurmaḥ. kam upālabhāmahe, NM 5, Kataoka 2010: 192–191, §§3.2.2–3). *NM reads *tadagrahe tadagraho vā* instead of *tadagrahe*, which is the reading of K1. The reading *tadagrahe tadagraho vā* is supported indirectly also by that of the *ka, kha* and *gha* manuscripts whose readings are reported in the apparatus of NM, and by that of Śāstrī Tailaṅga 1895–1896 and A1, which all read *tadagraho vā*. However, the reading *tadagrahe tadagraho vā* seems redundant and the *vā* in the reading *tadagraho vā* does not make sense. K1 also adds *jāter* before *abhāvād*. This might be a gloss and anyway speaks in favour of the copyist of K1, who always tried to understand the text. *kam upālabhāmahe* is only found in K1 and it makes much better sense than *kam upalabhāmahe* 'Which one should we perceive?'*

In the following, we shall see how Jayanta distinguished within the ontological level a cognitively graspable level (the *vyakti* and *jāti* that we can actually know) and the irreducible concrete particulars (the *piṇḍa*s). Thus, from the point of view of their essence, a *jāti*, as a natural kind, is distinguished from the *vyakti*, which is an instance of the former; although, from the point of view of where it is concretely present, the *jāti* is instantiated within a *piṇḍa*.⁴⁰ As Jayanta put it later in NM 5, the *piṇḍa* is like *deha* ‘body’ in regard to *ātman* ‘soul’, which exists only within it. If we want to know about the soul, we need to know that it has the body as its substrate, but the body in itself does not tell us anything about the soul and can be completely neglected if one focuses on the soul (Kataoka 2010: 186, §3.3.1).

In other words, the Buddhists wanted to radically reduce existence in general to independent existence, proven by independent perceptibility, and accordingly denied the possibility of the existence of natural kinds, since they are not independently perceivable and are only — if at all — perceived in concomitance with individuals. By contrast, Jayanta was ready to admit also subordinate sorts of existence, such as the inherence of the quality *X* in a substrate *Y*.

It is also noteworthy that Jayanta’s understanding of *vr̥tti* ‘presence’ slightly differs from the Buddhist one. The Buddhists denied the possibility of the natural kind existing within each concrete particular because they understood *vr̥tti* as the physical existence of an ultimate entity, which cannot be repeated. By contrast, Jayanta understood it (as he will state immediately thereafter, see below) as the inherence holding, e.g., between a quality and a set of individual quality-bearers. Thus, according to Jayanta, *vr̥tti* is repeatable and it is not the case that once a *jāti* is included in a *vr̥tti*-relation, it is exhausted (as claimed by the Buddhist in NM 5, vv. 3–4).

This *vr̥tti* is the same that [holds] between parts and part-bearer, and between qualities and quality-bearer. It will be shown later that these two (part and part-bearer and quality and quality-bearer) have different meanings. [...] But they do not have a difference of place (i.e., substrate).⁴¹

To sum up, the term *piṇḍa* denotes the concrete particular pieces of reality which are not captured by linguistic expressions. The term *vyakti*, on the other hand, seems to be a very close equivalent to the contemporary notion of referent (an individual that is linguistically opposed to a general class, namely meaning).

2.7.5 *artha*

artha in Jayanta is the most polysemous term on the list mentioned above. It can be generally translated as ‘meaning’, since it is used whenever Jayanta did not need

⁴⁰One can also find statements in Jayanta about the fact that the *jāti* is present in many *vyaktis*. However, these statements are found within the Buddhist vs. realist polemics, where the Buddhist refuses to accept the distinction of *vyakti* and *piṇḍa*, see the next passage quoted. In other such cases of seeming conflation, these statements focus on the *jāti* vs. *vyakti* opposition rather than describing a concrete state of affairs.

⁴¹*avayavāvayavinor guṇaguṇinoś ceyam eva vr̥tṭiḥ. tayor arthāntaratvam upariṣṭād darśayiṣyate. [...]* *deśabhedas ca tayor nāsti*, NM 5, Kataoka 2010: 190–189, §3.2.4.

or want to specify whether he was talking about a mental content (in which case he would have used *viṣaya*), or about a valid cognition (in which case he would have used *vastu*). The use of *artha* also allowed Jayanta to leave out the question whether the object is external to cognition (in which case he would have spoken of *bāhyārtha* or used the term *piṇḍa*) and also whether it is a *vyakti* 'individual' or a *jāti* 'natural kind'. Last, *artha*, unlike *vācya*, allowed Jayanta not to settle the connection with epistemology and ontology.

artha is a very common term in Śāstric Sanskrit, where it is used in the four fields of linguistics (as 'meaning'), epistemology (as 'cognised content'), deontics (as 'purpose') and — although in a less prominent way — ontology (as 'object'). It is also used as a kind of placeholder-noun together with an adjective (think of *bāhyārtha* discussed in section 2.7.6), in which cases it can be even omitted in translation. Indian philosophy tends to approach language while having in view at the same time what we would call "ontology", "deontics" and "epistemology", and the four domains are thought to be strictly connected. As already hinted at (see section 2.6.2), Jayanta in fact stressed the need for language to be a reliable instrument of knowledge through which one can acquire notions about reality.

Consequently, there will always be plenty of examples of generic and seemingly non technical uses of the term *artha*. Furthermore, it is at times difficult to see what is Jayanta's own distinctive usage of *artha*. First of all, Jayanta's style is often influenced by his sources. Next, Jayanta, inherited from Mīmāṃsā the usage of *artha* as 'goal', 'purpose'⁴² and from Nyāya and Mīmāṃsā an epistemological usage of *artha* in the context of the definition of perceptual knowledge, as meaning 'the real object of a valid act of cognition'. However, looking at Jayanta's usage of *artha* within the *siddhānta* 'conclusive view' (i.e., outside the passages where a Buddhist or another opponent is speaking) we can establish what follows.

In the śāstric usage preceding Jayanta, *artha* tends to define the meaning of a word, often implicitly assumed to be identical with its referent, similarly to what happens in contemporary referentialism. This does not mean, however, that for Jayanta the *artha* is a concrete individual existing in the external world, as a simplistic version of the referentialism might claim. For instance, in a passage quoted above, section 2.7.4 (NM 5, Kataoka 2010: §3.2.4), Jayanta stated that although the *sāmānya* is actually attestable only within a *vyakti* 'individual', both *sāmānya* and individual have distinct *arthas*. This proves that *artha* cannot simply be a concrete individual. In fact, within a single individual there are two distinct cases of concrete reference: a *vyakti* and the *jāti* instantiated in it, i.e. the individual and the natural kind which inheres in it.

Furthermore, when Jayanta used *artha* in a technical way, he focused his investigation on the question: "What feature makes an object fit to be linguistically (or cognitively) grasped, i.e., to be an *artha*?" Jayanta's explicit answer is that the object of a linguistic expression is the *vyakti tadvān* 'individual endowed with that (its natural kind)', i.e., the individual insofar as it is endowed with the distinctive features of its *jāti* (for a full-fledged discussion of Jayanta's answer to the question

⁴²See, e.g., NM 4, *tad[=veda]arthānuṣṭhāna* 'the implementation of the goals [the means to attain which are prescribed] in the Veda' (Kataoka 2004: 213).

around which NM 4–5 are organized, namely “What is the *artha* of a linguistic expression?”, see *infra*, section 2.8). In fact, a concrete individual can only be grasped through language insofar as it displays the characteristics of the member of a class. Else, one would need as many words as there are individuals which inhabit, have inhabited or will inhabit our world. Therefore, *artha* is a doublefaced term: it belongs to the realm of concrete linguistic acts (not unlike the Saussurean *signification*, and Gricean “speakers’s meaning”), but it exists only as far as some abstract class (Saussurean *signified*) defines it.

2.7.6 *bāhya* and *bāhyārtha*

The external entities are referred to by Jayanta as *bāhya*, which is used as an adjective or a nominalised adjective to denote whatever exists outside cognition (see immediately below).

More often than not, *bāhya* qualifies *artha*, which confirms itself as the most neutral term, a sort of placeholder (as in the English *thing* in clauses like “it’s a father thing” or “the little things”), which leaves the whole stress on the adjective. Consider, for instance:

Then, you have denied the external objects, like a Buddhist.⁴³

For the same reason, *viṣaya* can also be used together with *bāhya* (e.g., *bāhya-viṣayapramitiṣu*, NM 2, NM: 183). Several examples of this use can be found in the section on the Buddhist conception of *apoha* (NM 5, edited in Kataoka 2009). There, after a first Buddhist opponent (probably close to Dignāga) and Kumārila’s reply, a different Buddhist explains that the reply is misplaced, since:

The *apoha* is neither internal nor external. Rather, it is different from cognition and from [its] object (*artha*).⁴⁴

The respondent will reply that:

What ultimately does not exist either internally or externally |
that does not exist at all!⁴⁵

This might seem an obvious remark, but it points to a denial of the possibility that there is an extraordinary status for *apoha*. This addresses Dharmottara’s claim that *apoha* is neither external nor internal, i.e., “only existing within one’s cognition” (see Kataoka 2009).

In this way, the respondent also confirms that *bāhya/bahir* is used as an antonym of *jñāna* ‘cognition’ and denotes whatever is not of cognitive nature. Thus,

⁴³*bāhyārthanihnavaṣṭaḥ tarhi tvayā saugatavat kṛtaḥ* (NM 1, v. 60, NM: 56).

⁴⁴*nāyam āntaro na bāhyo ’pohaḥ, kintu jñānārthābhyām anya eva* (NM 5, Kataoka 2010: 473–472, §2). See also *infra*, section 2

⁴⁵*nanu yad vidyate nāntar na bahiḥ paramārthataḥ | tan na vidyate eveti* (NM 5, Kataoka 2010: 472, §2.1).

within the polemic against the Buddhist Yogācārins, who claim that everything exists only as cognition, *bāhya* asserts the existence of something also *outside* cognition.⁴⁶ Nothing else is added about the epistemological status of something *bāhya* (the epistemological status is rather the focus of the term *vastu*), nor about its being an individual, nor about its concrete materiality.

2.8 A tentative solution

artha can be used in order to denote the meaning of any linguistic expression, from morphemes to whole sentences, independently of whether it has a direct correspondence in the external world or not. Jayanta could in fact have thought of the *artha* of a *pada* as something external, whereas the same would not have applied to the *artha* of a sentence or, most of all, to the *artha* of a prescriptive sentence. In fact, the latter can not correspond to anything definite in the external world.⁴⁷

And even in the case of a single *pada* ‘word’, what does it mean that it has an *artha* which is tantamount to an external object? The question leads back to a pet-issue among Indian philosophers (as well as among many European ones), namely that of the meaning and/or reference of nouns (i.e. the *terms* of contemporary philosophers, which include proper names and definite descriptions, rather than bare substantives). Do they denote an individual, a natural kind, an *ākṛti* ‘configuration’, or an individual insofar as it is part of a natural kind? To have them denote an individual — rigidly, we would say today — is generally considered untenable,⁴⁸ but Jayanta refuted also the opposite stance, upheld by Kumārila, namely that words can only denote a natural kind, not singular individuals. In contrast, he suggested that the *artha* of a word is an individual insofar as it is endowed with the characteristics which make it a member of a natural kind, shortly a *vyakti tadvān* ‘an individual endowed with that (its natural kind)’.⁴⁹ In this sense, one could say that the referent is for Jayanta the *vyakti*, although the meaning is the individual’s natural kind.⁵⁰

⁴⁶A similar instance of the same opposition is: “Some say: the sentence-meaning is a cognition which has the appearance of the complex of the words’ meaning, since an external sentence-meaning is impossible” (*kecid ācakṣate — bāhyasya vākyarthasyāsaṃbhavāt padārthasaṃsarganirbhāsaṃ jñānam eva vākyārtha iti*, NM: 5.69).

⁴⁷Rather, according to the Mīmāṃsā point of view, a prescriptive sentence denotes the hierarchical relation of the elements it mentions in view of an action to be realised (NM: 5.74). Thus, it cannot by definition correspond to anything already existing.

⁴⁸One of the reasons is that if a word already denoted the individual, then we would understand a single thing through each word, e.g., we would grasp a single cow, different from all other cows, when we hear the word *cow*; see the NM 5 text edited in Kataoka (2009: 192, §1.4).

⁴⁹Below, we refer to this concept by the compound term *jātivadvakti* ‘individual endowed with the natural kind’.

⁵⁰On Jayanta’s final view, see also Ganeri (1996: 13), which emphasises the value of the deictic:

An utterance of “tree” should be thought of as having two components, a demonstrative element, expressed by a deictic pronoun “this”, and a qualifying, predicative component, expressed by the possessive affix attached to the name of a property, “...has treehood”. In other words, the nominal “tree” is analysed as having a ‘deep’ structure “this, having-tree-hood” or “this, (which) is-a-tree”. The deictic pronoun ensures that the expression is token-reflexive, different utterances referring to different, demonstratively indicated objects.

Jayanta also held on to the Mimāṃsakas’ emphasis on language as being linked to external reality, and consequently as being able to communicate knowledge. However, “an individual (*vyakti*, and not *piṇḍa*) endowed with a natural kind” cannot be straightforwardly described as an external object (such as a concrete pot). Hence, one might suggest that, like necessarily in the case of sentences, even for words, the *artha* is a mental entity. This does not mean that it is dependent on the subjectivity of each individual speaker. Psychology has nothing to do with it. Rather, natural kinds are innate to the nature of things but they are not available to perception as separate from the individuals, and can only be grasped within the individuals in which they inhere.

The main problem in reconstructing Jayanta’s thought in a way which can be understandable also for contemporary linguists and philosophers lies in the fact that the dichotomies existing for the latter two did not exist for Jayanta and vice versa. Not only the answers are different, but also the problems are differently framed. Within Jayanta’s — and possibly many other classical Indian authors’ — thought, the dichotomies at play are the following ones:

- *cognitive vs. linguistic*: it is not necessarily the case that a known object is also accessible to language;
- *cognitive vs. epistemological*: Jayanta was quite clear about the distinction between cognitions in general (including wrong cognitions, illusions, dream-images, etc.) and pieces of knowledge (acquired through the usage of means of knowledge);
- *ontological vs. epistemological*: although, usually, what one knows exists, and, vice versa, what exists can be known, the relation is not in every case straightforward and one-to-one. There can be residual things which cannot be known, although they provide an ontological anchorage for what we know.

The basic system of Jayanta’s thought about *artha* can be summarised in the Figure 3.

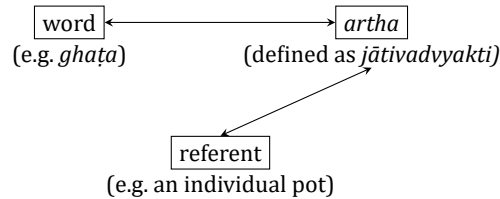


Figure 3: Jayanta’s use of *artha*

The arrows represent necessary links. They are either rooted in the nature of things (such as the one between individual and natural kind) or in a convention which cannot be altered by human beings (*saṅketa* ‘stipulation’, the conventional relation holding between the word *ghaṭa* ‘pot’ and its meaning).⁵¹

⁵¹On *saṅketa* and competing Indian theories, see Arnold (2006).

The *artha* does not exist as a concrete entity, but neither is it a psychological abstraction, since it depends on the reality of things and is therefore the same for all human beings. The possibility of using language to communicate knowledge is based on these necessary links. Note also that such a scheme vaguely recalls Ogden and Richards' semiotic triangle (Ogden and Richards 1923: 11).

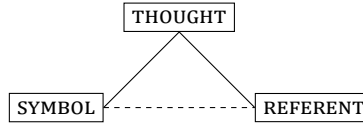


Figure 4: Semiotic triangle

Jayanta defined the *artha* as *tadvān*, i.e., “the [*vyakti*] endowed with that (its *jāti*)”.⁵² Note, Jayanta did not say that the *artha* is a *piṇḍa tadvān*, which would be theoretically legitimate, since the *jāti* is said to exist within the *piṇḍa*. In fact, the meaning does not refer to the ultimate concrete particular, the *piṇḍa*, which lies beyond the grasp of language. It is only as *vyakti* that a *piṇḍa* can be accessed. Consequently, the external object might be referred to as *piṇḍa*, if one has in view a single concrete entity, whereas *vyakti* refers to its logical role as distinguished from the *jāti* and provides the reference of linguistic acts.

Hence, something can be an *artha* without being a *vastu* (such is the case of the meaning of false sentences or of fictional ones), and it can be a *vastu* although it is not a *piṇḍa*. On the other hand, a *piṇḍa* is necessarily *bāhya*, but it can be denoted only via the fact that it is a *vyakti*. See the Table 1 for a survey of Jayanta's terminology.

| Approach | | Terminology |
|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| linguistic | | <i>artha</i> |
| epistemological | (<i>jñeya</i>) | <i>viśaya</i> |
| | (<i>prameya</i>) | <i>vastu</i> |
| ontological | (knowable) | <i>jāti/vyakti</i> |
| | (noumenal) | <i>piṇḍa</i> |

Table 1: Jayanta's terminology (Please note that *jñā-* refers to all sorts of cognitions, whereas *pramā-* only to valid ones.)

See the Table 2 for a comparison of Jayanta's terms with their suggested European parallels. The insertion of *vyakti* in two different rows of the Table 2 is meant to accommodate the identification — supported by Analytic philosophers — of the linguistic referent with the presumably real object.

Due to its generic usage, *artha* can also be used as a synonym of *viśaya* (e.g., *virodhārtha* ‘point of disagreement’, in NM 5, Kataoka 2010: 194, §3.1) or *vastu*

⁵² *gotvādjātyāvachinnaṃ vyaktimātram artho yas tadvān* ‘That meaning (*artha*) is the sheer individual determined by the natural kind, such as cowness, the one (individual) endowed with that (a natural kind)’ (NM 5, NM: 5).

| <i>Approach</i> | <i>Terminology</i> | <i>European parallels</i> |
|-----------------|---|---|
| linguistic | <i>artha</i> <i>vyakti</i> | meaning referent |
| epistemological | (<i>jñeya</i>) (<i>prameya</i>) <i>vastu</i> | mental representation propositional content |
| ontological | (knowable) <i>jāti</i> <i>vyakti</i> (noumenal) <i>piṇḍa</i> | natural kind individual concrete particular |

Table 2: Scheme of European Terms

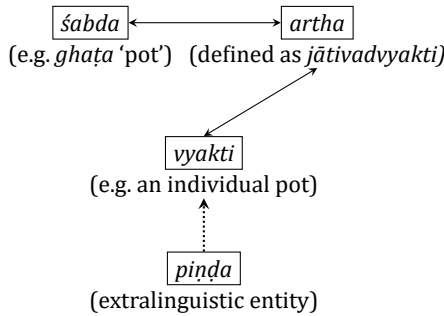


Figure 5: Semantic connections according to Jayanta

(cf. the common usage of *yathārtha-jñāna* ‘cognition which conforms to its object’, i.e. ‘valid cognition’, in NM 1). It can also be used to denote ‘external object’ when one does not want to take into account its concreteness or its individuality, or even its epistemological soundness (e.g., *apohaḥ* [...] *jñānārthābhyām anyah* ‘the *apoha* is different from both cognition and [external] objects’, NM 5, Kataoka 2010: 473–472, §2). If this is the case, one will need to interpret *artha* accordingly.

A *piṇḍa* ‘concrete particular’ becomes a *vyakti* insofar as it participates of a natural kind. Only once it is conceptualised as a *vyakti* it enters, indirectly, the domain of language, see Figure 5.

The dotted arrow \uparrow stands for the link intervening between a *piṇḍa*, understood as an extralinguistic entity, and its rationalisation as a *vyakti*, an individual or token of a given natural kind.

As for *vastu*, by this term Jayanta designated the propositional content that has been cognised through one of the instruments of knowledge. Therefore, *vastu*, although not directly belonging to the linguistic circuit, plays an important role when one has in view — like Jayanta had — language as an instrument of knowledge. In other words, neither *piṇḍa* nor *vastu* belong to language *stricto sensu*, but they provide language with — respectively — an ontological and epistemological anchorage (see Figure 6).

The double-lined arrow \uparrow represents the fact that *vyakti* and *vastu* are ontologically one and the same thing, although considered from two different points of view. A *vyakti* becomes a *vastu* only insofar as it has been known through an

instrument of knowledge.

An increased awareness of the theoretical issues involved in the debate on language may also make us aware of the mental aspect of linguistic referring, and thus better understand the opposition between *pratītyā* ‘cognitively’ and *sattayā* ‘ontologically’ (see above, section 2.4). Jayanta was very cautious about the existence of *arthas* only *pratītyā*, probably in order to distantiate the Nyāya position from the Buddhist one. His solution, therefore, will be that the ontological status of *arthas* is not discussed, but the epistemological value of linguistic communication is guaranteed by the fact that the *artha* is connected with the *vastu*, as can be proven through the fact that the same object of linguistic expressions, the *vyakti tadvān*, can also be known through perception and the other means of knowledge.⁵³

3 Conclusions

We can conclude, therefore, that Jayanta was not just using different terms to mean one and the same thing. By contrast, grasping the theoretic depth of Jayanta’s thought on language may significantly improve our ability to understand, translate and critically edit his texts.

As for the issue at stake, *śabdās* ‘linguistic expressions’ are bound to *arthas* ‘meanings’, and thus refer deterministically to *vastu* ‘objective propositional content’ as *vyaktis* ‘individuals’ of some *jāti* ‘natural kind’, leaving behind the *piṇḍas* ‘concrete particulars’. In this way, language can be a means of knowledge.

In view of the goal we stated at the beginning, namely, enhancing our understanding of Jayanta by looking at his work also through the lens of philosophy of language, let us also use a contemporary linguistic approach to point out some fineties which may have been overlooked by sheer philologists:

- *Abstract vs. concrete* dichotomy: The concrete particular, *piṇḍa*, is beyond the grasp of language, thus language deals only with the abstract level. However, *piṇḍa* provides the anchorage of language to reality.

⁵³On *pramāṇasamplava* ‘concurrence of various instruments of knowledge [to the cognition of a single object]’ as a legitimate way to guarantee the cognition’s validity, see Freschi and Graheli 2005: 312.

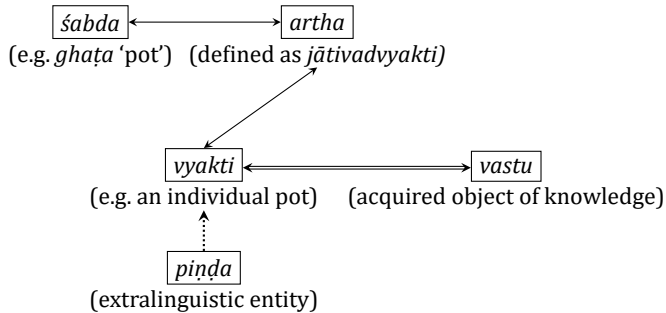


Figure 6: Semantic and ontological connections according to Jayanta

- *Class vs. individual* dichotomy: For Jayanta, the individual can be spoken of only insofar as it is a token of a class. From the epistemological viewpoint, however, the class is grasped only insofar as it inheres in an individual.
- *Mental vs. real* dichotomy: Jayanta wanted to reject the nominalistic approach of the Buddhists. Thus, although the *artha* is defined by him as a concept, Jayanta was very keen to stress its deterministic connection with reality as it can be grasped through the other means of knowledge (i.e., its *vastutva*).
- *Ideal language vs. everyday's language* dichotomy: Due to the influence of Vedic exegesis, Jayanta — like most other Indian authors — was quite aware of the distinction between ordinary and technical language. Nonetheless, he seems to have maintained that the rules of the one remain valid also for the other (as explicitly claimed by Mīmāṃsā authors, see ŚBh ad MS 1.1.1). An artificial language, that of Navya Nyāya, would be elaborated only later in the history of Nyāya with the purpose of exactly representing its object.
- *Vague vs. determinate* dichotomy: Due to his concern for the epistemic function of language, Jayanta needed to deterministically link language and reality. However, the level of reality that the language refers to is that of the individual members of certain natural kinds. Language cannot be deterministic all the way down to the concrete particulars (e.g. each concrete cow). Individuals are spoken about insofar as they share common characters but not insofar as their concrete particular characteristics are concerned. To summarize: the vagueness of language is not explicitly taken into account (similarly to what happens in Russell's referentialism), although Jayanta knew that words cannot refer to ultimate particulars (see above, fn. 48). Consequently, within the "*śabda-artha*-extralinguistic entity" scheme (see Figure 3), something (the *piṇḍa*) remains beyond the grasp of language.
- *Cognitive vs. linguistic* dichotomy: Jayanta dealt with language as an instrument of knowledge. The possible gap between concepts and linguistic expressions apt to express them is not taken into account. It seems that for Jayanta there is no chance for a concept not to be expressible by language. However, he uses a special term (*vastu*) for the rightly acquired object of knowledge independently of its being spoken of by language, thus seemingly admitting the possibility of knowledge independent of language. This perspective is also linked with the more inclusive nature of epistemology in India, which deals also with cases of false cognition (such as mirages, dreams, hallucinations, etc.) and can therefore accommodate within itself also the meaning of fictional linguistic expressions, etc.
- *Content vs. expression* dichotomy: Jayanta probably had a clear idea of the distinction between form (signifier) and meaning (signified), unseparably linked. Being a Naiyāyika, he maintained that this link is due to a convention, but that this convention is unavailable to human beings, who cannot change it (both points are as with Saussure). Jayanta was even aware of the

arbitrariness of the signifier, since he recognized the phonological difference between languages.⁵⁴

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Abbreviations

MS *Mīmāṃsāsūtra*, see Subbāśāstrī 1929-1934

NM *Nyāyamañjarī*, see NM and Śāstrī Tailaṅga 1895–1896

ŚBh *Śābarabhāṣya*, see Subbāśāstrī 1929-1934

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⁵⁴This topic is elaborated by Nyāya authors (especially from Uddyotakara onwards and implicitly also in Vātsyāyana) in connection with NS 2.1.56, see Freschi and Graheli 2005: 303.

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