CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF ‘BEING’ IN CLASSICAL VAIŚEŠIKA

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While ‘non-being’ and ‘negation’ are among the favourite topics of recent Nyāya and Vaiśešika studies, the corresponding theme of

1 Abbreviations:

Kir. Kiranaśvali by Udayanacārīya, in: Vaiśešikadarśanam ... with the comm. of Praṣastapāda and the gloss of Udayanacārya, ed. V. P. DVIVEDI (Benares 1919; Benares Sanskrit Ser. 9).

NBh Nyāyabhāṣya, see ND1, ND4.

ND1 The Nyāya-Darśana. The Sūtras of Gautama and Bhāṣya of Vātsyāyana, with two comm. ... ed. Ganganatha Jha and Dhundhiraj Shastri. Benares 1925; Chowkhamba Sanskrit Ser.).

ND2 Nyāyadarśana of Gautama, with the Bhāṣya of Vātsyāyana, the Vārttikā of Udyotakara, the Tātparyaṭīkā of Vācaspati, and the Pariśuddhi of Udayana (Volume I — Chapter I). Ed. Anantalal Thakur (Darbhanga 1967; Mithila Inst. Ser. Ancient Text 20).

NK/N8 Nyāyakandali by Śrīdhara, in: Bhāṣya of Praṣastapāda, together with the Nyāyakandali ..., ed. V. P. DVIVEDI (Benares 1895; Vizianagram Sanskrit Ser. 6).

NM Nyāyamaṇḍari of Jayanta Bhaṭṭa, ed. S. N. Sūkla, 2 vols. (Benares 1934/36; Kashi Sanskrit Ser. 100).

NS Die Nyāyasūtras. Text, Übersetzung ... von W. Ruben (Leipzig 1928; repr. Nendeln 1966; Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 18/2).

NV The Nyāyavārttikā of Udyotakara Miśra, ed. V. P. DUBE (Calcutta 1887—1914; Biblioth. Indica).

NV2 Nyāyavārttikā, see ND4.

.PB Praṣastapādabhāṣya ... with comm. Sūkti, by Jagadiśa Tarkalakāra, Setu by Padmanabh Miśra, and Vyomavatī by Vyomaśivācārya, ed. Gopinath Kaviraj (Benares 1924—1930; Chowkhamba Sanskrit Ser.).

PP Prakaranapañcikā of Śālikanātha Miśra, with Nyāyasiddhi (by Jayapurnārya Bhaṭṭa), ed. A. Subrahmanya Sastri (Benares 1961; Banaras Hindu Univ. Darśana Ser. 4).

VS The Vaiśešika Sūtras of Kaṇḍa ..., transl. by N. Sinha (Allahabad 1911; Sacred Books of the Hindus 6; contains also the Sanskrit text of the Sūtras).

VS4 Vaiśešikasūtras of Kaṇḍa, with the comm. of Candrananda, crit. ed. Jambulīlaya (Baroda 1961; Gaekwad’s Oriental Ser. 136).

Vy. Vyomavatī by Vyomaśīva, see PB.
‘being’, although both historically and systematically more—or at least equally—fundamental, has only met with a somewhat casual interest®.

The conception of sattā and bhāva as ‘highest universal’ (param sīmānyam) is, no doubt, sufficiently familiar; yet, its exact implications in the context of classical Vaiśeṣika, its interrelations with sattīva, sattāsambandha, svātmasattva etc., and its function and describability in terms of, or in contrast to, such Western concepts as ‘existence’ have never been thoroughly investigated.

One of the consequences of this has been that discussions of abhāva are often lacking in perspective and do not do justice to the full and proper historical and systematic dimensions of their theme. It usually remains unanswered or even completely unquestioned how and why abhāva was “added” as a seventh padārtha, and how, and to what extent, certain ways of conceiving of ‘being’ may have been conducive to certain corresponding ways of conceiving of ‘non-being’. — At any rate: An exploration of the role and development of abhāva especially in Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika is necessarily incomplete as long as it does not go hand in hand with an exploration of the theme and terminology of ‘being’ which forms its counterpart and background; and this, of course,

The following is a revised and considerably expanded version of a paper read at the 29th International Congress of Orientalists, Paris 1973. In the meantime, the stimulating discussions with the participants of my Seminar in Indian Philosophy (Oriental Studies 711) at the University of Pennsylvania, with whom I read some of the related texts, gave me a welcome opportunity to re-examine this complex of questions.


See below, notes 26—28; more specific references to this theme are to be found in D. N. Shastri, Critique of Indian Realism (Agra 1964), and especially in R. R. Daud, The Problem of Universals in Indian Philosophy (Delhi etc. 1972).

® A satisfactory treatment of this intricate historical question would require a more careful distinction of the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika traditions than it is usually met with especially in Indian contributions. — Within Vaiśeṣika itself, it is remarkable that Candramati’s Daśapadārthaśāstra, in which the Vaiśeṣika system is restricted to a ‘doctrine of categories’, presents ‘non-being’ as a separate padārtha, while Prāśastapāda’s Padārthadharmasamgraha, which re-emphasizes the more traditional ‘physicalistic’ aspects of the Vaiśeṣika philosophy of nature, has no room for it.
also requires an awareness of the implications of our own terminological tools in the area of 'being' and 'non-being'. It is certainly not very helpful to use phrases like "negation as an entity" or "non-existence as reality", as long as it remains unclarified how the 'reality' with which 'non-being' itself is credited has to be distinguished from, and related to, that meaning of 'to be' according to which non-being is not being.

The following remarks are meant to be preliminary and do not claim to present anything like an exhaustive answer and solution. They are by and large confined to classical Vaiṣeṣika texts of the 1st millennium A.D., especially to Praśastapāda's Padārthadharmanasamgraha and its commentaries, and they are focussing on the genesis, meaning and function of that conceptual construction which is indicated by the terms sattā, astiva, sattāsambandha and svāmasattā. — Within the Indian panorama, the Vaiṣeṣika way of dealing with 'being' is certainly not the most inspiring and convincing one; yet, it is illustrative in its stubborn and honest one-sidedness, and moreover, it is one of the most important catalysts for the development of Indian 'ontology', and highly effective in terms of the critical responses which it stimulates.

As to the terminology of 'being' in the Vaiṣeṣikasūtras, the following short reminders may be sufficient for the purposes of our present discussion: In this text of notoriously unsatisfactory philological status, two terms, sattā and bhāva, represent the understanding of 'being' as the highest sāmānyya, i.e. the most universal, all-pervasive common feature—perceptible by all senses—, of 'substances', 'qualities' and 'motions' (dravya, guṇa, karman). It appears likely that at an earlier stage Vaiṣeṣika did not go beyond these three 'categories' or constituents of reality. And if, in accordance with the testimony of Vyomaśīva and others, Kaṇāda actually announced his philosophy as a programme

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7. Cf. VS1, I, 2, 4ff.; on the perceptibility of bhāva cf. VS3 IV, 1, 14 (= VS1IV, 1, 13).
6. VS1 I, 1, 4—the only passage presenting an enumeration of all six 'categories' and using the term pūḍārtha—is neither found in VS3 nor in the Śūtra version of the anonymous commentary published by Anantāla Thakur (Vaiṣeṣikadarśana, Darbhanga 1957); the authenticity of VS1 I, 1, 4 was already questioned by M. R. Bodas in his introduction to Tarkasamgraha of Annambhaṭṭa, ed. Y. V. Athalye (Bombay 1897; repr. of 2nd ed. Poona 1963) XXXIIIff.
of naming, enumerating whatever has the character of being (bhāvarūpa),
we may assume that he was referring to this group of 'categories' which
are obviously more suitable for being enumerated than the 'universals'
(sāmānyā) etc. It would, of course, be idle to speculate on whether
'being' was already an explicitly developed theme of thought in "original"
Vaiśeṣika, or whether the idea of 'being', which forms the horizon of
this programme of exhaustive enumeration and classification, was
simply and commonsensically taken for granted. — How the way of
presenting asat and contrasting it with sat in VS IX fits in with the
original bhāra-orientation, and whether or to what extent this section
of the text may at all be regarded as old and authentic, is a question
which we cannot enlarge upon here.

The most familiar rendering of sattā and its terminological equivalent
bhāva is 'existence'; this translation demands some caution insofar
as it should not be taken as suggesting any contrast to 'essence'. Although
the connotation of 'actuality' and 'manifestness' is undeniable in the
actual usage of sat, sattā, as used thematically and terminologically,
leaves 'essence' and 'existence' undivided, just as it does not establish
any confrontation between 'being' and 'nothing'. Rather, it puts what-
ever there is, or 'exists', on a common ground with anything else that
exists, thus providing a basis for comprehensive enumeration and
classification. We may also note here that the traditional verbal and
actional connotations of bhāva, accentuated especially by grammarians
and grammatically oriented philosophers, do not affect the Vaiśeṣika

10 On the implication of completeness and exhaustiveness in Kanāda's
programme cf., e.g., NK 8—9: ... sarvajyena mahāraśā sarvārthopadeśāya
pravṛttena ...; this formula is repeated on p. 149.

11 See above, n. 4.

12 This translation is taken for granted in most of the general histories
of Indian philosophy; it is also used, e.g., in the majority of texts referred
to in notes 2—3 and 26—27. B. K. Matilal, however (cf. n. 2), has "being-
ness"; in his more recent publication: Epistemology, Logic, and Grammar
in Indian Philosophical Analysis (The Hague 1971) he paraphrases "existence
or being-ness".—D. H. H. Ingalls, Materials for the Study of Nava-
Nyāya Logic (Cambridge, Mass. 1951)—generally a work of considerable
terminological impact upon English translations of philosophical Sanskrit
terms—gives "reality".

13 This connotation in the understanding of sat is also evident in the
rejection of the implicit, potential 'being' which is implied by the Sāmkhya
dotrine of satkārya; cf., e.g., NK 143f. — M. Biardeau states: "... la
pensee indienne ne distingue à aucun moment l'essence de l'existence"
(La philosophie de Maṇḍana Miśra vue à partir de la Brahmaśiddhi, Paris
1969, p. 71).

14 Cf. L. Renou, Terminologie grammaticale du Sanskrit (Paris 1957)
243—244; 470—471.
usage. — Although awkward, an expression like 'beingness' might therefore be a more appropriate translation of sattā.

While sattā and bhāva, if and insofar as they are used terminologically, are obviously treated as synonyms in the Vaiśeṣikasūtras; there is, nevertheless, a functional difference which has to be taken into consideration: While sattā has a strictly terminological role, to which it remains basically confined also in later texts, bhāva is much more flexible and open to various other, less terminological functions, which should not be taken as evidence for the Vaiśeṣika doctrine of 'being' or 'beingness'. Yet, this variety of other usages is by no means negligible. The very fact that it exists and that it accompanies, and inevitably intrudes into, the doctrinal and terminological statements about 'being' is itself a potential stimulus of raising questions and objections, e.g. concerning such issues as the problem of self-reference, and it may thus have its direct or indirect bearing on the thematic and doctrinal level, too.

Praśastapāda goes on using sattā and bhāva in accordance with the language of the Sūtras, presenting 'beingness' as an attribute comparable with, and only more extensive in its scope, than 'blueness'; insofar as they are factors of unity and similarity, objective bases of recurrent perception and linguistic repetition, they are on equal terms. In trying to accentuate his point, Praśastapāda even refers to the unity of the blue liquid which can give blueness to many different things in the process of dying: yathā parasparaviśeṣaṃ carnavatvāsramaḥ balādiṣv ekaṃ nandārayābhīsam bandhān nilam nilam iti pratjayānuṣṭhitik, tathā parasparaviśeṣaṃ dravyagunākarman avviṣeṣā sat sad iti pratjayānuṣṭhitik, sā ca arthāntarād bhavānīm arhati-itī, yat tad arthāntaram sā sattā-itī siddhā. — In addition to sattā, however, Praśastapāda has a term which is symptomatic of his way of restructuring and rounding off the Vaiśeṣika system: the 'common abstract attribute' (sādharmya) astīva,

18 The synonymity of both is explicitly stated by Candrānanda on VS 2.1, 2, 4. — There is no evidence for equating Kaṇāda's bhāva with Praśastapāda's astīva, as D. N. Shastri, Critique of Indian Realism (Agra 1964) 148, would like to do.

19 To a lesser degree, this may be said about sattā (not in VS), too, which appears sometimes in terminologically less committed functions than sattā; cf. Vy. 126; NK 19.

17 In contrast with VS 1, 2, 4, cf., e. h., the less terminological uses of bhāva and abhāva in VS 1, 2, 9 ff. (= II, 2, 10 ff.).

18 Cf. the two levels of using abhāva in locutions like abhāvaya prabhā upadesa bhāvapādrastraṇyāṇa na t Bhāvānti (NK 7).

19 PB 311—312.
'is-ness'\textsuperscript{20}, which, together with \textit{jñeyata} ('knowableness') and \textit{abhi-dheyata} ('nameableness'), covers all six 'categories' and can accordingly be predicated of \textit{sattā} itself. 'Beingness', like all 'universals' (sāmānya), 'is' itself in that sense of 'to be' which is represented by \textit{astivā}; its 'being' in the sense of \textit{sattā} would, of course, lead to an infinite regress (anarasthā). — Although there is no such second-level term and concept of 'being' in the Vaiśeṣika Sūtras, there are nevertheless certain locutions — e.g. \textit{dravyagunakarmabhyo 'rthāntaram sattā}\textsuperscript{21} — which may be taken as presupposing or implicitly requiring it; the word \textit{arthaṭara}, often, but somewhat loosely used in the Sūtras, is, as we have seen, explicitly referred to by Praśastapāda, and it is obviously one of the signposts for his account of 'being'\textsuperscript{22}.

Subsequent to his introduction of the term \textit{astivā} — \textit{pañām api padārthānam astivābhidheyatvajñeyatvāni}\textsuperscript{23} — Praśastapāda characterizes \textit{dravya}, \textit{guna} and \textit{karman} as having \textit{sattā-sambandha}, 'connection with beingness', and \textit{sāmānya}, \textit{ciṣēśa} and \textit{samaṇḍya} as having \textit{svātmasattā}, 'beingness of, or by virtue of, the own nature'\textsuperscript{24}. He does not explain these terms, which — if we may disregard here the occasional use of \textit{sattā-nusambandha}\textsuperscript{25} — occur only once in his text. — There have been several usually rather incidental attempts to translate, paraphrase or account for this conceptual structure and its constituents. M. \textsc{Hiriyanna} explains \textit{svātmasat} as "intrinsically real" and contrasts it with the "borrowed being" of \textit{dravya} etc.; he adds: "This distinction is remarkably like that between subsistence and existence"\textsuperscript{26} — but without really clarifying his understanding of these Western terms. G. \textsc{Patti} interprets \textit{astivā} as 'essentia' in the scholastic sense and \textit{sattā} as 'existentia', and he paraphrases \textit{svātmasattā} as "Wesen, das sich selbst genügend ist"\textsuperscript{27}. T. \textsc{Vetter} finds intimations of a transcendental approach (in the Kantian and Post-Kantian sense) in the Vaiśeṣika formulations\textsuperscript{28}. — By and large, the implications of the fact that there is a twofold concep-

\textsuperscript{20} On the conception of a \textit{mahāsāmānya} as coinciding with \textit{padārthata} according to Jaina commentators cf. H. \textsc{U}, The Vaiśeṣika Philosophy (Varanasi 1962) 35ff.; it seems that Candramati himself does not have the term and concept of \textit{astivā}.

\textsuperscript{21} VS\textsuperscript{11} i 1, 2, 8.

\textsuperscript{22} See above, n. 19. — In Candramati, \textit{sattā} appears as a separate \textit{padārtha}.

\textsuperscript{23} PB 16.

\textsuperscript{24} PB 17; 19.

\textsuperscript{25} PB 312.

\textsuperscript{26} Indian Philosophical Studies I (Mysore 1957) 111.

\textsuperscript{27} Der Samavāya im Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika-System (Roma 1955) 143.

\textsuperscript{28} Erkenntnisprobleme bei Dharmakirti (Wien 1964) 94.
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In the strictest sense, satī — active on the one hand, sattāsambandha — svātmasattva on the other hand, have not really become thematic in these discussions.

Returning now to Prāśastapāda’s own text, we may first of all observe that the terms in the immediate neighbourhood of sattāsambandha resp. svātmasattva suggest some commonsensically obvious implications of such a distinction. The bringing about of ‘merit’ and ‘demerit’, the status of cause and effect, impermanence, etc. (dharma-dharmakarītvā, kāraṇatva, kāryatva, anīyatva) — these features are restricted to the realm of particulars, which are, and have a concrete, ‘manifest’ being, insofar as satī is inherent in them. With regard to the second group of ‘categories’ — sc. ‘universals’, ‘individualities’ and ‘inherence’ — Prāśastapāda says: sāmānyādināṁ trayānāṁ svātmasattvam buddhilakṣṇātanaṁ akāraṇatvam akāraṇatvam asāmānyavisēṣaṇātanaṁ nīyatvam arthaśādānābhidheyaatvam. ‘Universals’ etc. can be said to be, insofar as they are genuine objects of knowledge; they are irreducible constituents, parts of the world; they are, however, not physically separable entities, nor metaphysically superior archetypal powers.

As for astitva, which covers both groups of ‘categories’ and their respective ways of being, the conjunction with ‘knowableness’ and ‘nameableness’, together with the whole context in which it appears, gives us some hints: astitva means the applicability of the word ‘is’, i.e. the fact that there is an objective basis and condition for saying ‘it is’, in the sense of its being identifiable, recognizable, distinguishable from, not reducible to other entities, and thereby knowable, speakable, suitable as truth-condition for thought and speech. — We may recall here Prāśastapāda’s familiar practice of justifying the assumption of entities by claiming them as indispensable causes or conditions (kāraṇa, hetu, nimitta) of undeniable occurrences in thought and speech (pratyaya, vyavahāra). The word asti may be used to accentuate the veridical claim attached to such assumptions, as, e.g., in the following statement

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20 PB 17—18.
21 The term buddhilakṣṇātana obviously refers to the buddhayapekṣam of VS I 2, 2; cf. NK 19.
21 Arthaśādānābhidheyaatvam reflects VS VIII, 2, 3 (= VS VIII, 14): artha uī dravyagunakarmanu; as to the characteristic akāraṇatva, Śrīdhara specifies that it can only exclude samavādīyaṃ samavādīkāraṇatva, not, however, nimittakāraṇatva as capability of ‘causing’ knowledge or apprehension (NK 20).
22 PB 19.
23 Cf. Vy. 118.
24 On ‘causality’ in the case of ‘universals’ etc. see above, n. 31.
with regard to *samaṇaya*... *iti pratayayadārśanād aṣṭy esām sambandha *

iti *jñāyate*. 23

Śrīdhara āpi paraphrases *aṣṭīva* as *svarūpa-vatvā*, and he determines that it is the ‘characteristic nature’ of any entity which constitutes its ‘is-ness’ (*gasya vastuno yat svarūpaṃ tad eva kasya-aṣṭīvam*). Obviously, this is in keeping with the connotation of identifiability and recognizability in Praśastapāda’s use of *aṣṭīva* and, moreover, with his use of the term *svarūpa*, as in *ātmavesvarūpa*, *svarūpābhedā*, *svarūpālocanāmātra*, etc. 77. At the same time, however, the concept of *svarūpa*, in its functional openness and almost universal applicability, can hardly safeguard the ontological positivity which Praśastapāda connects with his notion of *aṣṭīva*, which, according to the whole context and orientation of his thought, is not supposed to include ‘non-being’ (*abhāva*).—Already Udayana remarks: *abhāvas tu svarūpa-vān api*... 38, and a critic like Śrīharṣa can justly emphasize that identifiability and distinguishability, as constituted by *svarūpa*, are no basis for contrasting ‘being’ and ‘non-being’, reality and fiction. 42. — In spite of its veridical functions, Praśastapāda’s *aṣṭīva* preserves a basically ‘existential’ connotation. It is insofar characteristically different from *tattva*, as it is at home in the more epistemologically oriented Nyāya, where it is explained as including both *sat* and *asat*: Both ‘being’ and ‘non-being’, ‘presence’ and ‘absence’ may be objective correlates of thought and speech, insofar as they may have a truth-conditioning function with regard to positive resp. negative propositions. 46. *Tattva* is an essentially veridical term; and it indicates a framework and context of thought which was certainly more conducive to the later development of *abhāva* than the original, ‘positively’ ontological world-orientation of Vaiśeṣika.

The second group of ‘categories’, sc. ‘universals’ etc., may easily be subsumed under this all-inclusive notion of *aṣṭīva*: Their whole

23 PB 325; cf. 311: *yad anugatam aṣṭi*... (on *samaṇya*).

24 NK 16. — Cf. the uses of *svabhāva*, *svarūpa*, *svadharma* in NBh on IV, 1, 38 (ND 1, 707ff.; NS IV a 35 in Ruben’s edition).

27 PB 311f.; 186f.

28 Kir. 6; Udayana discusses why *abhāva* has not been mentioned as a special ‘category’ and adds: *pratyoginirūpaṇādhinānirūpaṇāt*, na *tu* *tucchatāt* cf. also Nyāyakusumāṇaji on Kārikā I, 10. — Unlike later commentators, Udayana does not, as it is sometimes maintained, take *aṣṭīva* as including *abhāva*, and insofar not as co-extensive with *jñeyata* and *abhidhēyata*; cf. Kir. 27.


30 Cf. NBh and NV on I, 1, 1 (ND 1, 11f.); concerning VS I, 1, 4, which may have been modelled on NS I, 1, 1, see above, n. 8.
'is-ness' is svātmāsattva, often paraphrased as svārūpasattva⁴¹; as such, it consists exclusively in their being identifiable natures, forms of their own and is consequently, although implying 'absence of beingness' (sattāviraṇaha⁴³), eternal, unchangeable and independent.

The application of 'is-ness' to the particular 'manifest' 'substances' (dravya) etc. and their way of being is more intricate. In order to avoid confusion, we have to keep in mind that there are two kinds or levels of ontological dichotomy in Praśastapāda (sattā—astīva and sattāsambandha—svātmāsattva), and we have to take into consideration that in the passage under discussion he uses the word sattāsambandha, not simply sattā⁴². Within the context of his thought, this is by no means negligible: Dealing with the common and specific attributes of all six 'categories', he can, according to his own principles, only speak in terms of sādharmya and vaidharmya, not in terms of sāmānya resp. sāmānyavātasa. Therefore, any use of sattā in this context and on this level of discourse would be illegitimate. The 'categories' and their instances, such as sattā itself, represent his way of naming and enumerating the components of the real world; they are immediately world-oriented ('intentio prima'). The dharmas (sādharīmymya—vaidharmya) as abstract attributes⁴⁴, on the other hand, do not present any further separable or juxtaposable world-components, but ways and viewpoints of comparing and conceptually relating the actual world-components. They constitute a kind of second level of the system, which still deals with the real objective world, but is less immediately world-oriented, more concerned with systematic and structural devices and without the crudely hypostasizing ontological commitment of the 'first level'. — Praśastapāda does not have a theory of semantic levels, but he has a keen systematic mind and is keeping himself constantly aware of the danger of anavasthā, 'infinite regress'. He carefully avoids confusing his two levels of discourse and never treats a sāmānya and a sādharīmymya as commensurable or comparable. Consequently, the question what sattā and astīva have in common remains unasked; and the 'ontological dichotomy' which is involved here does not become explicitly thematic.—The term sattāsambandha, which is used in the sādharīmymya analysis, does not refer to sattā, 'being-

⁴¹ Cf. NK 19: . . . svārūpaṃ yat sāmānyādīnām tad eva teśām satvām. In Vyomaśīva’s 'ontological' sections, the notion of svārūpa plays a less prominent role than in Śrīdhara and Udayana. Vyomaśīva seems to be more interested in psychological explanation than in conceptual analysis.

⁴² Kir. 30.

⁴³ Although this distinction is not really carried through by the commentators.

⁴⁴ On the use of dharma, cf. NK 16: yady api dharmāḥ satpadārthabhye na vyatiricyante . . .
ness' as such, but rather to the condition of being related to it, which, though being common to all the individual 'substances' etc., is not an actually pervasive and ontologically separable factor of community like sattā itself: Being found in all particular 'manifest' entities (vyaktī), it nevertheless leaves them confined to their particularity. It is the universality of 'beingness' in the particularity of its being 'manifested' by individual entities.

In a sense, sattāsambandha comes closer to 'existence' than sattā itself, insofar as there is a more notable connotation of actuality and temporality: 'Connection with beingness' is the, in itself temporal and in the more ordinary cases impermanent, condition of being qualified by the qualifying universal 'beingness', which is as such eternal or rather atemporal. — In Praśastapāda commentaries and other later texts, the formula 'connection with beingness' often serves—especially in the compound svakāraṇasattāsambandha, 'connection with the beingness of the own cause'—the purpose of explaining utpatti, 'genesis', and kāryatva, the destructible contingent being of effects, i.e. composite entities. The question of its applicability to the ultimately simple and indestructible components or causes, such as the atoms, remains out of consideration or is, obviously not quite in agreement with Praśastapāda's own position, explicitly dispensed with. — It may be noted that in later texts not only sattāsambandha tends to coincide with 'destructibility' resp. 'producibility'; also sattā itself, not being distinguished from sattāsambandha, appears in a more temporal perspective, and its role is often reduced to serving as a counterpart and presupposition of pradhānamsābhāva, i.e. non-being resulting from destruction.

For a Vaiśeṣika critic of the 1st millennium like Śālikanātha, on the other hand, sattā still represents an understanding of 'being' which leaves no room for temporality and change.

Accepting Praśastapāda's own terms, the structure of his system and his way of not explicitly touching upon certain questions, one may concede that a conceptual settlement has been reached, and that

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44 The basic unsuitability of 'existence'—'essence', 'contingent' and 'necessary' being, 'esse ab aliō'—'esse a se' etc. for the translation of Praśastapāda's 'ontological' terminology should, however, always be kept in mind. — On the temporality of sattāsambandha cf. Bhāsarvajña, Nyāya-bhūṣaṇa (Varanasi 1968) 468.
45 E.g. Vy. 126; 129; 143; NK 18.
46 E.g. NK 17; Vy. 126.
47 Cf., e.g. Dinakari on Viśvanātha's Kārikāvalli, v. 9; ed. SANKARA RAMA SASTRY (Mylapore, Madras 1923) 114.
48 Cf. Rjuvimala on Prabhākara's Bṛhati, ed. A. CHINNASWAMI SASTRI (Benares 1929) 120f.; also PP 97ff.
his treatment of the problem of ‘being’ has its peculiar consistency. There are at least two ways and levels of talking about ‘being’: There is ‘being’ as sattā, the most comprehensive instance of the ‘category’ sāmāṇya, hypostasized ‘somethingsness’ which has itself become a something, a datum of sense-perception, one real and ontologically separable factor and component among others which constitute the world as it is given to us; and there is ‘being’ as astiva, which merely, and in a sense tautologically, states that whatever is, is (asti), i.e. has a certain character of positivity, identifiability.—Acceptance of this framework is, of course, not what we may expect from an opponent; and in the following centuries, this whole complex of ‘being’ was a highly welcome target of criticism and ridicule especially for Buddhists, Jainas, and Mīmāṃsakas, then also for Vedāntins. The commentators—I am mainly referring to Vyomaśiva, Śrīdhara, and Udayana—are forced into sometimes rather desperate conceptual efforts; occasionally, however, they cannot avoid to lay bare and make explicit the inherent tensions and ambiguities of Prāśastapāda’s apparently well-closed system.

It is beyond the scope of our present discussion to give a detailed account of the origin and systematic implications of the objections to sattā as they are stated in the pūrṇapāka sections of the Vaiśeṣika commentators. Consequently, we cannot fully explicate how these commentators try to defend and justify both sattā and astiva, nor can we analyze their attempts to rephrase the conceptual relationship between sattāsambandha and svāmasaṭṭva; it may suffice here to recall their practice of utilizing the concept of ‘metaphorical being’ (upacārāsattā, aupacārīki sattā) and of applying the principle of ‘co-occurrence’ (sāmāṇādhikaranaya; cf. also sādhāraṇadharmanādhikaranatā), which accounts for the extrapolation of ‘being’ to whatever has a common substratum with ‘beingness’, i.e. also to ‘universals’ etc.—At any rate, ‘beingness’, sattā itself is stubbornly defended against epistemological, pragmatistic and other decompositions (pramāṇasambandhayogatā, arthakriyākārita, vartamānakālasambandhitvā). The argumentation is

50 Such as Śrīharṣa (see above, n. 39).
51 Exemplary materials from these discussions will be presented and analyzed in a monograph now under preparation.
52 Cf. Vyomaśiva’s use of upacārāsattā, Vy. 124ff.; on the function of this concept in the philosophy of grammar see K. A. Subramania Iyer, Bhartṛhari (Poona 1969) 209ff.
54 Vy. 142f.
largely ad hominem; and all the opposing interpretations of 'being' are charged with leading to an infinite regress (anavasthā, anavasthāna⁴⁴). However, it is evident that the positive establishment of sattā as common denominator of whatever exists and its defense in terms of 'supreme similarity' becomes increasingly difficult and awkward in this atmosphere of discussion. Śrīdhara incidentally concedes that this alleged similarity of all 'beings' ultimately consists in their being distinguishable from non-being⁴⁵. In this way, he obviously weakens the old claims concerning the independence (svātantrya) of the conception of 'being'⁴⁶ and consequently the defense-line against the Buddhist apohavāda.—Astīva, being more of a functional concept, is in general more open to re-definition and re-interpretation, and accordingly subject to a process of semantic evaporation which is due to an increasingly epistemological and reflexive attitude. Its positivity is eventually relegated to the positivity, the affirmative character of the apprehension of which it is the object or content: Śrīdhara explains astīva occasionally as vidhiprātyayavrāga-vyayatva⁴⁷; Udayana’s widely accepted formula is vidhimukhapratyaya-vājyatva⁴⁸. The difficulties and potential consequences of defining astīva as svārāpyatva, as identifiability, distinguishability of whatever may ‘be’ identifiable or distinguishable, have already been referred to⁴⁹.

The problems inherent in Praśastapāda’s ‘ontological’ construction and generally in the conception of sattā as pervasive and qualifying sāmānya of whatever is sat are further illustrated by a question which was not explicitly considered by Praśastapāda himself, but, as one of stock arguments of the Vaiśeṣika critics, had to be faced and discussed by his commentators: Does that which is connected with ‘beingness’ have any ‘being’ in itself or not⁵⁰? Pursuing the implications of this question we may add: ‘Is there’ anything like an individual entity in itself of which ‘beingness’ would just be a further ‘real predicate’⁵¹?

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⁴⁴ Vy. 124ff.; NK 12f.
⁴⁵ NK 12: … teṣām abhāvavilakṣanena rupena tulyatāpratibhāsanat; in his defense against Prabhākara objections (cf. PP 97ff.), Śrīdhara has to face the fundamental difficulties which Aristotle avoided by not accepting ‘being’ as ‘highest genus’ (nor any summum genus at all).
⁴⁶ Cf. NV 11f.; this passage is referred to by Śrīdhara, NK 226.
⁴⁷ NK 15; cf. NK 226: vidhirūpatā.
⁴⁸ Kir. 27; Udayana adds pratiyogyanapekṣanirūpanatva.
⁴⁹ See above, notes 38—39.
⁵⁰ Vy. 126: kim sattā satam aha-asatam; NK 17: kim sattāsambandhah sato 'sato ud. — But see also below, n. 76.
⁵¹ According to Kant’s formulation, Kritik der reinen Vernunft B 626: “Sein ist offenbar kein reales Prädikat . . .”
Is there an astīvā of ‘substances’ etc. apart from their sattā? And does sattā actually add anything to what an individual thing ‘is’ as such?

One method of reacting to this notorious dilemma (vīkalpa) had been not to accept it as such and to deny any temporal, ‘physical’ implications of the idea of a ‘connection with beingness’: na sattāḥ sattāsambandhāḥ, na-asattāḥ | yadā-eva tad vastu tad-eva sattāyā sam-baddham . . .44. — The Vaiśeṣika commentators are familiar with kind of reply and refer to it in their argumentation45; yet this does not take care of all their problems: The basic Vaiśeṣika attitude of dissection and juxtaposition precludes them from simply and firmly grounding the meaning and unity of ‘being’ in the concrete unity of the vastu; as their reactions demonstrate, the difficulties caricatured by this ‘dilemma about being or non-being’ (sadasadvikalpa) are, indeed, deeply rooted in the ontological orientation of the system.

Especially Śrīdhara, blurring in a sense Prāśastapāda’s distinction of two levels of discourse, goes rather far in suggesting an actual ontological cleavage. Arguing that both astīvā and sattā are necessary to adequately describe and explain the world as it is, he says that while sattā is necessary to account for our apprehension of ‘being’ in its unity and universality, astīvā or svarūpaavattva is indispensable insofar as sattā would never inhere in what does not have a svarūpa, a characteristic nature of its own46. Arguing against the attempt of the Prabhākaraś to understand ‘being’ in terms of the mere vastu-svarūpa, the ‘characteristic nature’ and self-identity of each single entity, and without the assumption of a real sattāśāmānya (sattā being reduced to an ‘extrinsic qualification’—upādiḥ, sc. pramāṇasambandhayogatā, ‘suitability for being connected with a means of knowledge’47), Śrīdhara never says, nor does he presuppose, that there is no such thing as an independent vastu-svarūpa. Instead, his whole emphasis is on that it would not be sufficient to explain our apprehension of the unity of ‘being’ in the different entities48. Vice versa, the Prabhākaraś’s denial of an independent real

44 NV1 322; cf. NM I 286.
45 Cf. Vy. 126: tad asat, niṇḍāsambandhayor ekakālatvāt; cf. also NK 15 (concerning samāśaya in general): sva-kāraṇasāmārthyd upajāyamānam eva tatra sambhāyate, yathā chidikriyā chedayena . . . Vy. 690 has: niṇḍāsambandhayor ekakālatvāt iti; this may go back the Vākyā and Bhāṣya commented upon in Prāśastapāda’s lost Tīkā: see below, n. 76.
46 NK 16.
47 See the references given in n. 49; a long discussion concerning this point is found in Maṇḍana, Brahmāsiddhi, ed. S. Kuṭṭunwami Śastri (Madras 1937) 85ff. Cf. also pp. 289ff. (on svarūpamātra as ekātī bhūcāh).
48 NK 11f.; cf. Kir. 23.
sattā, by reducing it to pramāṇasambandhayogatā, does not at all affect his acceptance of the independent extramental existence of things (vastu) as such. And, of course, no Vaiśeṣika author ever says that without sattā there would simply be nothing; the very idea of 'nothing' or 'nothingness' is, in fact, quite outside their horizon. — On the other hand, to predicate sattā of 'universals' etc. is regarded as mistaken only insofar as it superimposes a factor of unity and universality upon what has, or 'is', just its 'own form', svarūpa.

Sattā, thus reduced to a factor of unity-in-diversity, appears as a kind of extra to the individual existence of each particular (dravya etc.); and according to its status as a real, epistemologically and ontologically separable 'universal', it cannot simply coincide with, and not even completely depend upon, the fact that things are or exist. Sattā is not the being of the world, which is such never really thematized; sattā is and remains an occurrence in the world.

What seems to be at the bottom of this understanding of 'being', and especially of the conceptual bifurcation of sattā and astitya, is a deep-rooted ambivalence in classical Vaiśeṣika which again is the result of an attempted integration of different historical levels,—that is of an enumerative, physically oriented philosophy of nature and of a categorial analysis. In other words: It has to do with a tendency to present findings of categorial analysis in the old and traditional shape of an enumeration, juxtaposition of different entities. Initially, there may have been an enumerative philosophy of nature in terms of 'elements' or 'substances'. But then the substances themselves became subject to what is actually a categorial and conceptual analysis and decomposition. They were distinguished from, and stripped of, their qualifications resp. qualifiers (vidṛśaṇa), which—sattā being regarded as one of them—appear as separate entities, side by side with their qualificands (vidṛśya).

The Vaiśeṣika's dravya is insofar quite different from the Mīmāṃsaka's vastu or, e. g., Aristotle's τὸ ὑπ’ ὑπάρχον. Nevertheless—and this adds to the ambivalence—it continues being regarded as having its own, quasi-complete nature and being, and even some kind of separate perceptibility; it is never reduced to an unformed ὑπάρχον and not even to what is

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88 NK 19: bhinnasvabhāven ekānuṣṭam mityad-eva, svarūpagrahaṇaṁ kesa na mṛdh, svarūpaṣya yathārhatvat.

70 Vyomāśiva ( Vy. 143) says about 'universals', in a context dealing with sattā: samastādyayavindāte 'py avasthānam iyate.

71 Cf. L. Schmithauer, Zur Lehre von der vorstellungsfreien Wahrnehmung bei Praśāstapāda. Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens 14 (1970) 125—129. — How the 'facticity' and 'positivity' implied in the perception of the actual thing (dravya) qua vidṛśya has to be related to the
called 'bare particular' by some recent and contemporary philosophers. In spite of their conceptual courage, the Vaiśeṣikas are too commonsensical to enlarge upon the more startling 'ontological' consequences of their system according to which, at the end of a process of enumerative dissection into factors and constituents, the unity of the world and each single thing has to be restored by postulating an additional enumerable and juxtaposable factor, i.e., 'inherence', sāmanāya.

In conclusion, we may say that astitva has not only the function of circumscribing the whole realm of 'categories', but also of regaining a meaning and type of 'being' which is not, like sattā, a logically, epistemologically and ontologically separable attribute of what there is. Sattā and astitva represent two different levels of philosophical reflection and thematicization. In trying to integrate these in one system, Prasastapāda shows a sound systematic instinct. Nevertheless, his construction remains easily accessible to misunderstandings and attacks, and, as the further development shows, it does not provide any firm and fertile ground for a tradition of ontology: While the old concept of sattā appears more and more fossilized and obsolete, astitva represents a meaning of 'being' which tends to evaporate with the development of epistemological reflection, insofar as it tends to coincide with the mere objectivity or thematicity of whatever has been objectified and is positively taken into account at any given level of thought.

However, in stating that the Vaiśeṣika conceptualizations of 'being' do not really lead to a tradition of ontology, we should not forget what

apprehension of sattā qua viśeṣana is a question which does not really become thematic in Vaiśeṣika; and there is nothing like the Vedānta attempt to equate what is given to 'indeterminate' (nirvikalpaka) perception with 'pure being' (saṁmātra, saṁmātra).


73 Relating our discussion to the old theme of the one and the many, we may say that sattā represents a meaning of 'being' according to which it is basically one, while astitva posits what there is in its irreducible manifoldness. It is symptomatic that sattā itself is understood in terms of astitva.

74 It is no longer acceptable to Raghunātha Śiromaṇi; cf. reference given in n. 55.

75 Insofar, it may be said to coincide with padārthatva (cf. n. 20) and to amount to a sense of 'being' as mere 'somethingness', as it is advocated by what is known in our days as 'allgemeine Gegenstandstheorie'.—On the difficulties of defining astitva, cf. Vardhamāna and Rucidatta on Udayana in: Kṛishṇavall by Udayanācāryya, ed. S. C. Sarvvardhamāna (Calcutta 1911) 37 ff.
has already been emphasized in our introductory remarks—sc. the historical role of this ‘ontological’ theory as an important, stimulating and truly catalytic target of criticism.\footnote{According to Mallavādin’s Dvādaśāranayacakra, as presented by Simhasūri, it seems that Praśastapāda’s (= Praśastamati’s) lost Tīkā on a Vaiśeṣikabhāṣya (by Ātreya?) contained more detailed discussions of ‘ontological’ questions, esp. of the concept of sattāsambandha; see the extract from Mallavādin’s work in: VS 147—152. Mallavādin explains Praśastapāda’s understanding of the formula niṣṭhāsambandhayor ekakālatvat (also quoted by Vyomasiva, cf. above, n. 65) as follows: siddhārya vastunāḥ svakāraṇāṁ satayo.ca sambandha ūtī prāśastamato ‘bhiprāyaḥ (loc. cit. 152). — The question to what extent Praśastapāda’s ‘ontology’ may have been prepared during the somewhat obscure period between VS and PB, which was excluded from the present, more systematically oriented sketch, will be taken up in the projected monograph, referred to in n. 51.}